

**BLACK AND LATINO/A ECOSYSTEM AND  
SUPPORT TRANSITION (BLEST) HUB**

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# 2023 STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM REPORT

**PREPARED BY**

KENDALL WATTS & IMONI DEJESUS

Undergraduate Students, College of Arts & Sciences and  
College of Education

MICHAEL VAZQUEZ

Graduate Student, College of Education

TROY WASHINGTON, PHD

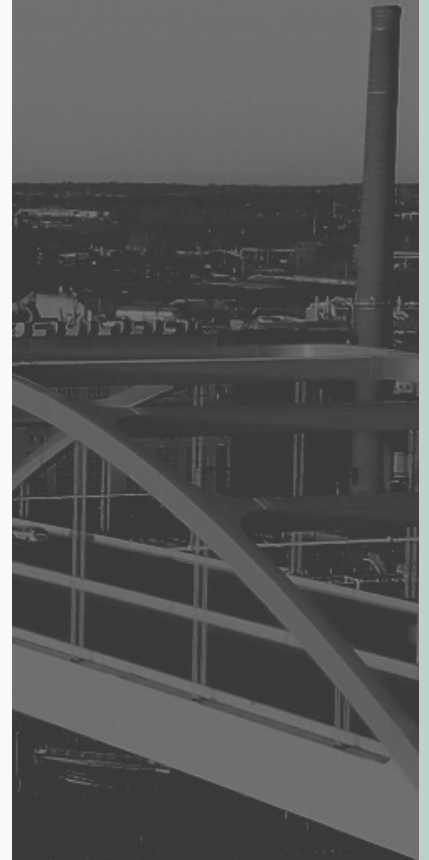
Teaching Assistant Professor, College of Arts and Sciences  
Associate Director, BLEST Hub

GABRIEL VELEZ, PHD

Assistant Professor, College of Education  
Faculty Director, BLEST Hub

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**CURTO  
MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
AUGUST 2023**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This past year marked the third year of the BLEST Hub. The project began during the pandemic, which forced a shift of the main focus to become gathering available information, documenting the nature of the ecosystem, and producing public resources. Through 2022, we engaged in targeted research projects, including reflections on Marquette's campus and with area partners.

In 2022-2023, we continued to build this foundation, by returning to areas and programming that were originally part of our mandate. Drawing on the outreach and engagement of our student research assistants, we continued to build out and update our ecosystem map.

In terms of returning to our original areas of focus, we greatly expanded our dual enrollment work by engaging in conversations with key stakeholders and knowledgeable partners locally, at the state level, and nationally in academia. We produced podcasts, reports, and began to offer limited programming to local area Black and Latino students.

The year also saw the re-engagement of the Obama Foundation's My Brother's Keeper Initiative, with BLEST Hub chosen as a research and support arm of the effort. One of the founding visionaries on our work, African American Leadership Alliance of Milwaukee CEO Walter Lanier, will be leading the city in the certification process. We have already begun support with identifying key metrics and starting data compilation to move toward a city-wide dashboard.

Additionally, we are happy to announce that Dr. Troy Washington, who had previously worked on various projects, has been named Associate Director of the BLEST Hub and is leading our dual enrollment programming.

As we wrap up this year's work, we look forward to these exciting new directions and deeper engagement with our core mission. In 2023-2024, we will look to continue to build sustainability and drive toward systems change building onto Milwaukee's many strengths.

## MAIN NEW EFFORTS IN 2022-2023

1. Building and disseminating a timeline of the ecosystem.
2. Deepening our dual enrollment work to include targeted programming, research reports, podcasts, and local coalition building.
3. Expanding our network of graduate and undergraduate student's researchers.
4. Restarting the Leadership And Brotherhood (LAB) Summit in collaboration with Milwaukee Public Schools' Department of Black and Latino Male Achievement.
5. Becoming key partner for re-ignition of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance with the City of Milwaukee.

# Vision, Mission, & Aims

## Our Mission

Our mission at BLEST Hub is to provide logistical, informational and catalytic support, as well as targeted programming, to contribute to the thriving and learning of Black and Latino/a students in Milwaukee.

## Our Vision

Our vision is that all Black and Latino/a students in the city of Milwaukee are supported and excel from middle school through post-secondary education, fulfilling stable employment.

This broad vision requires:

1. Supporting the synergy across organizations, institutions, and government efforts.
2. Understanding and identifying gaps in services offered to our youth.
3. Working towards amplifying and supplementing resources that are already available.

## Our Aims

It is our aim to understand the strengths and needs of Black and Latino/a students as well as the supports present at points of transition in their lives.

