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**Nuestro Futuro: Exploring Perspectives about Cultivating Bilingual & Bicultural Latinx  
Educators in California**

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### **Abstract**

In response to the nationwide effort to cultivate, recruit, and retain qualified bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers and the growing demand for bilingual education in California, this qualitative study explores the perceptions of teacher educators at University X. The research considers the significant presence of emergent bilingual learners (EBLs), the increasing Latinx population, teacher shortages, and high attrition rates. The study aims to investigate how University X educators and teachers perceive initiatives designed to increase the number of bilingual and bicultural Latinx educators and their suggestions for improvement. Through a comprehensive analysis of collected data and an extensive review of relevant research literature, the researcher will identify critical insights and develop an actionable response to tackle the challenges and opportunities associated with recruiting and retaining Latinx educators in California. This study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse about the importance of a diverse and representative teacher workforce to effectively meet the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

## **Nuestro Futuro: Exploring Perspectives about Cultivating Bilingual & Bicultural Latinx Educators in California**

As a Mexican American male student, I often felt a void in my life due to the emotional absence of my 'Papa' and the lack of bilingual educated role models. My father, a migrant farmworker, did not speak English and did not receive an education due to poverty in his childhood. During high school, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery, seeking to fill this void. Here, I found two bilingual Mexican-American coaches who were college-educated and shared culture and religion. Their guidance and support filled the void in my life, becoming the father figures I had longed for. Moreover, these coaches were not just elementary school teachers but also biological brothers. Their 'Consejos' and support, communicated in both languages, instilled confidence in me. This confidence, in turn, propelled me to excel academically and athletically.

In retrospect, as an adult, I now recognize the profound impact these "maestros" had on my life. At that time, I did not realize that language or race had a tremendous effect on our connectedness, but it honestly did. Reflecting on this transformative period through a psychological lens, they became the pillars of support and beacons of guidance I had yearned for. Their influence, "platicas," was transformative that ignited a fierce determination within me to succeed in every aspect of life. This personal growth and self-discovery journey extended beyond sports; it touched upon my identity. This experience solidified my passion for running and underscored the importance of having robust and relatable role models throughout one's journey.

During my junior year in high school, I registered for an elective class in my educational plan to become a teacher assistant. Initially, my intention in selecting this course was to embrace the leisurely moments and escape the demanding realms of academia. However, a situation arose that made me realize the issue's urgency. My regular teacher, Miss' L,' was absent, and a substitute teacher had been called in for several days. Boredom began to set in, and I longed for something to occupy my time. As I sat there, listening to music on my headphones, I suddenly became acutely aware of the English language learning students struggling in the classroom with their assignments. The substitute teacher, unfortunately, was not fluent in Spanish and showed no

inclination to address the problem. She maintained a neutral stance, seemingly uninterested in finding a solution for the English language learning students struggling due to the language barrier. Witnessing this inequity, I instinctively rose from my seat, no longer interested in leisurely activities, and felt compelled to take action.

At that moment, I had not yet realized the power of my bilingualism. I was proficient in both Spanish and English, a skill that allowed me to bridge the communication gap and assist my fellow students with their academic tasks. As I worked alongside them as a peer tutor, I began to understand the profound impact I could have on their educational progress. This realization was transformative, filling me with purpose and fulfillment. I had found my true calling. The experience of assisting my peers as a tutor not only solidified my passion for education and service but also deepened my understanding of the vital role that bilingual teachers play in ensuring equitable and practical education for all students.

### **Literature Synthesis**

In bilingual education, chronic shortages persist, disproportionately affecting historically underserved districts and exacerbating educational disparities for students needing culturally responsive and linguistically diverse instruction. As globalization, multiculturalism, and linguistic diversity continue to increase, it is crucial to address the substantial challenge of ensuring a sufficient supply of competent educators proficient in multiple languages and cultures to meet the rising demand for bilingual education. In recent years, the demand for bilingual education in California has significantly surged, alongside an increased appreciation for available qualified bilingual teachers. As reported by Kaplan and Mesquita (2021), the number of bilingual education teachers hired by California school districts increased significantly by 250% from 220 to an estimated 760 during the five years between 2012 and 2018. Concurrently, the California State University (CSU) system demonstrated a solid commitment to bilingual instruction programs, enrolling an impressive 7,543 students in bilingual education courses over the six years from 2016 to 2022 (Fujimoto et al., 2022). This is due to the substantial rising presence of emergent bilingual learners (EBLs) in California, numbering approximately 1.5 million in 2017 and constituting nearly a quarter of the state's student population (Herrera et al., 2022). In 2022, approximately 40% of K-12 students in California spoke a language other than English at home, with nearly 1.1 million students classified as English learners (ELs), indicating their primary

language is not English (California Department of Education, 2024). Among the state's population, 42% speak a language other than English at home, with Spanish being the most prevalent at 29% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

According to Fujimoto et al. (2022), research findings reveal California's potential to be a model for other states to attract more diverse, bilingual, and bicultural teachers to the teacher profession (p.298). California educators and policymakers say it is a new era (Jacobs, 2019). These research findings are no surprise, as California has long been a beacon and leader for social change in this nation. A popular adage states, "As California goes, so goes the nation" (Lee, 2021). California is very similar to the rest of the nation, as students in high-poverty areas bear the brunt of qualified teacher shortages (Fujimoto et al., 2022). California is now clamoring for qualified bilingual and bicultural TK-12 teachers who are prepared to sustain the linguistic and cultural assets and identities of TK-12 students (Herrera et al., 2022). English as a second language students and English-language learners require certified teachers to adequately serve students in their native language and assist students in transitioning to English (Browning et al., 2017). This demand shows no signs of subsiding (Herrera et al., 2022).

