CREATING CAMPUS CULTURES

Fostering Success among Racially Diverse Student Populations

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We dedicate this book to the advocates and the activists who have risked the safety and security of complacency to fight for transformation in higher education and society at large. Their voices and energy motivate us, their legacy informs our scholarship, and their work inspires ours. This book belongs to them.
As described in detail by Museus and Harris (2010), a growing body of literature indicates that campus cultures shape college students' experiences. Furthermore, the authors point out that research indicates that many college students of color face additional challenges adjusting to predominantly White institutions (PWIs) because their cultural norms and values vary from those of their campuses. Although many cultural variations have been identified among diverse groups and societies, one of the most promising differences that can aid in understanding disparities in college students' success is the distinction between individualism and collectivism. Individualist societies tend to value independence, competition among members, emotional detachment from family and parents, individual attitudes and perspectives over group norms, and personal goals over the goals of the collective (Triandis, Chen, & Chan, 1998). Alternatively, collectivist societies value interdependence, group synchronization, emotional attachment to families or parents, societal norms over individuality, and the subordination of individual aspirations to the aspirations of the collective (Fox, Lowe, & McClellan, 2005; Triandis, Chen, & Chan, 1998).

It has long been observed that Western cultures tend to be more individualistic, and many non-Western cultures (e.g., African, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latin American, and Native American) tend to be more collectivist in orientation (Beattie, 1980; Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2001; Hetts, Sakuma, & Pelham, 1999; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Mead, 1967; Triandis, McCuster & Hui, 1990; Yamaguchi, Kuhlman, & Sugimori, 1995). Moreover, cross-cultural psychologists assert that collectivist values positively influence African American, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Latin American, and
Native American communities and help these groups deal with experienced racial and class oppression (e.g., Marin & Marin, 1991; Phinney, 1996; Staples & Mirandé, 1980).

Guiffrida (2006) argued that cultural orientations toward individualism and collectivism contribute to the disparities that exist in college student achievement and persistence between White students and students of color. Specifically, he asserted that students who have internalized collectivist cultural orientations face particular challenges adapting to the more Eurocentric, individualist cultures inherent in many institutions of higher education. Whereas students with collectivist orientations arrive at college with a wealth of interpersonal strengths, these strengths often go unrecognized and are inconsistent with the Western, individualist values and norms of the institution. One can imagine, for example, the incongruence between an aggressively competitive environment and a student who places more value on cooperation, a fast-paced institutional environment and a student who is slower and more contemplative or reflective, or a campus culture based on consumerism and a student who values sustainability; as is found in many Native American and Pacific Islander cultures. Additionally, Western-based systems often ignore collectivist-based, non-European curricula, including the rich languages and histories of non-European groups. Although it is impossible and unethical to essentialize all students of color as collectivist and all White students as individualist, existing research does suggest that students of color may be more likely than White students to maintain collectivist values (Gaines, Marelich, Bledsoe, Steers, Henderson, & Granrose, 1997; Triandis, 1989). Addressing the needs of collectivist-oriented students, therefore, is one important means of fostering success among many college students of color.

In this chapter, we share a brief overview of research that (1) supports the assertion that students with collectivist orientations face challenges when transitioning to higher education and (2) highlights the strengths of collectivist cultural orientations, particularly as these strengths are drawn upon when navigating individualist cultures at higher education institutions. We conclude with suggestions for adapting campus cultures in ways that embrace collectivist norms as a necessary component of the academic curriculum and social support structure.

Research on Collectivism and Individualism in Higher Education

Although few studies have investigated correlations between cultural orientation and college student achievement and persistence, results of two studies suggest that students from collectivist cultures may face additional challenges adapting to the Eurocentric norms that predominate in many PWIs (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005; Thompson & Fretz, 1991). Thompson and Fretz,
for example, examined whether bicultural adaptive variables predicted levels of academic and social integration among African American students at a PWI. The researchers found that academically well-adjusted African American students had more positive attitudes toward individualist and competitive learning environments than African Americans who were less academically adjusted. They also found that more positive attitudes toward competitive learning situations were associated with greater social adjustment to college. Thompson and Fretz concluded that successful African American students either enter college with more individualist norms or learn to quickly adapt to individualist environments that characterize academia.