### *What we can offer Milwaukee*

We offer Milwaukee up-to-date information regarding the state of the services that we, as a city, offer our students. Programs, services, and outreach efforts create an ecosystem with the potential to sustain and support flourishing through mutually beneficial relationships. Documenting our ecosystem facilitates creating a trusting space for communication, collaboration and coordination.

### *What we can offer organizations*

We offer organizations a safe space that is independent of city politics and funding sources. Such a space can sustain conversations across sectors and organizations to collectively build capacity as a city with the aim of better supporting the development of our youth. To this end, we offer an intellectual hub where best practices, key metrics, and research can be identified and shared.

### *What we can offer our Black and Latino/a students*

We offer our students practical, effective programming to support their development. We provide timely information about available resources, opportunities, and organizations. We cannot do any of this without the active engagement of our youth and their voices across all sectors and throughout the process necessary to develop our understanding of Milwaukee as an ecosystem.

# THE ADVISORY BOARD

The community advisory board has provided guidance as well as key partners in our work since the inception of the BLEST Hub. They generate ideas for areas of exploration, guide plans for action and dissemination, and offer valuable insights. The board is comprised of individuals who work in public schools, charter schools, and institutions of higher education across the region.

Below are some representatives that sit on the Advisory Board.

## SELECT MEMBERS OF ADVISORY BOARD



Bevin Christie  
**Charter Schools**

Bevin Christie is a passionate social entrepreneur and educator who believes in a holistic approach to education, program development, social justice, organizational culture, and workforce development.



Alberto Maldonado  
**Higher Education**

Alberto Maldonado is director of UWM's Roberto Hernandez Center and Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for DEI. In these roles, Alberto serves the Latinx population at UWM and across southeastern Wisconsin, supporting all multicultural efforts at UWM and enhancing partnerships on campus and in the community.



Paul Moga  
**Public Schools**

Paul Moga serves as coordinator for MPS's BLMA department. BLMA works to improve the outcomes of Black and Latino male students within MPS.



Equan Burrows  
**Higher Education**

Equan Burrows serves as the Dean of Student Experience at MATC, where his work focuses on student retention and success and fostering a culture of equity and inclusion.



David Emmanuelle Castillo  
**Education & Youth Empowerment**

David Castillo founded and runs Equitable Systems Consultants, LLC, and has been a lead in Milwaukee Succeeds' Design Your Future Fellowship. He previously worked for MPS' BLMA, and his work focuses on disrupting the carceral system that unjustly warehouses Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies.



Nate Deans Jr.  
**Public Schools**

Nate Deans Jr is the Director of MPS' BLMA. He helps oversee programming and provide supports that increase Black and Latino students' success in MPS.

# History of BLEST Hub

The BLEST Hub was initiated in 2020 by the Center for Urban Research, Teaching, and Outreach (CURTO). It was driven by the vision of two members of our leadership team: Dr. Robert Smith, Director of CURTO, and Walter Lanier, CEO of the African American Leadership Alliance of Milwaukee and community activist and organizer. Their personal experiences and years of work with Milwaukee organizations and institutions across sectors (e.g., education, employment, health, mental health) brought to light the need for collaboration, synergy, and amplification to address the deep needs of Black and Latino/a students as they transition from high school to post-secondary education and beyond.

## *Funding*

The initial funding to support the creation and first year of work came from The City of Milwaukee Community Block Grant Association. The BLEST Hub began as the beginning stages of a collaboration with major educational institutions in Milwaukee, including Marquette University, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), MATC, and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), as well as representatives from Employ Milwaukee and the Black and Latino Male Achievement Department of MPS.

Currently, the BLEST Hub work is funded primarily through CURTO, with additional funds accessed through institutional research grants and support for students to serve as research assistants.



**"My path to public service was inspired by mentors...We all appreciate the importance of direction and encouragement. All of us can lend a hand so that the great potential residing in our young people is fully realized."**

**- Cavalier Johnson, Mayor of Milwaukee**



# Summary of 2022 Report

In the 2022 State of the Ecosystem Report, we detailed how, in our second year of operation, the BLEST Hub expanded its scope of work and began to more broadly disseminate its work.

Highlights include:

- **Expansion and Dissemination of Ecosystem Visualization**
  - We continued to meet with community organizations to further build out the map, while sharing it more broadly with community members, organizations, local and regional leaders, and more.
- **Delving in Dual Enrollment**
  - We began to explore equity and data in relation to dual enrollment, meeting with local, regional, and national actors and experts, while systematically reviewing key documents.
- **Starting a Youth Consultant Program**
  - In order to more directly engage youth voice in our work, we developed a program to have a small group of high school students meet regularly to consult on our work, while also engaging in professional and personal development sessions of their choosing.
- **Developing Various Small Research Projects**
  - These included using a group of graduate students to begin to scan the history of the ecosystem and studying the experiences of Black and Latino/a students across various institutions of higher education in Milwaukee.
- **Broadening Our Student Engagement**
  - We increased our capacity by mentoring and working with a broader group of graduate and undergraduate students at Marquette University.