In the 21st century, education agencies, universities, school districts, and nonprofits have a unique opportunity to expand the pool of qualified bilingual and bicultural teachers to serve the state. The California State University (CSU) system is highly significant. First, the CSU system is historically notable for preparing and producing teachers. For instance, California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) has a longstanding history of excellence in teacher education. It is committed to serving historically underserved populations in higher education (Founding Vision Statement, 1994). This CSU emphasizes the importance of multicultural assets (Founding Vision Statement, 1994). Second, the pivotal role of the CSU system cannot be overstated, as it is the country's largest four-year system of higher education and is a leader in preparing teachers in the state (Fujimoto et al., 2022; Herrera et al., 2022). The third critical factor in this discussion is that most CSUS are Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs). HSIs are public and private, two- and four-year, not-for-profit degree-granting, postsecondary institutions that enroll a minimum of 25% full-time equivalent Latinx undergraduate students (Garcia, 2019). Garcia (2019) asserts that, according to various sources, (HSIs) must provide a culturally enhancing experience. A final key reason for the paramount significance of the California State

University (CSU) system lies in its public commitment to serving as a frontrunner in enhancing the educational opportunities and overall well-being of students within the Latinx community (Thropay, 2023). Addressing these problems can help meet the academic needs of the growing Latinx student population, 78% of whom are classified as English learners nationwide (Garcia et al., 2022).

### **Why is it an Opportunity**

In a recent news report by NBC News, Gamboa (2023) highlighted a significant statistic: the U.S. Latino population is projected to constitute one in four Americans in the near future. This demographic shift, anticipated to continue through 2060, underscores the need to cultivate a more extensive and diverse cohort of future Latinx Spanish-speaking bilingual educators. Fostering an extensive and more varied group of Latinx bilingual and bicultural educators can help advance equity and inclusion within the education system by more accurately reflecting the diversity of the student population. Unfortunately, California exhibits the most significant mismatch between the Latinx student population and the number of Latinx teachers (Fujimoto et al., 2022). The mismatch between the proportion of Latinx students and teachers, particularly in California, highlights the urgent need to invest in and bolster the development of more qualified Latinx bilingual and bicultural educators (Fujimoto et al., 2022). Investing in these educators means empowering students with influential role models who understand their unique cultural perspectives, ultimately enhancing the educational experience through a heightened sense of belonging and engagement. As Breland (2022) states, teachers of color act as both "windows" and "mirrors" for students, reflecting the racial and cultural aspects of the student population while simultaneously offering a window into opportunities beyond their immediate context. Finally, investing in Latinx bilingual and bicultural educators aligns with the imperative to prepare all students for success in an increasingly diverse and globalized world. Such investment facilitates cross-cultural understanding and exposure to multiple languages and cultures, equipping students with the skills to succeed in a globalized future.

The opportunity to cultivate, grow, and nurture future qualified Latinx bilingual and bicultural teacher candidates has arisen due to recent legislative changes and policies, which are poised to have a lasting impact on our contemporary society. This situation occurred after the California

Multilingual Education Act, also known as California Senate Bill 1174, was passed in legislation from Proposition 58. The November 2016 passage of Proposition 58 repealed the decades-long occupancy of Proposition 227 from 1998 (Herrera et al., 2022). Corea, the chief executive officer of the California Association for Bilingual Education, described Proposition 227 as devastating (Jacobs, 2019). Because it was an anti-bilingual initiative that depleted the ranks of qualified bilingual educators in California; additionally, this particular legislative move impacted the preparation of California educators since this issue influences programmatic structures and curriculum at district levels across the state (Herrera et al., 2022). Fujimoto et al. (2022) voice that the passage of legislation Proposition 58 now provides an opportunity to begin a different cycle of teacher production that can center the experiences and draw on assets of non-native speakers by using culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy (p.298).

Proposition 58, which went into law in 2017, has now positioned California school districts to re-establish or expand bilingual education programs. Through the implementation of this bill, a renewed commitment to addressing the need for more qualified bilingual teachers has been galvanized. The California State University (CSU) system, specifically tailored to prepare, produce, and graduate future prospective teachers, is critical in this effort. The CSU system's dedication to elevating the education and lives of students within the Latinx community demonstrates its potential to drive positive change and address the pressing need for more qualified bilingual educators. This shift in climate toward valuing and promoting bilingual education provides a unique opportunity to strengthen teacher preparation.

### **What Should Be Done**

University educator preparation programs in California and beyond should continue to foster collaborative partnerships with local school districts. Effective partnerships will contribute to developing a pipeline of highly qualified bilingual and bicultural educators who can effectively address the diverse needs of students within their communities. Bilingual education programs, particularly in California, should continue strengthening their collaborations with school districts to secure federal funding for initiatives that prepare Latinx bilingual teachers. This strategy will help increase the availability of qualified bilingual educators who share the cultural background of many students (Williams & Skinner, 2022). California and the California



State University (CSU) system must continue demonstrating their commitment to creating a comprehensive teacher production cycle. This can be achieved by building partnerships and adopting a community-of-practice framework, which promotes continuous professional growth, knowledge-sharing, and the implementation of innovative strategies to serve the unique needs of bilingual learners better. This approach supports effective professional learning and knowledge sharing and enhances teaching practices among pre-service and in-service teachers (Fujimoto et al., 2022). The success of partnerships in Illinois, where joint efforts between universities and school districts have resulted in placing over 200 bilingual Latinx teachers in bilingual classrooms, exemplifies the potential impact of such collaborations (Williams & Skinner, 2022). By learning from this example and expanding on it, California can work towards establishing a solid network of bilingual and bicultural educators, ultimately benefiting the state's diverse student population.

A systemic approach to cultivating more bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers involves establishing teacher education pipeline programs. One strategy that should be implemented to cultivate bilingual and bicultural teachers is the Grow Your Own (GYO) Program model framework because it is an effective recruitment strategy to attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates (Lightfoot & White, 2022). This program is critical in providing early exposure to the teaching profession, offering a clear roadmap during undergraduate studies, and fostering relevant mentorship as students consider their subject area specializations (Fujimoto et al., 2022). The GYO model is designed to identify potential candidates with the desired qualifications and experiences within local communities by fostering partnerships among universities, schools, and community organizations. Through active involvement, school administrators and teachers can recognize and nurture individuals who will contribute to a strong pipeline of bicultural, bilingual teachers. GYO programs have created opportunities for people of color from various socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds to enter the teaching profession (Lightfoot & White, 2022). Furthermore, these programs are uniquely positioned to acknowledge and address negative schooling experiences faced by students of color, often resulting from dominant teaching approaches that perpetuate deficit views of non-dominant cultural identity, language, and knowledge (Lightfoot & White, 2022)