Dennis et al. (2005) conducted a study of college students using an assessment of cultural norms related to collectivism and individualism. The researchers surveyed 100 first-generation Latino students attending an urban commuter university and assessed the extent to which students were motivated to attend college based on career/personal motivation (i.e., personal interest, intellectual curiosity, and desire to attain fulfilling careers) or family expectation motivation (to meet the expectations of the family). The authors hypothesized that, because students of color are heavily influenced by collectivist values, both career/personal and family expectation motivation would be important predictors of their college adjustment. Consistent with their hypothesis, they found that career/personal motivation was a predictor of college adjustment and a slight predictor of college commitment when controlling for other variables such as high school GPA. However, contrary to their expectations, family expectation motivation was not significantly related to college adjustment and commitment when controlling for other variables. The authors concluded that, although many students of color are motivated by both individually oriented and family-based forms of motivation, the individual-based motivations were more closely related to college adjustment and commitment. Additionally, whereas many of these students of color lived in families and communities that valued collectivist norms, their abilities to integrate those collectivist norms with the individualist norms that are valued by PWIs were most predictive of their success.

The results from Dennis et al. (2005) and Thompson and Fretz (1991) suggest that students of color who espouse collectivist cultural orientations may be at risk for academic underachievement or attrition if they are not able to assimilate to individualist norms. These findings indicate that PWIs continue to be dominated by Western, assimilation-based norms that are insensitive and even oppressive to people with collectivist orientations. Rather than valuing the diverse traditions and strengths of collectivist students, the findings from these studies suggest that collectivist students may be required to abandon salient elements of their cultural identities and traditions if they wish to become successful at PWIs. This assimilationist perspective is particularly a problem given research that has highlighted the strengths that collectivist values can
provide students of color when navigating PWIs (see Delgado, 2002; González, 2002; Guillory, 2008; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002).

To understand how the inconsistencies between individualist and collectivist cultural norms can impact undergraduate student achievement and success, it is useful to examine two areas of research on college students: (1) the impact of student relationships with families and friends from home on academic success and (2) the relationship between involvement in culturally based campus activities and academic success.

Impact of Families and Friends from Home on College Success

According to Tinto (1993), successful college students need to break away from their home communities in order to become integrated into the academic and social life of the university or college that they attend. Indeed, there have been several studies that have supported the notion that higher levels of social integration correlate with academic success in college (see Braxton & Lee, 2005). The applicability of this proposition to students of color, however, has been challenged — both conceptually (see Hurtado, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Nora, 2001; Rendón, Jaloma, & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992, 1999; Waterman, 2007) and by findings from numerous studies that have concluded that those students can gain tremendous support from families, friends, and other members of their home communities (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Delgado, 2002; Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999; González, 2002; Guiffrida, 2004a, 2005; Hendricks, Smith, Caplow, & Donaldson, 1996; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Museus, 2008; Museus, Maramba, Palmer, Reyes, & Bresonis, 2011; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002).