## 2021-2022 SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

1. Growing and updating the ecosystem map visualization.
2. Engaging with the local restorative justice community and laying the groundwork for supporting the growth of this work across the region and beyond.
3. Beginning to scan the dual enrollment landscape in Milwaukee and Wisconsin.
4. Expanding our research efforts to include Hispanic Serving Institution work and MATC student experience.
5. Starting a youth consultant pilot program to integrate young people's voice into our work.
6. Building a network of graduate and undergraduate students researchers.

# 2022-2023 Projects

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The ecosystem map is an effort to systematically document the array of resources serving Black and Latino/a students and their partnerships in the city of Milwaukee. This ecosystem is dynamic and constantly shifting, meaning our efforts are inherently process-based. The map represents our efforts to reach out to organizations and document their work, but will never be a complete and finalized product.

The work began with a collaboration between graduate students in Marquette's College of Education. In Spring 2020, a team of graduate students attended meetings with community leaders, reached out to organizations to gather information, created and disseminated a survey for leaders, and searched online platforms. They produced a database of local programming with available information, which laid the groundwork for the visualization.

In our third year of ecosystem mapping, we worked throughout the year to increase our outreach to more organizations. Each semester and over the summer, we had two undergraduate research assistants reaching out to new organizations to document their work and add them to the map.

## DEVELOPMENTS IN ECOSYSTEM MAP

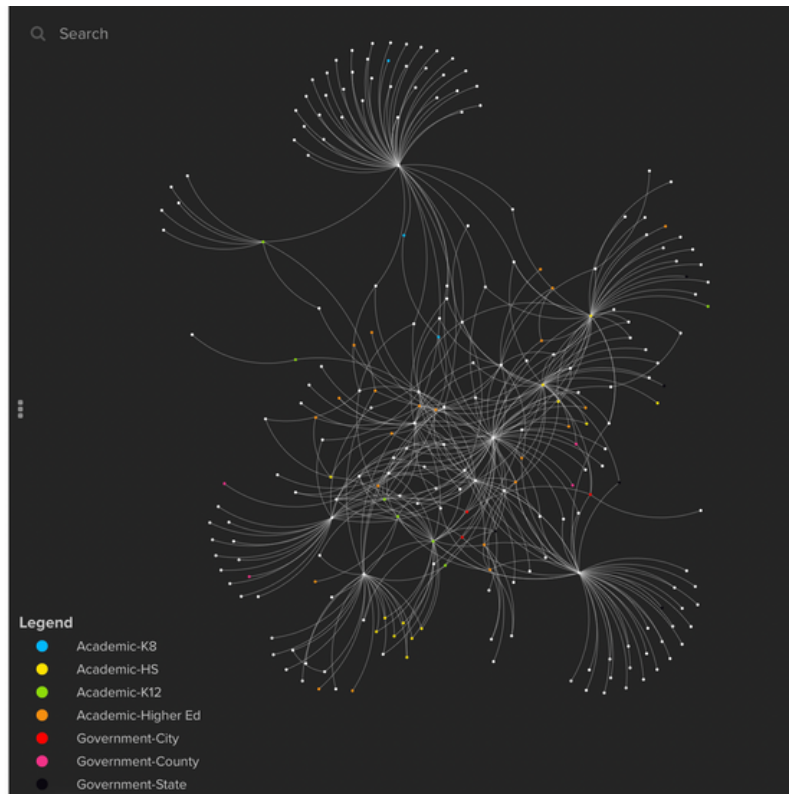
1. Met with and added information for over 30 organizations.
2. Began to add direct contact information and geographical location of organizations.
3. Have developed a version of the map with geo-location in partnership with the Visualization Lab at Marquette University.
4. Shared the map and introductory presentation with various audiences, including as part of the kick-off event for the My Brother's Keeper reconnection with Milwaukee.
5. Wrote an academic manuscript about the ecosystem mapping process that is currently under review.

# SUPPORT & SERVICES ECOSYSTEM MAP

## Milwaukee Black and Latino/a Youth Ecosystem Map [BLEST - CURTO](#)

This map hopes to represent the actors and partnerships that serve Black and Latino/a youth in Milwaukee. Our objective, here at BLEST, is to create a usable tool to understand the various resources available to Black and Latino/a students, and to highlight the nature of connections that bring together a number of organizations within our city. We believe that this visual representation of quantitative and qualitative data will help us better understand Milwaukee as an ecosystem within which our youth develop and will also serve as a community resource.