To effectively serve Latinx students and foster their academic success, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should adopt a student-centered approach that caters to these students' unique needs and experiences (García, 2019). This involves acknowledging the Spanish language and cultural diversity of Latinx students, particularly in Hispanic-serving institutions (García, 2019). By embracing language diversity, institutions can create more inclusive environments, enhance service and support, and cultivate bilingual and bicultural educators who contribute to equitable educational experiences for linguistically and culturally diverse learners (Huerta & Miguel, 2024). Rather than focusing solely on enrollment numbers, HEIs should prioritize a multicultural perspective that values the racial and cultural ways of knowing among Latinx students (García, 2019). This holistic approach fosters a more effective learning environment for all students and improves overall success. To achieve this, institutions must engage in strategic planning and curriculum development that considers the diverse needs of English learners and recognizes the unique knowledge and experiences of Latinx teacher candidates. Emphasizing multilingualism and integrating culturally relevant curricula are essential to creating a transformative educational experience for Latinx students (García, 2019; Huerta & Miguel, 2024). By doing so, HEIs can actively serve and support this population while promoting inclusivity and equity in education. Ultimately, prioritizing tailored strategies for Latinx students' success benefits all students and contributes to a more diverse and culturally competent educational landscape.

One key strategy for creating an inclusive campus environment is hiring diverse faculty and staff dedicated to equity and justice. This not only ensures a diverse representation but also brings in a variety of perspectives and experiences, enriching the learning environment. Additionally, institutions should value non-normative indicators of success, moving beyond traditional metrics to recognize the diverse achievements of Latinx students. Data on bilingual speakers should be collected in higher education institutions.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, developing a linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse teacher workforce is a matter of representation and an essential step toward creating an educational landscape that reflects our nation's rich diversity. Through sustained efforts in recruitment,

mentorship, professional development, and policy advocacy efforts, we can build a teaching force that mirrors the diverse society we live in and provides students with the support, understanding, and inspiration they need to succeed in an ever-changing world (Thomas et al., 2022). Enhancing a sense of belonging in public schools directly influences the academic outcomes of students of color by impacting their motivation and learning experiences. To address educational and racial justice challenges faced by educators of color, connecting research with changes in programs, policies, and structures is crucial for creating a comprehensive and effective strategy. The role of Latinx teachers and Teachers of color is not just about representation; they are advocates for change who contribute to the ongoing ideological struggle within the school environment (Gist & Bristol, 2022). As influential role models, educators can learn from innovative practices, amplify marginalized voices, and engage in anti-racist work that fosters a more inclusive educational experience for all. Ultimately, our schools serve as essential arenas where we grapple with our collective identity and vision for the future. By fostering diversity among educators and prioritizing the success of students from all backgrounds, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape that benefits everyone and paves the way for a brighter future.

### **Method**

As the researcher for this Capstone Project, I explored the perspectives of University X educators and leaders regarding the need to increase the number of bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers and establish a diverse pool of bilingual educators to meet California's educational needs. By analyzing data and reviewing relevant research literature, I synthesized my findings. Utilizing these insights, I devised an actionable response to address the challenges of fostering a larger bilingual and bicultural Latinx teacher pool and promoting diversity within the educator workforce.

### **Context**

University X is located in Seaside, Monterey County, California, and sits on the former site of the Fort Ord military base, which ceased operations in 1994. University X boasts a picturesque setting, with Monterey Bay and the Santa Cruz Mountains providing a stunning backdrop. University X is near pristine beaches, redwood forests, tidepools, and the Fort Ord

National Monument. The campus sits halfway between the Monterey Peninsula, which features Pacific Grove, Monterey, Seaside, and Carmel coastal communities, and the Salinas Valley, known as the "Salad Bowl of the World" for its abundant agricultural production.

Designated as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) by the U.S. Department of Education in 1998, University X benefits from federal recognition under the Higher Education Act. This designation allows the university to access various funding opportunities and grants, which help enhance academic offerings and programs for Hispanic students and individuals from low-income backgrounds. University X has implemented numerous programs to support its students, such as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, TRIO Student Support Services, and the College Assistance Migrant Program.

It is essential to acknowledge that University X sits on the ancestral lands of the Amah Mutsun, Esselen, Ohlone, Rumsen, and Salinan people. The university's commitment to serving underrepresented and historically marginalized communities is evident in its diverse student body, comprising approximately 45% Hispanic/Latinx, 23% White, 11% Asian, and 7% African American students. Many students are first-generation college students or come from low-income backgrounds.

### **Participants and Participant Selection<sup>1</sup>**

I selected University X because of its designation as a Hispanic-serving institute and its commitment to addressing Hispanic/Latinx students' unique needs. With approximately 40% of the student population comprised of Hispanic/Latinx students, University X strongly emphasizes delivering specialized educational opportunities and support services to foster academic success among this demographic.

**Dr. Guitierrez:** A bilingual female educator with a PhD in Bilingual and Bicultural Education, serving as Assistant Professor of Bilingual Education and Coordinator of the Bilingual Authorization Program.

**Dr. Henry:** A male educator with a PhD in Education and Board Certified Behavior

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

Analyst-Doctoral, currently serves as the Department of Education and Leadership Chair. He is also a Professor of Special Education.

**Dr. Bailey:** A female leader with a PhD in Child Development and Family Studies, currently serving as the Dean for the College of Education. She possesses extensive higher education leadership experience and a solid commitment to preparing highly qualified educators for diverse learners through formal and community learning opportunities.

**Dr. Wagener:** A respected female PhD scholar with 14 years of experience in school districts as a teacher, instructional coach, and literacy specialist.

**Dr. Villagomez:** A bilingual male Professor of Liberal Studies Education and lecturer at a renowned CSU institution with over 15 years of experience in education and a PhD degree.

**Dr. Hernández:** A distinguished bilingual female Assistant Professor of Education specializing in Bilingual Education and serving as the Bilingual Authorization Program Coordinator at a renowned CSU institution. She has over 16 years of experience in bilingual education in various institutions, including school districts and higher education.