Qualitative studies investigating the experiences of students of color indicate that some students perceive members of their families as among their most important assets in college because they provide them with cultural connections, strategies for dealing with oppression, and strong encouragement and inspiration to succeed (Delgado, 2002; González, 2002; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Waterman (2004), for example, found that Native American college students glean enormous support from their family and communities. In a qualitative study of 54 Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) college graduates, Waterman found that “family” was their greatest source of support in college. Participants indicated that family offered money, rides, words of encouragement, and emotional support. Communities provided a place of comfort from the non-Native institutions that participants attended. These findings are consistent with other research on Native American college students (see Guillory, 2008; Lindley, 2009). Similarly, Museus and his colleagues (2011) interviewed 30 Southeast Asian American students (Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and
Vietnamese) and found that family expectations and support was the most important facilitator of their success. Although there is a dearth of literature on this population at the higher education level, these findings are consistent with research underscoring the importance of family and culture on Southeast Asian American students in K–12 education (Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Qualitative research conducted with students of color indicates, therefore, that families can be very supportive of undergraduates from collectivist cultures and that not all students need to break away from their families and communities to succeed in college in the way delineated by Tinto (1993). Cultural orientation provides one explanation about why breaking away from relationships from home may be a necessary prerequisite to college success for some students and harmful to the success of others. Students from collectivist cultures are more likely to desire, or be expected, to maintain relationships with families and friends from home while in college than students from individualist cultures. Moreover, whereas students from individualist cultures may more easily break away to become integrated into the academic and social realms of their colleges, students from collectivist cultures find value in establishing connections in college while maintaining strong connections with those who are supportive at home. In fact, attempts by well-intentioned faculty and staff to integrate students with collective orientations into the culture of the university not only may be met with resistance by students and families, but could potentially be harmful to students by robbing them of strong cultural support networks at home.

It is important to note, however, that relationships between connections to home and college success are complex. This complex relationship was illustrated in the results of a qualitative study conducted by Guiffrida (2005) with African American college students to understand the conditions under which families were perceived as supporting or hindering student academic achievement and persistence. Many of the lowest-achieving students in his study, including the ones who dropped out, indicated that they felt their parents were not supportive of them going to college and offered little financial or emotional support. Instead, these students described how their obligations to their families, which included providing the family with financial support, emotional support, and other head-of-household duties, distracted them from their academics. High-achieving students, on the other hand, perceived their families, irrespective of their incomes or levels of education, as among their most important assets in college. Rather than requiring them to lend support at home, these students’ families encouraged them to focus on school, regardless of the needs of the family. In fact, families of high achievers often encouraged students to view their college success as their most important obligation to their family and to the Black community. Guiffrida concluded that, to succeed at PWIs, it is important for African American college students to strengthen relationships with family members who provide emotional, academic, and
financial support and encourage their students to make healthy connections at their college campuses.

Museus et al. (2011) provide another example of the complexity of the relationships between connections to home and success. As mentioned, they found that Southeast Asian Americans' parental expectations and support, and the resulting pressure to succeed, facilitated the success of those students. However, they also noted that, in a few cases, that pressure became excessive, led to students feeling that they could not do anything right, and eradicated their motivation. Museus et al.'s study underscores the fact that, although expectations are important, they can have a detrimental effect if they are excessive or not coupled with support, and their findings are consistent with research suggesting that Asian American and Latin American students' obligations to family positively influence academic motivation to a certain point, but that those with the highest levels of family obligation exhibit levels of academic achievement as low as those with the lowest levels of family obligation (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999).

The extent to which families understand and value Western, assimilation-based systems of higher education is an indicator of whether their students benefit from strong connections to home or become distracted from academics by these connections, but the responsibility of the institutions and the actors within them must also be examined. For example, the issue of how much value is placed on education is something that can be complex. First, what types of education are we, as actors within institutions of higher education, asking families to value? It is possible that Western, individualist expectations of valuing education may not align with those of certain collectivist communities? In Latino communities, for example, education may be expressed in a number of ways that are inconsistent with Western forms of education, including using consejos, which are advice-giving narratives (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Lopez, 2001); counternarratives intended to resist problematic school practices (Villenas, 2001); or drawing upon funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999). Second, we acknowledge that, although many families with collectivist values may, in fact, support Western-based systems of higher education, their life circumstances or cultural values may make it necessary for all family members, even those attending college, to contribute to the immediate needs of the family. Because our society has historically engaged in actions to force Indigenous communities to assimilate and eradicate their ethnic heritage (Adams, 1995), the maintenance and revitalization of those communities and traditional culture therefore go beyond a sense of obligation – it is an issue of survival. The only ways to continue, maintain, and revitalize those Indigenous communities and cultures are to remain connected to family and community.

