

EDITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Leadership for Broadening Participation – Start With Why

Kelly Mack, Ph.D.¹^a, Yolander Youngblood, Ph.D.²¹ American Association of Colleges and Universities, ² Prairie View A&M University

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The Editor's Perspective for this inaugural issue reflects on the significance of this moment, one where a knowledge-generating outlet is launched with the principal purpose of disrupting traditions that have limited the scope of broadening participation research to merely student success outcomes. Together, the articles in this volume create a new space for opening lines of inquiry at the intersection of leadership and the leadership skillset that creates the conditions for broadening participation interventions to flourish. With the inclusion of personal narratives, portraits, and commentaries, the articles in this issue also expand STEM higher education's understanding of what constitutes scholarship and who has the authority to decide.

This issue, our very first, comes at a critical time in STEM higher education when the need for effective leadership and leaders is apparent, and tools and toolkits for both are abundant. From inclusive leadership to change leadership, from transformational leaders to servant leaders, there is no shortage of attempts in higher education to explain what it means to be responsible for making institutional change happen, or knowing when and how change needs to happen. But few of them ever capture or reveal how the ancestral origins of minoritized peoples can be used and leveraged to create the institutional conditions for broadening participation in STEM. This issue, our very first, represents our collective intelligence and intuitiveness about broadening participation and affords it the visibility and credibility it hasn't received in other knowledge-generating outlets. Here, our intent is not to resist or reject conventional frames about leadership and leaders outright. That would be a repeat of mistakes made by other scholarly journals. Rather, in this issue, our very first, we have fully embraced the idea that leadership – and the scholarship thereof – comes in many different forms, is shaped by so many more lived experiences than we currently know enough about, should be documented within and for all institutional contexts, and needs to be expressed from many different perspectives and vantage points.

This issue – as will all others that are to follow – focuses on illuminating the scholarship, worldviews, perspectives, viewpoints, perceptions, sensibilities, journeys, narratives, voices, and revelations of those whom

^a Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kelly Mack. Email: mack@aacu.org

history has revealed to be leaders in broadening the participation of Blacks and other marginalized groups in STEM. Indeed, HBCU STEM leaders, whether within faculty ranks or administrative positions, have led American higher education in responding to the call for greater diversity and competitiveness in our STEM workforce. And they are not alone. Others have had equal success in other institutions, as well. Yet, so little is known about how these leaders make broadening participation happen or how they come to know how to make it happen. As a result, the thought of adapting any of their practices across institution boundaries is believed to be more of an impossibility than an urgent necessity.

We accept both – the challenge presented by an impossibility that invites us to be innovative and the charge of a necessity that expects us to be intentional in our efforts. Unlike others, we have the dual responsibility as editors of this Journal – a different double bind than the one we live as Black women – of inserting the broadening participation leadership of HBCUs into the national undergraduate STEM reform discourse and advocating for its legitimacy among other accepted styles and types of leadership. But we don't do this at the expense of broadening participation leaders and scholars who lead, teach, and work at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). To do so would mean that we have perfectly replicated the very systems and structures of exclusion that mainstreamed scientific research journals have upheld for centuries. Instead, this journal holds HBCUs as the standard bearer for broadening participation in STEM. They've earned it. And, because a peer-reviewed journal can, and should, do more than one thing at a time, we also acknowledge the efforts and successes of (and accept manuscripts from) leaders who are not at HBCUs but who nonetheless have achieved enviable measures of broadening participation success at their institutions and throughout their careers.

In this issue, our very first, we expect readers to be introduced to the unique ways in which we have created a space for broadening participation leadership to be explored. The articles included in this issue are grounded in conventional scholarship, personal narrative, and the ancient African traditions of storytelling. The first articles include research studies, portraits, and a research brief. Collectively, they call attention to historical and recent social and political uprisings and the ways they have and still do shape contemporary broadening participation practice. In the first article by [Rankins and Rankins](#), we see a rare, candid view into the window of HBCU STEM leaders and the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded with the global awareness of police brutality towards the Black community, presented new, but all too familiar, challenges for HBCU STEM leaders. Authors [Hall](#) and [Rankins](#) capture the familiar through their portraits of two HBCU STEM leaders – Oliver Hill, Jr. (1949-2020) and Warren Buck – with powerful stories of segregation, educational opportunity, and rich

broadening participation legacy. In her research brief, [Gallagher](#) discusses the importance of Black academic journals to the growth and development of the Black academic community and American higher education overall.

This issue also features two personal narratives. Here, [Leggett-Robinson](#) invites us to join her at the “kitchen table,” an unapologetically safe brave scholarly space for discussing how Black women in STEM must support other Black women. Also, [Price](#) offers an equally provocative personal narrative, marking the publishing of the Journal of STEM Leadership and Broadening Participation as an important “symbol of support” in STEM higher education that provides a knowledge-generating and knowledge-disseminating platform for legitimizing the work of all STEM leaders, including the few that we know most about right now and those we still know so little about.

And, finally, we include two articles that represent real-world examples of broadening participation leadership at work. In her recount of an intervention that explores the interrelationships between problem-solving style and Black identity among undergraduate STEM students in agriculturally-related degree programs, [Simpson and colleagues](#) offer tools for retaining minoritized male students. The issue ends with, [McSween and colleagues](#) detailing their implementation of an innovative psychosocial intervention that can address institutional challenges in meeting the needs of historically minoritized undergraduate students in STEM.

In sum, it is our hope that the reader of this Journal will appreciate how this issue, our very first, offers more than a mere passing glimpse into HBCU broadening participation practice or the unique ways that leader qualities create the broadening participation outcomes that HBCUs enjoy. This issue – indeed, this Journal – focuses on much more than what HBCU STEM leaders do. In fact, not only do the articles of this issue highlight how they do it, they also reveal why they do it. And, ultimately, as has been said many times before, it is knowing why that leads us to finding a way.

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