### **Researcher**

The concern of cultivating, nurturing, and growing a more significant number of future qualified bicultural, bilingual Latinx K-12 teachers holds deep personal significance for me because teacher preparation programs like the "(TPP)" and University X MAESTROs project provided me with a guided roadmap to achieving my educational goals. The transformative power of partnerships between diverse higher education systems is astounding, particularly when elevating and empowering nontraditional students like myself. Both institutions I attended in the past are designated as Hispanic-serving institutions, providing essential support to Latinx students and promoting inclusivity within higher education. My journey from poverty and limited career opportunities to becoming a community leader, role model, and social change agent is a testament to the impact of these institutions in fostering personal growth, resilience,

and achievement. The experiences and opportunities gained through these partnerships have been instrumental in shaping my identity, and they serve as a powerful example of how collaboration can support underrepresented students in realizing their full potential.

The presence of diverse faculty who understood my background profoundly impacted my educational journey. Their empathy and shared experiences created a supportive environment that nurtured my growth and success. Moreover, the professional development workshops offered through these institutions empowered me to contribute meaningfully to my community and fostered a strong sense of purpose. Teacher education programs like "TPP" were instrumental in preparing me to become an effective educator despite my challenges. The comprehensive support I received, including dedicated instructors and tailored resources, was invaluable in overcoming obstacles and ensuring my academic success. The emphasis on personal connection and understanding extended beyond the classroom, as professors became mentors who recognized my struggles and celebrated my achievements. Through their guidance, I developed a deeper understanding of myself, ultimately uncovering a learning disability that had been overlooked for years.

These teaching preparation programs gave me the tools and self-assurance needed to navigate the world, enabling me to discover my true potential and find my place within it. The transformative experiences I gained through these programs will be a source of gratitude and inspiration. My firsthand experiences as a student within teacher preparation programs like "TPP" and as an active participant in the University X community have afforded me a distinctive perspective and insightful knowledge. This background has deepened my understanding of culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy, equipping me with valuable strategies tailored to the unique needs of the future teenagers and children I will teach. These experiences have prepared me to contribute effectively to developing and implementing inclusive teaching practices supporting diverse student populations' educational journeys.

I bring a unique set of personal qualities that will contribute to the success of this project, including my ethnicity, race, language skills, nationality, empathy, cultural competency, resilience, effective communication, adaptability, and leadership abilities. As a bilingual individual fluent in English and Spanish, I can engage with a diverse range of students and stakeholders, ensuring clear and effective communication. My education in culturally responsive

teaching methods further equips me to support and guide students from various backgrounds.

Drawing from my experiences with mentorship, I have developed the capacity to provide valuable support and guidance to students as they navigate the complexities of higher education and work toward their goals. My strong interpersonal skills also enable me to build meaningful relationships and connections within my community. My distinct experiences as a heterosexual male with a learning disability, a first-generation college student from a farm-working-class family, and a Mexican-American background not only differentiate me from the participants in this project but also provide me with a deep understanding of the challenges they may face. These lived experiences grant me the empathy and perspective necessary to support and empower students on their academic journey effectively.

My experiences overcoming various challenges have significantly shaped my perspective, enabling me to better understand and empathize with prospective bilingual and bicultural Latinx educators' unique struggles. This heightened understanding will allow me to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments in the future while also fostering authentic relationships rooted in trust and shared experiences. My background has nurtured my adaptability and openness to diverse perspectives, empowering me to tackle complex issues with a nuanced approach. By drawing on these experiences, I am dedicated to advocating for inclusive education practices and providing customized support to help students overcome barriers and reach their full potential. My unique combination of experiences fuels my passion for empowering Latinx bilingual students and contributing to a more equitable education system. I strive to create lasting, positive change for students and the broader educational community through this commitment.

### **Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions**

1. What is University X doing to attract/recruit bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers?
2. What is University X doing to retain bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers?
3. What is University X doing to prepare bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers?
4. What are you most concerned about regarding recruiting, retaining, and preparing potent bilingual and bilingual Latinx teachers at University X?
5. What is currently being done to improve how University X attracts/recruits, retains, and prepares potent bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers?

6. Based on your experience and leadership, what should be done at University X to attract/recruit, retain, and prepare potential bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers?
7. What are the challenges to doing something about the attraction/recruitment, retention, and preparation of potential bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers at University X?
8. Is there anything else you would like to say about the recruitment, retention, and preparation of potential bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers at University X and how these things could be improved

### **Procedure**

The data collection process commenced with identifying and contacting highly educated, reputable, and experienced individuals relevant to the project's theme. I employed various methods to recruit participants for the study. First, I connected with individuals at events hosted by a CSU campus. Second, I visited the Latinx Student Success Center, EL Centro. Third, another approach I took was regularly visiting buildings associated with the College of Education.

Additionally, I used participants' office hours on campus to further expand my recruitment efforts. To schedule appointments effectively, I utilized several communication methods. This included utilizing Gmail for email correspondence and sending Google Calendar invites to all participants to confirm and coordinate meeting dates and times. All participants contributed individually. In conducting the data collection, informed consent was obtained, and it was the procedure and method I used to ensure individuals were fully informed about what they were agreeing to and that their agreement was voluntary and informed. Participants were invited to engage in face-to-face interviews and video calls, during which they responded to a series of thoughtfully crafted questions designed to elicit insightful and comprehensive responses about the research topic.

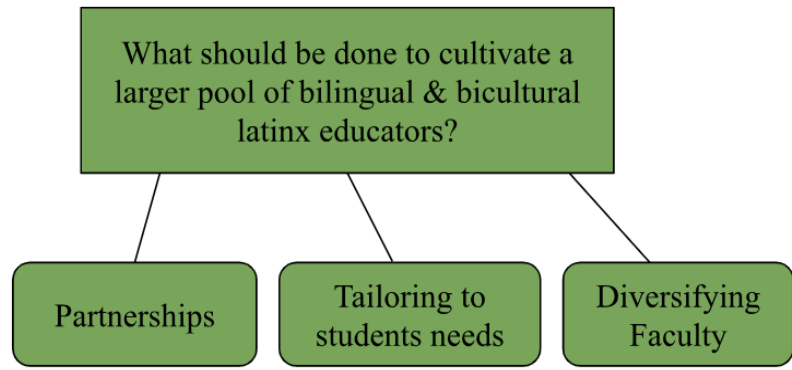
### **Data Analysis**

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.