In a discussion of the college transition experiences of Latina/o students, Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (in press) offer the funds of knowledge framework
(Moll et al., 1992) as one way to understand the assets that students acquire and bring from their home communities to help in navigating in and through college. Funds of knowledge refer to the diverse knowledge and resources found in Latina/o households (Moll et al., 1992). Specifically, funds of knowledge are conceptualized as the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). McIntyre, Rosebery, and Gonzalez (2001) note that funds of knowledge can include language, social practices, and various other forms of knowledge influenced by life experiences and found in homes and communities. Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama suggest that, by understanding students’ experiences through an asset-based framework such as funds of knowledge, researchers can better understand the values that influence, inform, and assist students in navigating educational processes in and through college and in the development of professional aspirations. Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama point to specific examples of how funds of knowledge can prove useful in the navigation of K–12 education for Latina/o students and suggest that those same resources and values could also be applied to higher education processes. Such a framework embraces the collectivist orientation of students’ home communities and can be a useful tool in combating deficit ideologies often espoused by higher education institutions.

Although funds of knowledge have been applied mostly in K–12 classrooms, there are a few examples of how the framework has been incorporated into systems of higher education (see, for example, Van Neil, 2010). Research suggests that curricula and programs developed in the funds of knowledge tradition for K–12 students can embrace collectivist communities in ways that support college-going behaviors among the collective. One example is the College Knowledge Academy (a pseudonym), which represents a partnership between a state university and a local school district consisting of approximately 85% Hispanic/Latino families. The program provided families with information about the courses that their children were required to take in high school to be eligible to apply for state institutions, connected them with faculty members from the university who shared similar racial/ethnic backgrounds, and exposed them to the university through tours, performances, and classroom experiences. In what follows, we highlight findings from three studies that have examined the program and demonstrate how a program that is rooted in collectivist values can facilitate college-going cultures.

Kiyama (2010, 2011) conducted pre- and post-program interviews and oral history interviews with six families who participated in the College Knowledge Academy to understand the impact of the program from the perspectives of the participants. Results indicated that access to social capital provided the families with the resources and knowledge necessary to understand and navigate the K–12 schooling system. For example, one family that had long been associated with the school district as volunteers, and had one family member who was a
school bus driver, described how these associations allowed the family to network and connect with teachers and administrators at the school to learn about courses, classrooms, and involvement opportunities. Kiyama (2011) argued that, because of their extensive social networks, families have opportunities to access the same social capital around the college knowledge they are receiving as participants in the College Knowledge Academy. Moreover, college knowledge gained in the Academy was not only shared with those who were formally enrolled in the program but, because of their collectivist orientation, affected college opportunity in the larger community.

Findings from Kiyama’s (2010, 2011) studies parallel those of Lew (2009), who suggested that, for Korean American families who were involved in collectivist settings (e.g., a community church), the networks developed in those settings were instrumental in providing social capital to community members and perpetuating norms and values such as attending college within the community. These norms and values influenced the college-going opportunities for Korean American high school students. Lew’s (2009) findings underscore the fact that the collectivist orientations and opportunities resulting from such groups were not limited to Latina/o, African American, or Native American communities.