[#organizations-stakeholders](#) | [permalink](#)



SCAN QR CODE TO ACCESS

KUMU MAP



USE LINK BELOW TO ACCESS MAP

PRESENTATION

The link below goes to an online orientation presentation that walks through the map, explaining the different elements and providing greater detail.

[Orientation Presentation Link](#)



## BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2022, the BLEST Hub asked a team of Marquette College of Education Graduate students to conduct a historical review of initiatives and programs in the ecosystem of supports. The team produced an extensive report that we summarized in our 2022 State of the Ecosystem Report.

In line with our goals of promoting transparency and understanding, we have taken the report and built out a visual tool for public access. The tool presents the different founding years for various initiatives, institutions, and organizations, grouped by various categories.

This tool is evolving, much like the map. To this end, our goal is to continue to build this out over the course of the next year.

## Takeaways from 2022 Historical Scan

There are many college access programs working in silos.

Access programs are often too limited to create institutional-level change.

Higher education pipeline shows improvements for Hispanic students, but not for Black students.

Higher-level policies play a significant role in funding and encouraging urgency to address access.

# ECOSYSTEM TIMELINE

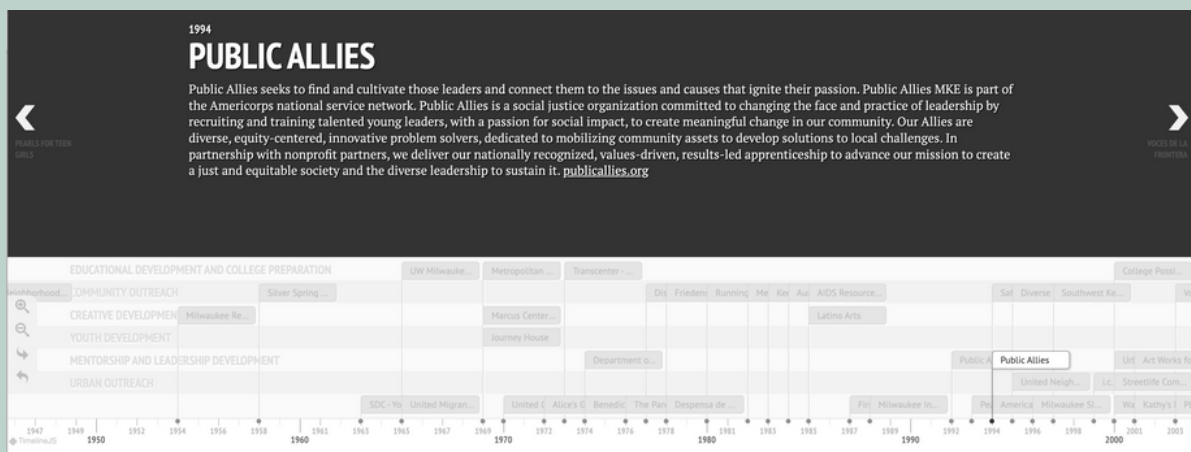
## THE PROJECT

An ecosystem is not a static entity but develops over time due to the influence of politics, policies, social trends, individuals, and more. In recognition of the value of a historical perspective, this timeline offers a broad perspective and transparency about where Milwaukee has come to better understand where it is going.

The map highlights a number of important takeaways about this space:

- The ecosystem is dynamic and engaged. In other words, while statistical measures related to Black and Latino/a students are stark, there has been a rich history of efforts and work in this space.
- The number of efforts raises questions about accountability and lack of movement. No one initiative or event is responsible for current conditions, but the results of these efforts speak to the need for synergy and collective systems change.
- A few organizations have a long history—though not always working in this space—while many arose during the Civil Rights Era in the 1960s. These contexts are important to remember, and also speak to the linkages between past inequity and injustice and current challenges, as well as past strength and resilience and these aspects of Milwaukee’s people today.

## SNAPSHOT OF TIMELINE



SCAN QR CODE OR USE [THIS LINK](#)  
TO ACCESS THE TIMELINE





Continuing to build on our focus of supporting holistic, systematic efforts, our 2022-23 efforts included expanding our work to support restorative justice work with and led by youth across the city, region, and even internationally. These initiatives are led by Dr. Troy Washington, the Associate Director of the BLEST Hub and Teaching Assistant Professor at Marquette University.

### **RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WORKSHOP**

During the month of March, Dr. Washington led a three-day restorative justice certificate training seminar. This training seminar introduced the core tenets of restorative justice, including community healing, forgiveness, and sociocultural awareness. The goal was to teach staff members at Wisconsin Community Services the basic principles of restorative justice and the importance of building healthy relationships with juvenile offenders. During the three-day training, staff members engaged in restorative conversations, community, and formal circles, and learned how to respond to minor and major youth behavior problems.