## Results

For this Capstone Project, University X educators and leaders were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve the cultivation of an extended number of bilingual and bicultural Latinx K-12 teachers. This is important because the demand for bilingual education in California has significantly surged, alongside an increased appreciation for available qualified bilingual teachers. This is urgent due to the substantial rising presence of emergent bilingual learners (EBLs) in California, numbering approximately 1.5 million in 2017 and constituting nearly a quarter of the state's student population (Herrera et al., 2022). In 2022, approximately 40% of K-12 students in California spoke a language other than English at home, with nearly 1.1 million students classified as English learners (ELs), indicating their primary language is not English (California Department of Education, 2022). Three themes emerged based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision-making requires evaluating each potential Action Option by Time, Reasonableness, and effectiveness. To effectively evaluate an Action Option for this project, it is essential to consider three critical criteria: Time, Reasonableness, and Effectiveness. Analyzing the timeframe required to implement and observe the impact of an Action Option helps determine whether it can be realistically executed and when positive outcomes can be expected. Assessing the feasibility of an Action Option, considering available resources, personnel, and stakeholder support, is crucial for ensuring alignment with an organization's capabilities. Lastly, evaluating the potential of an Action Option to achieve the desired outcomes is vital for providing a significant and positive impact on the overall goal of improving the preparation of culturally sustaining educators. By examining an Action Option through these three lenses, decision-makers can make well-informed choices, prioritize actions, and allocate resources effectively. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option, an action will be recommended and justified.



*Image 1. Themes which emerged from the data and literature.*

*Table 1*

*Evaluation of Action Options*

	Time	Reasonableness	Effectiveness
Partnerships	High	High	High
Tailoring to the needs of students	High	High	High
Diversifying Faculty	High	High	High

**Partnerships**

University X education professionals, including educators and leaders in authoritative roles, offered their insights on effective strategies to bolster the number of bilingual and bicultural Latinx teachers. The first theme arising from the interview data was partnerships. Participants recognized that forming partnerships is critical in successfully expanding the pool of bilingual and bicultural teachers. The evidence that was collected is, as one interviewee highlighted, "We are actively developing a comprehensive pathway for future educators,

beginning in middle school and extending beyond; this collaborative endeavor involves multiple institutions, including school districts, county offices of education, community colleges, and the UC System" (Dr. Bailey, personal communication, April 25, 2024). The collected data aligns with existing literature on partnerships, suggesting an evolving and observable transformation in the approach of higher education institutions toward collaboration. The findings indicate that institutions are progressively moving away from traditional partnership models and adopting a community-of-practice framework (Herrera et al., 2022). This model emphasizes inclusivity for all stakeholders, promoting learning, knowledge sharing, and collaboration within professional domains or areas of interest (Herrera et al., 2022). While this theme emerged throughout the interviews, a notable hurdle was identified: financial constraints. An education leader highlighted the challenge, stating, "The institution is facing financial constraints, and consequently, University leadership, such as presidents and deans, are exploring various funding opportunities from both public and private sources, including foundations" (Dr. Bailey, personal communication, April 25, 2024). This data further corroborates the importance of intentional collaboration in the literature, as partnerships must be authentic and actively engage both school districts and universities (Williams & Skinner, 2022)

Based on examining both the literature research and interview data, this action option requires a significant investment of time. The planning, preparation, and implementation stages of partnership establishment are time-intensive. For instance, mentor teachers and teacher candidates need to observe and collaborate in different settings, necessitating frequent communication and coordination. Furthermore, mentor teachers must work together daily to implement lesson plans, discuss and adapt ideas, and provide feedback to ensure continuous improvement. Despite the considerable time commitment, this collaborative approach is very reasonable because it offers valuable opportunities for mentor teachers and teacher candidates to enhance their professional growth and develop effective strategies for supporting the needs of bilingual Latinx students. Next, according to Williams and Skinner's (2022) research, the effectiveness of this approach is high, as evidenced by their findings on Latin American students. They discovered that forming partnerships with a specific emphasis on tackling the shortage of teachers of color, especially bilingual educators, proved to be a successful strategy in attracting more teachers of color to the profession (Williams & Skinner, 2022).

### **Tailoring to the needs of students**

A second prominent theme identified from interviews with University X's education leaders, professionals, teachers, and lecturers was the importance of tailoring to students' needs to increase the pool of future qualified bilingual and bicultural teachers. This action option entails implementing a student-centered approach to promoting multilingual and multicultural learning environments to foster a sense of belonging by strongly emphasizing multilingualism and the integration of culturally relevant curricula. Teacher preparation programs, lectures, and dedicated faculty members at University X are responsible for providing an equitable learning environment that supports their diverse student population's unique needs and backgrounds, especially to meet the needs of future potential bilingual and bicultural teachers.

Dr. Wagner elaborated on tailoring to students' needs and stated:

We may already have a lot of bilingual students, but bilingualism is not affirmed or valued in terms of the curriculum, so we first need to have data about the number of bilingual students. One of the critical aspects we recognize is our designation as a Hispanic-serving institution. It is essential for us, as a campus community, to deeply explore what this designation signifies for our identity and mission, what it means for the languages spoken by Latinx folks, and how that is brought into our curriculum and everyday practices. We are working actively to build a community inclusive of multilingualism, which is the first step. We serve primarily Spanish bilingual candidates, allowing them to communicate in whatever primary language they have. For example, allowing students to read and write in Spanish so there is a particular emphasis on integrating translanguaging so students feel comfortable and safe, and so multiculturalism is valued. (Dr. Wagner, personal communication, April 25, 2024)

This data aligns with Ofelia García's (2009) Translanguaging theory, the pedagogical practice of translanguaging involving multiple discursive practices through which bilingual individuals engage to understand their bilingual worlds. Translanguaging encompasses more than code-switching; it is a systematic, strategic, affiliative, and sense-making process. To construct meaning, bilingual families and communities must engage in translanguaging practices (García,

2009). The theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing and supporting the diverse linguistic practices of language-minoritized individuals (Herrera et al., 2022). García's approach encourages educators to leverage students' entire linguistic repertoires, fostering inclusive and effective learning environments in an increasingly globalized world (Herrera et al., 2022).