In a separate study of the same college outreach program, Kiyama, Lee, and Rhoades (in press) interviewed the faculty, staff, and administrators who were involved in the program to understand how they came to be involved, their specific roles and functions, and their views of the program. What emerged was an example of a critical agency network of faculty, staff, and administrators coming together in an effort to build and deliver college knowledge to the local Latina/o community. Kiyama et al. offer this critical agency network as a way to understand how a network of siloed professionals came together to form a subculture around a common cause. Those involved with the outreach program shared “a critique of the academy’s role in reproducing social inequalities and a commitment to changing that through their service” (p. 31), and “this subculture was rooted not in academic disciplines, but in a commitment to social justice” (p. 30). In essence, the outreach program is based upon a collectivist orientation and aimed at changing the college opportunity structure for Latina/o students. The outreach program was created for a community that functions on collectivist ideals. Thus, the program itself and the ideals it embodied represented the community it aims to serve. Such programs are able to connect with Latina/o students at home, in the community, and on campus.

The Impact of Campus Involvement on College Success

A second way in which differences among collectivist and individualist cultural orientations can impact college student achievement relates to the ways in which students become involved in college. One powerful form of
campus involvement for students of color is participation in culture-based student organizations. Several studies indicate that cultural student organizations assist students of color in bridging the cultural gap that exists between their home environments and the environments at PWIs (e.g., Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987; Mnruguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991; Museus, 2008; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzales, & Trevino, 1997). Indeed, these organizations can facilitate what Museus (in press) refers to as cultural integration – the integration of the academic, social, and cultural spheres of student life. Researchers have also found that cultural student organizations provide students with supportive mentoring relationships with people of color, opportunities to give back through community service projects and by advocating for systemic changes on campus, and a “respite” from the White world in which they can feel comfortable dressing, talking, and socializing in ways that are comfortable and familiar (Guiffrida, 2003, p. 9).

Despite the well-documented benefits of participation in cultural student organizations, there have been studies that have indicated that involvement in these organizations can be problematic to students of color, if they distract those students from their academics (Flemming, 1984; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Hines, 1997) or isolate students from the larger campus environment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Guiffrida (2004b) interviewed academically high- and low-achieving African American students to examine the conditions under which participation in African American student organizations supports and hinders their academic achievement and persistence. Findings suggest that cultural orientation may play a role in whether this involvement supports or hinders academic achievement. Although most of the students in the study were very active in cultural student organizations, low-achieving students were more likely to describe themselves as over-involved with African American student organizations to the point that their involvement interfered with their academic achievement. High-achieving students, on the other hand, tended to describe themselves as actively involved and detailed the benefits of their participation in these groups on their academic achievement and persistence.

In exploring the differences between self-described over-involved low achievers and actively involved high achievers, Guiffrida (2004b) uncovered salient differences between the students’ definitions of success. Over-involved low achievers tended to hold definitions of success that valued service and giving back to the Black community over academic success, several even going as far as labeling academically high-achieving students who were less active in these groups as “selfish” (p. 9). Actively involved high achievers valued academic success above all else in defining a successful African American student and perceived self-proclaimed over-involved students as using their involvement as a poor excuse for their academic lapses.
Viewing these two perspectives from a cultural orientation lens, the values of the over-involved low achievers tended to align with the collectivist orientation. Seeking to make changes on campus and give back to the Black community, they viewed their involvement in these culturally based organizations as central in defining themselves as successful African American students. Conversely, the actively involved high-achieving students tended to align with individualist values. Whereas many of the high achievers in the study indicated that they felt that they had strong support from their home communities, they viewed their own academic success as most important in defining a successful African American student and viewed their peers’ involvement in systemic change efforts as distractions from the main purpose of college (to get good grades, graduate, get a good job, etc.). This research suggests, therefore, that cultural orientations may shape the reasons that students become involved in student organizations and the ways in which they engage in these organizations.

Students socialized in individualist cultures may seek to join organizations that support their individual academic and social needs in college, whereas students socialized in collectivist cultures might seek involvement with organizations that allow them to focus their efforts on societal change.