This training was designed to promote a Culture of Care among staff and incarcerated youth, while facilitating a connectedness and repair harm approach to relationships.

Additionally, in the year 2022 Dr. Washington certified over 200 youth in restorative justice through his collaboration with Wisconsin Community Services. The collaboration with Dr. Washington and Wisconsin Community Services has increased youth participation in restorative justice programming to record levels.





In 2022-2023, we expanded our efforts in the dual enrollment space with two branches of work. The first involved programming in partnership with the the Black and Latino Male Achievement Office of MPS. The second was further expanding our research, including releasing our first report. Both branches are detailed further below.

### **DUAL ENROLLMENT COURSES**

Our dual enrollment courses have been led by Dr. Washington and designed to provide credit-bearing academic experiences on the campus of Marquette University for Black and Latino male students from MPS. The initiative is in close partnership with MPS as well as its Black and Latino Male Achievement Department. Dr. Washington is also collaborating with international institutions to explore the possibility of participating in credit-bearing educational programs worldwide.

The idea began in fall 2022 with planning and development to hold one course related to educational studies and equity through Marquette's College of Education. The course was taught in the Spring of 2022 and is slowly growing through adding a summer course focused on restorative justice. The number of participants is increasing, and we are focusing on new opportunities and advancement towards our mission and strategic goals. Some highlights include:

- Supporting over 30 MPS students with dual enrollment programming in 2022-23.
- Strengthening our partnership with community stakeholders throughout the entire state.
- Working toward eradicating the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Providing opportunities for MPS students to receive college credit, while also orienting them to what college academics entails with campus visits and more.

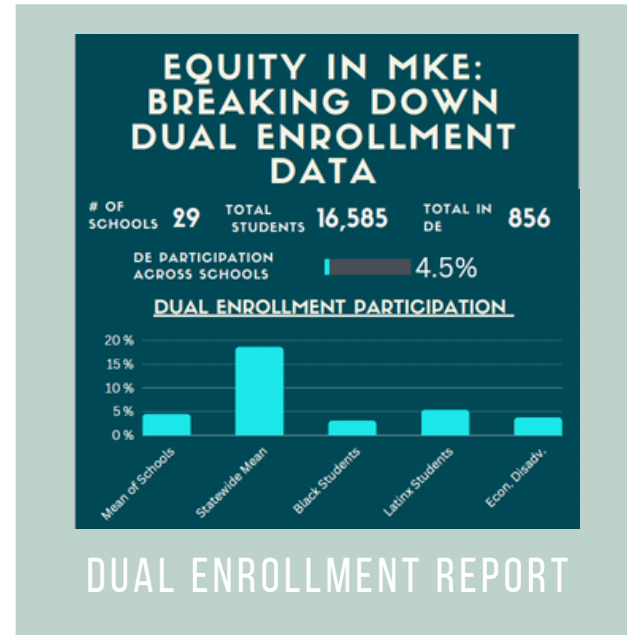
# DUAL ENROLLMENT

## DUAL ENROLLMENT RESEARCH

Starting in 2022, we began to explore how to support equity, data transparency, and initiatives in dual enrollment in the city and state. We have spoken with national experts, state officials, local leaders and educators, and youth themselves. Our goal is to build out an understanding of who is accessing these opportunities, barriers to engagement, and how to expand availability with an eye to equity.

In fall 2022, we released a podcast that focused on data, current equity gaps, and the support needed for our students of color who navigate dual enrollment in Wisconsin and beyond. In this conversation, we engaged with Vicki Bott (UWM), Karin Smith (DPI), and Dr. Jason Taylor (University of Utah). In November 2022, the BLEST Hub also presented their research on dual enrollment and greater access to equity to Higher Education Research Association (HERA).

We continued this work into January 2023 as the team explored a publicly available dataset: the Wisconsin State Report Cards. To promote greater equity and transparency of the students of color and low-income students in Milwaukee Public High Schools, infographics were created.



## SELECTED MEETINGS AND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Conversations to build systematic understanding of dual enrollment in the region included key actors from the following institutions:

- Alverno College
- UW-Whitewater
- Cardinal Stritch University
- Gateway Technical College
- Marquette University
- Wisconsin Technical College System
- WI DPI
- UW-Milwaukee
- Mount Mary
- Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (MIAD)
- Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC)



# DUAL ENROLLMENT

In addition, we met individually with nine universities who are part of HERA. Through these conversations we looked to capture the work that is being done on dual enrollment in institutions across the Milwaukee area.

Lastly, BLEST Hub has partnered with Karin Smith and DPI to lead focus groups that would allow high schools and universities to better understand the experiences of students in dual enrollment courses.