Tailoring to students' needs demands a lot of time investment due to the multifaceted nature of creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment. For example, educators must dedicate time and effort to understanding students' diverse backgrounds, languages, cultures, and learning styles (Hammond, 2015). Tailoring to students' needs also necessitates deeply examining teachers' cultural beliefs and biases, developing strong, trusting relationships with students, and applying brain-based strategies to cater to diverse learners (Hammond, 2015). In addition, this also entails dedication to studying students' cultures, reflecting on personal biases, building rapport, and adapting teaching methods. Some may resist change and hold onto outdated ideas. Despite the time investment required, tailoring to students' needs is highly effective and reasonable due to its numerous benefits. Tailoring to students' needs is crucial in fostering improved student engagement and academic outcomes, as it activates students' prior knowledge and contextualizes learning within their lives (Hammond, 2015). Moreover, tailoring to students' needs is pivotal in closing achievement gaps by ensuring mastery of academic content and addressing systemic inequities in education (Hammond, 2015). Furthermore, this action option facilitates the development of strong teacher-student relationships grounded in trust and respect as educators demonstrate authentic care and give students a voice in the classroom (Hammond, 2015).

### **Diversifying Faculty**

The third theme that emerged from the interview data of University X education professionals, including teachers and lecturers, was diversifying faculty. In this context, diversifying faculty refers to the intentional effort and process of increasing the representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds within University X.

Dr. Villagomez emphasized in an interview:

Numbers are significant, but we must first examine the philosophy, politics, and sociology at play. If we are not careful, that same diverse faculty can replicate the same

school system that is English-only, Eurocentric, and assimilationist. So numbers matter, do not get me wrong; however, the content of what is being taught and the teaching styles employed are equally, if not more, important. We also have to have folks who either come out of the comunidad, understand the comunidad, or maybe do not come out of the Comunidad but are down with the community. (Dr. Villagomez, personal communication May 3, 2024)

These insights align with recent findings by Herrera et al. (2022), revealing that the California State University (CSU) system does not reflect the state's demographic composition, underscoring the need for a more diverse teaching workforce in higher education. A more inclusive and supportive learning environment would contribute to the success of all students (Herrera et al., 2022). Increasing underrepresented faculty in higher education has improved graduation rates for all students, particularly for Latinx and Black students (Herrera et al., 2022).

We can gain deeper insight into the potential advantages, disadvantages, and implicit assumptions by evaluating the theme of diversifying faculty using time, reasonableness, and effectiveness criteria. First, the pros of diversifying faculty include improved student outcomes, particularly for Latinx and Black students, as supported by research (Herrera et al., 2022). Culturally responsive pedagogy and role models from underrepresented groups can also enhance the learning experience for students from diverse backgrounds. However, diversifying faculty can be time-consuming and may need more support from stakeholders due to personal biases or possible reluctance to change existing power structures. Additionally, a limited pool of qualified candidates from underrepresented groups can present challenges in achieving rapid diversification. Several assumptions are associated with diversifying faculty, such as the positive correlation between increased underrepresented faculty and better student outcomes. Another assumption is that faculty members from underrepresented groups will naturally invest in their communities and understand their needs. Lastly, while diversifying faculty is a step towards culturally responsive pedagogy, this change is assumed to lead to curriculum transformation and new teaching methodologies automatically. Diversifying faculty in higher education requires careful consideration of the potential benefits and challenges.

## **Conclusion**

I unequivocally advocate tailoring to the needs of students. Several important factors that influenced my recommendation were the growing Latinx student population in higher education institutions. As more Latinx students pursue a higher education, their financial challenges become increasingly apparent. Many encounter economic barriers that impede their educational access and success. Moreover, traditional metrics often need to acknowledge the diverse achievements of Latinx students, as conventional measures of success tend to overlook their accomplishments. Creating culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments is crucial in light of these challenges. Establishing a supportive campus environment that prioritizes equity and justice is paramount in fostering educational success for Latinx students. The values and priorities reflected in my recommendations include equity and justice in higher education, holistic and tailored approaches to addressing diverse student needs, promoting academic and personal growth of Latinx students, enhancing the educational experience through experiential learning and inclusive practices, and fostering a supportive campus environment with a focus on equity and justice.

**Concessions.** While tailoring educational approaches to meet students' needs is the most effective action option, the other two alternatives also possess significant advantages. For instance, diversifying faculty can provide students with role models from diverse backgrounds who embody intellectual authority and draw upon their lived experiences as people of color (Fenwick & Akua, 2022). A diverse faculty brings an extra dimension of sensitivity to their students' aspirations, needs, and the barriers they may face due to systemic racism, sexism, and classism. As a result, faculty members of color can offer students specific strategies for successfully navigating these challenges and empower them to overcome obstacles on their academic journey (Fenwick & Akua, 2022). As an alternative action option, partnerships have notable strengths that should be considered. Williams and Skinner's research (2022) demonstrated that partnerships foster reciprocal support between participating entities. For example, collaborations between school districts and institutions allow for resource sharing, including office spaces and funding (Williams & Skinner, 2022). This approach saves money on grants that would otherwise be spent on renting office space and enables the partnerships to effectively educate an initial cohort of teachers (Williams & Skinner, 2022). Overall,

partnerships offer a promising strategy for addressing the challenges associated with teacher preparation and recruitment.

**Limitations.** There are several potential limitations and assumptions, such as gaps in understanding Latinx students' specific needs and challenges and the most effective strategies to address these issues. Moreover, more ongoing research and data collection are necessary to inform best practices. Second, more knowledge regarding Latinx students' specific challenges might be needed. Third, socioeconomic challenges affecting Latinx communities, such as financial constraints, limited access to technology, or family responsibilities, can impact students. Furthermore, the Latinx student population is not homogeneous, and cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds vary. Tailoring to students' needs can be a complex and nuanced process. Finally, implementing strategies on a broader scale can be challenging due to differences in institutional resources, policies, and student demographics.