Similarly, Kiyama and Luca (2010) have documented the social and academic benefits gained by students of color during their employment as peer mentors in a university retention initiative. Among the most salient elements of their peer mentor experience was the sense of belonging and collectivism that was formed among other peer mentors and professional staff. Similar to the benefits of participating in culturally based student organizations, the relationships that students formed as part of their participation in this program with other students of color provided participants with access to extensive social networks, professional and academic opportunities, and new campus resources. The shared value of giving back to their communities of color, or reciprocity (Coleman, 1988; Newton, 1997), was evident in their reasons for deciding to work as peer mentors and in articulating their future professional goals. As indicated in social capital literature (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 2001), the reciprocal nature of these relationships illustrates the sense of obligation, trust, and accomplishment that is developed among a collectivist community. Kiyama and Luca concluded that, the more connections students of color felt with other peer mentors, professional staff, the college community, and extended networks with people of color, the more a “sense of obligation and reciprocity developed” (Kiyama & Luca, 2010, p. 21). This sense of obligation and reciprocity was important as students recognized the value of giving back to a community that had invested in them and helped them succeed. Research on Native Americans also finds reciprocity to be valued and, sometimes, the very reason for attending college (Guillory, 2008; Lindley, 2009; Waterman, 2007).
Changing Campus Cultures to Foster Success among Students of Color

Research reviewed in this chapter indicates that there are differences in the ways in which students from collectivist and individualist orientations may seek to engage in campus academic and social systems. In the following sections, we provide suggestions for addressing the needs of collectivist college students. We begin by providing suggestions for adapting college cultures and support structures in ways that allow these cultures to capitalize on the strengths of students' who espouse collectivist orientations. We also provide several suggestions for the ways in which institutions of higher education can assist in preparing collectivist students and their families for adaptations that can increase their success in college.

One important way in which colleges and universities can begin to shift their cultures to make them more accessible and welcoming to students from collectivist cultural orientations is by educating college faculty, staff, and students about collectivist traditions. This is particularly important given research that has found that college personnel often do not understand these rich traditions. For example, Guillory and Wolverton (2008) studied the administrators at three PWIs to assess their understanding of Native American college students' needs and found that "institutions did not fully understand the Native American student mindset, and, as a consequence, they failed to adequately meet their specific needs" (p. 84).

Some ways in which university communities can become knowledgeable about collectivist cultures is through learning from campus subcultures that reflect students' home communities (e.g., campus cultural centers and ethnic studies programs) and collaborations with ethnic communities external to the institution. Indeed, many institutions have learned and can learn much from African American, AAPI, Latino/a, and Native American cultural centers and ethnic studies programs that house individuals who are knowledgeable about collectivist communities of color. Experts in those cultural centers and ethnic studies programs can consult and provide professional faculty and staff development about the cultures of those communities. Such consultation and professional development could, for example, include (1) helping inform colleges about cultural, religious, or spiritual events that may conflict with the university calendar, (2) providing alerts about other potential cultural conflicts that might arise, such as events or policies that would infringe on Native American treaty rights, and (3) assisting colleges in providing academic advising, counseling, and university recruitment and retention initiatives in ways that are culturally sensitive and appropriate for each student.

Several examples of the aforementioned collaborations exist. One example is evident in Chicago, where the American Indian Center works collaboratively with Northwestern University in developing and providing comprehensive
services to Native Americans. Most notable is that the partnership that they have created allows the college to work together with Native Americans in conducting research rather than the Native Americans being merely the subject of the research conducted by members of the university. Another salient example of such collaboration is the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where faculty work collaboratively with Asian American community members to teach courses, host extracurricular activities, and organize field trips for Asian American Studies courses. It is important to note that both of these examples are based on asset-minded perspectives that engage ethnic minority campus subcultures and communities as entities that have something meaningful and valuable to contribute to the educational experience.