## PRODUCTS (With Links)

1. Podcast on [Data, Equity, and Dual Enrollment](#)
2. Report on Equity and Access in Milwaukee Using State Report Card Data
  - a. [Overall Report](#)
  - b. [School by School Breakdown](#)

## Main Takeaways from Various Projects

	<b>Main Takeaways from Various Projects</b>
<b>1</b>	Need for expanding opportunities and access, even as more universities and high schools are scaling up what they offer.
<b>2</b>	Need to build understanding of, interest in, and capacity for best practices in data and also data collection.
<b>3</b>	Barriers to dual enrollment opportunities include certifying teachers and lack of understanding, however we will be exploring these further in the fall.
<b>4</b>	Wisconsin Technical College System is leading the way in terms of collecting and analyzing data that can serve to understand student outcomes and explore questions of equity.



In our efforts to engage youth voice in our work, we launched our second cohort of BLEST Hub Youth Consultants in fall 2022. Our goal was to engage this group of high school students in a paid advisory role, meeting regularly to solicit feedback and provide networking and academic enrichment opportunities. We also offered academic, college application, and scholarship support. Meetings were intended to be spaces for communal discussion of important issues and/or spaces for academic experts to share their expertise.

Session	Focus
1	Overview of program; one-on-one meetings with students.
2	Workshop on scholarships & college applications.
3	Conversation on student protest, DEI topics in K-12 schools.
4	Presentation on housing inequality in Milwaukee.
5	Discussion on restorative justice with Dr. Washington.
6	Virtual admissions night with Marquette admissions.
7	In-person restorative justice event with Dr. Washington.



# YOUTH CONSULTANT PROGRAM

Our second cohort included two seniors from Golda Meir High School, one senior from Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, and one first-year student from Pathways High School. The group met six times with one week devoted to individual meetings with students.

## *Feedback and Lessons Learned from Youth Consultants:*

Across our meetings and events, it became clear that our students had similar needs in terms of academic support and personal development.

Some themes included:

- Continued need for support through the college admissions process, especially regarding late-stage processes (e.g., housing deposits, accepting or rejecting admission).
- Interest in leadership events and community events centered around multiculturalism and cultural celebration(s) (e.g., DEI movie nights, cultural festivals).
- Interest in learning more about issues facing the City of Milwaukee—and how to get involved in addressing them (e.g., housing inequality, DEI topics in schools).
- More campus-sponsored events for students of color—students were highly engaged in our Marquette-centered events (e.g., admissions presentations, restorative justice presentations from Marquette faculty. Our youth consultants' input suggested that more events would be beneficial and well-attended.



## SISTEM STUDY

The BLEST Hub collaborated with faculty in the Marquette College of Arts & Sciences and of Engineering to explore factors related to student success and experience for those from underrepresented groups.

The project involved focus groups with students in Engineering and STEM fields at Marquette, UWM, and Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE). We first held conversations within each school and then brought together students across the three institutions. In total, we held 8 focus groups with 40 participants who identified as Black, Latino/a, or not as a cisgender male.

Preliminary analyses included the following themes in relation to student experience, success, challenges, and supports:

1. Representation matters but is lacking.
2. Experiences with faculty can be varied, and for some included racial and gender discrimination.
3. Success often centered around grades, and students generally felt a lot of pressure to do well.
4. While some supports are institutional, affinity groups were particularly highlighted.

Surveys with a broader cohort (326 total) focused on relations between mental health, discrimination, efficacy, and demographics.

Next steps include preparing this work for publication and extending the research into a second year.

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*"It's been happening and occurring since my freshman year—racial incidents. And it's crazy that it's still happening. It seems like every single time it's the same. It's a cycle, it's okay, let's host a town hall meeting. Let's talk about it. And then pretty much there's no follow up."*

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# RESEARCH

## FROM PREDOMINANTLY WHITE TO HISPANIC-SERVING: LATINX STUDENT EXPERIENCES ON A CAMPUS IN TRANSITION

We conducted focus groups with students at Marquette University to explore their thinking about the transition to becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Our goal was to explore how being an emerging-HSI (EHSI) was experienced by the students.

With this in mind, our goals were to gather Latinx students' experiences at Marquette (as an EHSI) and to study how students think about these transitions as more institutions strive to become a HSI.

From our analyses, we came up with five themes:

1. Seeing positive outcomes and access to post-graduate opportunities.
2. The power of representation for these students.
3. Seeing the transition as a journey toward belonging.
4. Identifying obstacles to being truly served due to low resources and unmet needs.
5. Feeling that HSI was a false reality, though also conceptually as an aspirational institutional identity that uplifts and develops the whole Latinx student.