Potential negative outcomes. Firstly, faculty and staff may hesitate to embrace changes, especially when changes involve altering already established systems and practices. This resistance can hinder progress and the implementation of innovative solutions. Secondly, despite good intentions, new initiatives may perpetuate stereotypes or lead to unintended disparities among student groups. Educators must be aware of potential biases and engage in ongoing reflection to ensure that initiatives support equity and inclusivity. Lastly, tailored programs to address specific student needs may not achieve the desired outcomes due to unforeseen challenges or inadequate implementation support. Therefore, it is essential to monitor the effectiveness of such programs and provide the necessary resources and assistance to promote their success.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, despite the identified concessions, limitations, and potential adverse outcomes, I recommend tailoring to the needs of students' action options. Adopting a student-centered approach, as Gina Ann Garcia (2019) advocates, enables Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to effectively address the unique needs of Latinx students and promote a more equitable educational environment. This approach should emphasize justice and equity by incorporating diverse perspectives on racialized and cultural histories, intersecting identities, and liberation-based models. By integrating civic engagement and activism into the curriculum, HEIs can empower students to challenge systemic subjugation and discrimination, contributing to a



more just society. Additionally, prioritizing students' cultural and linguistic epistemologies, particularly by embracing and promoting the Spanish language, enhances their academic success and fosters a culturally responsive and inclusive learning experience (Garcia, 2019).

Implementing these strategies enables institutions to cultivate a Latinx-serving identity and create transformative educational experiences that value diversity, equity, and inclusion, allowing for cultivating an extended pool of bilingual and bicultural teachers.

### **Action Documentation and Critical Reflection**

The primary focus of this issue is the cultivation of a larger pool of bilingual and bicultural Latinx educators. While conducting my interviews, I was privileged to engage with diverse individuals, each bringing their unique perspectives and experiences. My interviewees, a diverse group affiliated with California State University (CSU), included four bilingual faculty members, four lecturers, a Chair of a postsecondary education department, a Dean of a College of Education, and numerous published scholars. It is worth noting that all interview participants were professionals in the field of education, employed within the California State University (CSU) system, and held a PhD degree. This diverse group of interviewees enriched the research process, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The resulting action options were the cultivation of collaborative partnerships, the adaptation of educational approaches to tailoring to students' needs, and the diversification of faculty within higher education institutions.

I implemented the action option that focused on tailoring to students' needs. This decision was not arbitrary but instead driven by evidence-based insights showcasing the potential benefits and positive impact of this strategy on student success. This rigorous approach to decision-making made it the most rational and logical choice to enhance the educational experience for our diverse student population. Furthermore, the timing of my research project placed me in a unique and advantageous position to leverage my voice and influence change within the context of my work.

### **Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection**

In my action research project, documentation, and reflection, I participated in a comprehensive process to contribute to social change at University X by participating in strategic planning. This strategic planning process, occurring every 3 to 5 years, is a crucial platform for ongoing evaluation and adaptation in response to evolving challenges and needs. Recognizing

the importance of cultivating a larger pool of qualified bilingual and bicultural students, I advocated for enhanced support systems tailored to Latinx students' needs. I took part in the university's strategic planning process, voicing my recommendations and emphasizing the significance of addressing the needs of Latinx students. I employed various communication methods to ensure my input was considered during the strategic planning. I participated in virtual Zoom discussions with key stakeholders, students, faculty, and education leaders, allowing me to share my thoughts and ideas directly. I also completed a detailed written feedback form, providing specific suggestions to address Latinx students' needs better and foster a larger pool of bilingual and bicultural educators.

Furthermore, I wrote a letter to emphasize the importance of these issues and the potential impact of implementing targeted strategies to support this student population. Using multiple communication channels, I aimed to maximize the visibility and consideration of my recommendations in developing the university's strategic plan. This proactive approach to communication ensured that my voice was heard. This active engagement in the strategic planning process provided me with an invaluable opportunity to advocate for positive change at University X. I stressed the significance of addressing the unique needs of Latinx students and promoting a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

## Strategic Planning Virtual Discussion

Thursday, May 9  
2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

### Breakout Rooms

#### Goal-setting

- Meet your breakout room members
- Ensure that everyone understands the description of the pillar
- Assignment:
  - Generate 1-2 specific goals within the pillar's domain for Cal State Monterey Bay to achieve in 3 years and input into Google Form.
  - As a group, identify the **TOP-1-2 goals** you believe CSUMB should prioritize in the next three years
  - Then, identify strengths and weaknesses related to each



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## Strategic Planning Steering Committee

### Co-chairs of CSUMB

831-582-3000

100 Campus Center Seaside, CA

Dear Maria Bellumori and Dale Grubb

I am Jaime Garcia Ramirez, a Liberal Studies student in the College of Education. I am writing to express my perspectives on the future strategic plan that will guide Cal State Monterey Bay over the next three years, particularly regarding our institution's identity as a Hispanic-serving institution and the importance of bilingualism, student-centered curriculum, and multilingual community building.

As a Hispanic-serving institution, it is crucial for us to affirm bilingualism as an essential part of our campus identity and mission. This can have an immense impact, as it can create a more inclusive and diverse environment for our students, many of whom come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This commitment to bilingualism should be reflected in our programs of instruction and our everyday practices.

Regarding our curriculum, I strongly support the notion that it should be student- and society-centered. This approach not only meets the needs of our students but also contributes to the development of our communities in the Tri-County region, including inner-city and isolated rural populations. To achieve this, we should emphasize regional assets, such as allowing students to communicate in their primary language, including reading and writing in Spanish. This will foster an atmosphere where students feel comfortable, safe, and valued, embracing multiculturalism as an integral part of our curriculum.

As a campus community, we must actively foster an inclusive environment that recognizes and supports multilingualism. Since a significant portion of our student body speaks languages other than English, with Spanish being predominant, we should invest resources in gathering data on the number of bilingual students at our institution. This information can help guide the development of specialized programs and resources that cater to the specific needs of these students while promoting the growth of bilingual education.

Embracing bilingualism and focusing on a diverse, student-centered curriculum has the potential to become a unique strength for our institution. Bilingual education is not just a trend but a necessity in our increasingly globalized world. As it continues to grow in importance at the state and national levels, this approach can also contribute to increased enrollment numbers and, more importantly, a richer educational experience for all students.

Thank you for considering my perspective as we work together to shape the future of Cal State Monterey Bay

Jaime Garcia

*Jaime Garcia*

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To complete my action project documentation, I sought guidance from experienced professionals who provided invaluable recommendations and directed me to the most suitable platform to communicate my message effectively. The process began with RSVPing through my student email account and registering online for a virtual strategic planning meeting. Subsequently, I attended the scheduled virtual conference meeting via Zoom, a video conferencing software, utilizing my institution-provided account on my personal computer. I

connected with key stakeholders, engaged in productive discussions, and contributed to developing the strategic plan.