A growing number of colleges have parent relations programs that are specifically designed to facilitate connections with parents and provide resources for them. Representatives from this office can serve as a resource to parents by welcoming them to campus, keeping them informed about upcoming events, and providing advocacy for parents. However, colleges that are serious about changing cultures to foster success among students of color from collectivist orientations must also learn about the communities from which students come and maintain broad and inclusive definitions of what constitutes a family. Western, individualist definitions of family tend to include only biological parents and siblings, whereas collectivists often include extended family members (aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.), close friends and neighbors, and other influential members of the community (e.g., tribal and religious or spiritual leaders) in their definitions of family (Heilman, 2008). Additionally, colleges need to hire and retain a diverse staff with individuals who espouse collectivist values so that family members, friends, and students will feel comfortable seeking and receiving assistance from them.

Another way that colleges can embrace collectivist values is by offering a wide range of cultural activities for students, while also taking steps to prevent overinvolvement. Faculty members, academic advisors, college counselors, and student organization advisors must become proficient in identifying students with potential for becoming over-involved in these organizations and to provide them with leadership and time management strategies. Such strategies will help students effectively balance academic and organizational responsibilities to prevent their involvement from negatively affecting their academic achievement. Additionally, colleges seeking to capitalize on the strengths of collectivist students, including the potential they have for leading groups that foster positive systemic change on campus and in society, should recognize service to these organizations as part of the college curriculum. Institutions can do this, for example, by allowing students in these organizations to gain academic credit for their leadership and service to the community.

Along the same lines, college career services also must adapt their
perspectives in ways that accommodate the needs of students from collectivist orientations. According to Waterman (2004), career counselors often assume a Western, individualist perspective regarding student mobility during job searches, which manifests in the assumption that all students are willing to move away from their home communities in pursuit of employment opportunities. Waterman points out that students from collectivist orientations may not hold the same values about mobility and may choose, instead, to return to their home communities to live, work, and contribute in meaningful ways after their college graduation, even if that means forgoing a range of career opportunities. Colleges that are committed to embracing collectivist values need to ensure that career counselors are sensitive to the needs of collectivist students when assisting them in career opportunities and potential moves without making judgments about students who choose to return home after graduation.

Colleges also need to focus on hiring and retaining faculty of color who share collectivist orientations in order to provide students with mentors who understand them and who can assist them in capitalizing on the strengths of their collectivist values. Just as important is the need for colleges to train faculty with more individualist values about the needs of collectivist students so they can adopt pedagogical practices that embrace collectivist norms and values. Faculty must be sensitive, for example, to collectivist students’ desires or needs to return home for cultural nourishment and to support their families. It is important that these students be afforded opportunities to make up assignments when they need to go home to attend to the needs of their community, even if the reasons for going home are not consistent with individualist values.

Faculty can also adapt classroom environments to make them less competitive and more communal by encouraging collaborations among students in the form of group projects. Such collective work, such as study groups, has been identified as a critical factor in facilitating academic success among students of color (Fullilove & Treisman, 1990; Treisman, 1992). It is especially important for faculty to prepare students for these group experiences by affirming the various styles of group engagement, including differences that may emerge in the interpersonal styles of collectivist and individualist students. When presented properly, group projects allow students not only to learn to work effectively together, but also to appreciate the diverse interpersonal strengths that each student brings to the group. Additionally, by structuring a communal environment within group work and the classroom itself, space is created for students to share their home and community experiences and resources as important forms of knowledge (i.e., funds of knowledge) in the classroom. Incorporating students’ diverse forms of knowledge into learning activities can lead to greater engagement, sense of community, and learning.

Changing campus cultures should also involve sustained efforts by colleges to engage local communities of color, specifically parents and families of
elementary school-aged students of color. Research by Kiyama and colleagues suggests that outreach with local communities and families can affirm collectivist cultures and build a holistic college-going culture starting at the early elementary grade levels. Research on these outreach programs suggests that, to sustain meaningful connections with students of color, colleges must integrate families' home knowledge and assets into outreach initiatives, validate families' preexisting college knowledge, embrace families' extensive social networks, and understand families' unique educational ideologies. Meaningful college outreach programs must create opportunities for participants to share their college knowledge, educational practices, and strategies used in their homes with one another. For example, Kiyama (2010) found that families would often share educational tips during program breaks, such as creating designated homework space for kids. Colleges seeking to embrace collectivist orientations need to formally incorporate that sharing into their outreach programming to validate families' home educational practices and connect them with program curricula. By doing so, they can build on the knowledge that families already possess.