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*"It's not just about bringing the students on campus, it's also fighting for how we are going to retain those students."*

*"I haven't met anybody that's Latinx, that's not willing to plug me with some type of resource or somebody that they know that can help."*

# RESEARCH

## MATC FAST FUND

Following up on a two-year long collaboration, in the summer of 2023 we extended our work with the Milwaukee Area Technical College Local 212 FAST Fund. The project has surveyed students every year to assess their areas of need, the ways the emergency support has aided their education and beyond, and obstacles they faced in accessing resources.

Data collection and analysis is currently ongoing (with over 200 responses). Preliminary themes include:

- Trouble paying for schooling and housing are the top two financial concerns for these students.
- Many students do not know resources are available or do not think they qualify.
- A significant number cited mental health as a challenge they faced.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN MILWAUKEE

In collaboration with Milwaukee Succeeds' Youth Forward MKE Coalition, we worked to compile an extensive list of youth leadership opportunities in Milwaukee. Beginning with youth advisory councils, in total we accumulated over 75 of these and are currently working with the Coalition's High School Success Data working group to plan next steps.

### SELECTED YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- Leadership By Teens, For Teens (Milwaukee Repertory Theater)
- Teen Advisory Council (Children's Wisconsin)
- Spark Youth Leadership (Arise Milwaukee)
- YouthBuild (City of Milwaukee)
- Superintendent's Student Advisory Council (MPS)
- Growing Youth Leadership (Walnut Way)
- L.E.A.D.(Center For Community Based Learning, Leadership, and Research)



# RESEARCH

## PUBLICATIONS

The following are academic publications that we have produced through the BLEST Hub over the last two years.

Velez, G., Mancheno, V., & Lopez, S. (Under Review). Mapping Ecosystems: Building an Understanding of An Urban Network of Supports and Resources for Black and Latino/a Students.

Velez, G., Black, J., Lopez S., & D'Anna-Hernandez, K. (2023). From Predominantly White to Hispanic-Serving: Latinx Student Experiences on a Campus in Transition. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. (See text [here](#))

Velez, G., & Jessup-Anger, J. (2022). Messaging and Action around Race and Inclusion at a Predominantly White Institution: Perceived Dissonance of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Students. *Emerging Adulthood*, 10(4), 852-858. (See text [here](#))

Washington, T.D. (2021). "Mentoring Occupational Component: A proposed conceptual framework for supporting restorative justice in the classroom." *Internet Journal of Restorative Justice*, 2056-2985. (See text [here](#))

Article

### From Predominantly White to Hispanic-Serving: Latinx Student Experiences on a Campus in Transition

Journal of Hispanic Higher Education  
1-15  
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sagepub.com/journals-permissions  
DOI: 10.1177/15381927231161801  
journals.sagepub.com/home/jhh  
SAGE

Gabriel Velez<sup>1</sup> , Jacqueline Black<sup>1</sup>, Saúl López<sup>1</sup>, and Kimberly D'Anna-Hernandez<sup>1</sup>


#### Abstract

This study utilized focus groups with Latinx students at a private, Midwestern university to explore the complexities inherent in the process of becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). The purpose of the study was: (a) to better understand Latinx students' experiences at an "emerging" HSI, and (b) to understand how students understand an institutional journey toward the HSI designation. Findings point toward the value in exploring the Latinx student experience and perspective on HSI initiatives.

Race/Ethnicity, Culture, and Related Issues

### Messaging and Action around Race and Inclusion at a Predominantly White Institution: Perceived Dissonance of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Students

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Study of Emerging Adulthood  
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DOI: 10.1177/16769682211094489  
journals.sagepub.com/home/tae  
SAGE

Gabriel Velez<sup>1</sup>  and Jody Jessup-Anger<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract

As college has increasingly become part of emerging adulthood for United States youth, Predominantly White and Historically White Institutions (PWI/HWIs) have faced pressures to diversify and address problematic racial/ethnic campus climates. Within the rich and evolving literature, there is room for better understanding how Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) emerging adults experience institutional messaging. This report draws on environmental press and meaning making to explore this experience for 21 BIPOC students at an urban, Midwestern PWI/HWI. In focus groups, students highlighted the role of the university's messaging around race/ethnicity and inclusion as problematic: negative descriptions about the urban context surrounding the university held implicit messages about BIPOC students on campus, while positive messaging about inclusion and diversity efforts was dissonant with the lack of perceived action. The findings speak to the importance of emerging adults' perception and interpretation of messaging and institutional action to promote diversity.



### Mentoring Occupational Component: A proposed conceptual framework for supporting Restorative Justice in the Classroom.