During my Action Research Project, I encountered a surprising realization: As a transfer student at University X, this was the first time I had previously participated in the institution's strategic planning process. This was unexpected, as I was unaware of the possibility and process that allowed students to share their voices and contribute to informed decision-making. Only when a faculty leader forwarded me an essential registration email did I realize the opportunity to engage in this critical process. This newfound knowledge enabled me to partake in strategic planning, ultimately advocating for positive change and fostering a more inclusive educational environment at University X. Throughout the continuous and collaborative strategic planning process, my involvement in numerous meetings and collective efforts has centered on devising a holistic plan for the future. While the outcome remains forthcoming, a key realization has surfaced: appreciating the worth of my personal contributions and unique perspective. Participating in discussions surrounding enacting change has elicited positive feedback from key leaders on the innovative ideas I have shared and revealed the significant impact of my voice in this process. This experience has affirmed the significance of active engagement and the potential for individual voices to shape meaningful change within a collaborative setting.

If I had been more aware of strategic planning meetings earlier in my undergraduate career at University X, rather than just the final months before graduation, my educational experience I would have advocated more about different issues. Engaging in these meetings and contributing to developing the institution's vision would have allowed me to make a more profound impact as a student. This realization underscores the importance of fostering awareness and creating accessible pathways for students to participate in shaping the future of their educational experiences.

Maintaining involvement in the ongoing strategic planning process and contributing to its successful completion is crucial. Additionally, sharing my experiences and insights with friends, close colleagues, and peers can inspire others to recognize the value of their perspectives and participate actively in shaping the future of their institutions. As an alumnus, I must remember that my connection to University X should remain strong. Even after graduation, I can play a meaningful role in the institution's growth and development. I can contribute to a more inclusive

and equitable educational environment for current and future students by remaining engaged and encouraging others to do the same. Working towards change has taught me invaluable lessons about myself and the intricate nature of driving transformation. I have come to understand that initiating change takes much work. It entails a long and meticulous process that demands significant investment in time, hard work, research, and a well-rounded understanding of the issues. Influential leaders are crucial in guiding individuals to ask the right questions and initiate meaningful conversations that lay the foundation for progress. Throughout this journey, I have discovered my potential as a leader with the personality and skills to engage in any endeavor I choose. Collaborating with diverse individuals has highlighted the importance of valuing varied perspectives and the power of collective insights.

Moreover, I have learned the significance of being an active listener and engaging professionally, proactively, and knowledgeably when advocating for change. Additionally, my experiences have shed light on the formal power systems we must navigate to foster change. In our globalized world, I now recognize that encountering and collaborating with people from various backgrounds and identities is inevitable and enriching. Ultimately, I have learned that change is attainable through asking pertinent questions, engaging in thoughtful dialogue, and drawing from diverse viewpoints.

### **Critical Reflection**

This project has led to significant personal discoveries about my abilities and growth as a student. Initially, I found that self-doubt often surfaced when starting a new endeavor. However, once immersed in the work, the process became enjoyable and rewarding, bestowing a sense of purpose and making me feel like an explorer. As a first-generation college student and bilingual learner, I discovered that my skills and determination were adequate to overcome challenges. In addition, I recognized my gift to engage with people from diverse backgrounds and engage in meaningful discussions about complex issues. By listening to others' perspectives, I came to appreciate my creativity in developing innovative solutions, highlighting the importance of considering various angles and approaches to problem-solving. Overall, this project allowed me to confront and overcome initial doubts, embrace the joy of learning, and acknowledge my strengths in communication, collaboration, and creative thinking. These realizations have fostered personal growth and prepared me to face future challenges confidently and resiliently.

Throughout this journey, I understood that teaching and learning are dynamic and interconnected processes. Continuous growth and exploration are essential components of education, as there is always something new to discover and understand.

Furthermore, I recognized the power of community in fostering a supportive learning environment, as people with shared goals and values can collaborate to achieve more than they could individually. Lastly, advocating for change requires dedication, resilience, and a willingness to engage with others. Partnerships, attending events, and listening to diverse perspectives contribute to a broader understanding of the issues at hand and help create meaningful connections with individuals who share a commitment to improvement. This experience has taught me that change does not happen overnight; it demands patience and a long-term vision for progress.

### **Synthesis and Integration**

Engagement in the Liberal Studies Major Learning Outcomes (MLOs) required coursework, and this Action Research Project has significantly impacted my professional growth by motivating me to actively participate in school-setting committees and embrace my role as a representative who advocates for inclusive practices and equitable educational opportunities for others. Through my professional development, I have gained expertise in utilizing and implementing various innovative technological tools to enhance classroom instruction and learning. These tools include digital formative assessments and interactive presentation platforms, facilitating engaging and compelling learning experiences. Moreover, I am now well-versed in leveraging AI teaching assistant software to optimize lesson planning and utilizing podcast creation applications and game-based learning platforms to promote student engagement and motivation. I have developed the ability to advocate for access, equity, and justice across various institutions and settings. These experiences have taught me the importance of collaboration and communication in driving meaningful change, extending beyond higher education to community organizations, public schools, and local government. For instance, I regularly attend and actively participate in school board meetings and city council sessions, ensuring that the voices of underrepresented groups are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

I must take various steps to achieve my vision of becoming a successful professional. First is gaining hands-on experience. With more time available now that I am no longer a full-time student, I will prioritize working more consistently with students to acquire practical experience in education. This direct engagement will provide valuable insights and opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills I have gained through my studies. While awaiting the chance to apply to a teaching credential program, my second step will be to remain actively engaged in the education community, which involves maintaining contact with educators, nurturing professional relationships, and keeping up-to-date with current events, workshops, conferences, and changes to California's education laws. A critical aspect of this step will be researching and exploring various school districts to determine which would be the most suitable fit for my career goals, values, and teaching style. The third essential step involves gathering the necessary information and obtaining the documents and prerequisites for applying to a credential program. This process will ensure that I meet the eligibility criteria and have all the essential materials to apply for the program successfully.

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