Published in the Internet Journal of Restorative Justice,  
<https://www.rj4allpublications.com/ijri/>

© RJ4All 2021

Submission date: August 2020





The BLEST Hub, with the support of CURTO's research assistant program, expanded its work through deeper engagement with Marquette students. Over the year, we engaged a broad array of graduate and undergraduate students in various projects, with most of the students identifying as Black and/or Latino/a/x and coming from the city of Milwaukee. Their insight, perspectives, and work were invaluable to advancing our efforts to map and support the ecosystem in the city.

This year, BLEST Hub worked with:

- 5 graduate students - two doctoral and three masters students - who oversaw our dual enrollment and youth consultant work, and also served as focus group leaders and co-investigators
- 2 of these students were mentors for undergraduates, including multiple undergraduate students engaged in service learning
- 5 undergraduate students across Fall 2022, Spring 2023, & Summer 2023

### **STUDENT PERSPECTIVES**

*Kendall Watts - Undergraduate Student Research Assistant, College of Arts & Sciences*

My work is to discuss partnerships with nonprofit organizations across Milwaukee. Building an ecosystem of how these organizations work together and support underrepresented groups in Milwaukee has become the focus of my work. Understanding how these organizations interact with one another is essential for better serving our community.

Along with the ecosystem map, I also built a visual timeline depicting when each organization started. Being able to visualize where everything started and the progression of support for youth in Milwaukee is imperative for the expansion of youth development. The BLEST Hub has provided me with the opportunity to engage with the Milwaukee community in ways that standard educational practices would not.

# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

*Michael Vázquez – Graduate Student Research Assistant, College of Education Doctoral Student*


This past year I had the opportunity to continue our dual enrollment efforts. I led a podcast where three individuals and I spoke about the current equity gaps that are present within dual enrollment. Leading this podcast allowed me to gain much insight on the work that is being done to support our marginalized students and the work that must be implemented. In addition to the podcast, I spoke with several universities to learn more about their dual enrollment programs. Each institution that I had the privilege of speaking with spoke of how they look to bridge equity gaps in their programs and hopes for the future. The biggest takeaway from these conversations was that institutions struggle with the collection of data. It is crucial for these institutions to collect data as they look to improve dual enrollment outcomes.

As more research and conversations have occurred, there has been a desire to make our work into a publication. That being said, along with the collaboration of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, I conducted a focus group with high school students who have taken dual enrollment courses in the state of Wisconsin. These students were able to share the benefits and the impact that it will make for them as they hope to transition into college.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN VARIOUS PROJECTS

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Student Roles</b>
<b>Mexican Fiesta</b>	Social Development Commission, Summit on Poverty
<b>Alverno College</b>	MKE Neighborhood News Service: Community Post
<b>Hunger Task Force</b>	CURTO Conversations Podcast
<b>VIA CDC</b>	Marquette University College of Education Magazine: "On the Map"

# NEXT STEPS



This upcoming year will be our fourth. We have laid important foundations this past year that we will build on, which include expanding dual enrollment programming and identifying data to build better understandings of this work across the region. Additionally, as the research partner leading the My Brother's Keeper certification, we will focus on engaging key stakeholders, identifying metrics, and building toward systems change.

A broader goal we will focus on is identifying grant opportunities to fund an expansion of our work and to further cement the sustainability of the initiative.

Lastly, we will continue with key tenets of our work, including the continual development of the ecosystem map.

## COMMITMENTS FOR 2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

- 1) Lead development of a data dashboard for Milwaukee to assess metrics set by My Brother's Keeper initiative.
- 2) Expand dual enrollment program and identify grant opportunities to expand research and analysis capabilities in this space.
- 3) Support the work of Youth Forward Milwaukee and its youth-led projects and research, including of the High School Success Data working group.
- 4) Train, promote intellectual development, and draw on the expertise and strength of Marquette University Latino/a and Black students.
- 5) Continue iterative development and expansion of ecosystem mapping and Youth Consultant program.
- 6) Develop a plan for sustainability and funding outside of the support of CURTO, including opportunities to contribute to systems change across the city of Milwaukee.

# ABOUT US

## PEOPLE BEHIND THE BLEST HUB



DR. ROBERT  
SMITH



WALTER LANIER



DR. GABRIEL  
VELEZ



DR. TROY  
WASHINGTON



MICHAEL  
VAZQUEZ



MAX HERTEEN



IMONI DEJESUS



LONNY CLAY



CATHERINE FINK



KENDALL WATTS

# STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM

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**BLACK AND LATINO/A  
ECOSYSTEM AND SUPPORT  
TRANSITION HUB**

# CONTACT

VISIT OUR [WEBSITE](#) OR EMAIL US AT  
[GABRIEL.VELEZ@MARQUETTE.EDU](mailto:GABRIEL.VELEZ@MARQUETTE.EDU)

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