Additionally, college outreach programs must acknowledge and validate the collectivist values that some communities of color espouse. With respect to the strong social networks that families possess, Kiyama (2010) argued that outreach programs can help parents highlight how they have activated these networks in acquiring K–12 educational information and assist families in recognizing they have the same tools available to them when navigating postsecondary education. Building on the example of the family who was involved with the school district as volunteers and a bus driver, we see that these same social networks could be useful when addressing higher education questions and concerns. For example, because of the families' multiple connections to the school, they built engaging and ongoing relationships with school administration. Such relationships differ from a more traditional line of communication through which one typically makes an appointment to speak with a school administrator. The relationships with administrators can be valuable assets when making decisions about higher education as lines of communication are already established and open.

Assisting Collectivist Students in Navigating Individualist Campus Cultures

Although the emphasis of this chapter is on changing college cultures in ways that make them more amenable to collectivist students, there are also a number of steps that colleges can take to assist collectivist students and their families in understanding and adjusting to the individualist aspects of the college environment. Such efforts should begin during new student orientations. This process will probably be enhanced by including upperclassmen and their
parents who identify with collectivist values and who have successfully negotiated their initial transitions to the more individualist culture at their respective colleges, as well as faculty and staff from the college who also identify with collective orientations.

One issue of particular relevance to students and family members with collectivist orientations is how to negotiate the challenges that arise as the students form new social connections in college. This can be a particular problem if parents, siblings, and other community members are dependent upon the college-going students to provide support at home. Helping transitioning students to anticipate interpersonal conflicts that may arise as a result of their college transitions and providing them with coping strategies for dealing with these issues may effectively circumvent crises that could impact their academic performance.

At the same time, orientation staff should also educate families about their children's upcoming experiences at college and assist those families in exploring the ways in which they can support their children during the transition to higher education. These efforts could include actively helping families strategize ways of finding sources of support that will partially replace that which has been provided by the child about to enter college. Orientation can also be an opportunity to help parents and other members of the home community understand that subtle changes in thinking and behaving on the part of the college-going student are normal and can indicate positive growth and development rather than an abandonment of family/community values. Likewise, orientation programs can also assist family members from collectivist orientations to understand how important the emotional and financial support they provide their children is to college success, even small contributions (e.g., money for laundry) if that is all the family is able to provide. Orientation leaders can encourage families to provide this support in ways that motivate students and avoid inducing guilt for taking away from family resources.

Another topic that should be addressed at new student orientation is the role that involvement in culturally based student organizations and college retention programs can have in supporting the success of students of color, particularly those from collectivist orientations. Research suggests that participation in these culturally based activities can provide opportunities to fulfill a number of essential needs that many collectivist students share, including the need to connect with other collectivist students, faculty, and staff, and to give back and make meaningful changes at college and in the larger community. At the same time, students and their families should be informed about the negative consequences of students from collectivist orientations becoming overly involved in these activities. Therefore, in addition to encouraging them to become involved in these organizations, orientation staff should also provide cautions about overinvolvement and strategies to prevent collectivist
students from allowing their participation to negatively impact their academic achievement.

Conclusion

Research suggests that students of color who espouse collectivist orientations experience a number of challenges in college because their cultural orientations are inconsistent with the Western, individualist cultures that predominate at many institutions of higher education. In this chapter, we present several salient steps in which colleges can begin to shift their cultures to accommodate and embrace collectivist orientations. Such initiatives include collaborating with local cultural centers; educating parent relations staff and strengthening their services; expanding and lending greater support to culturally based student organizations, cultural centers, and student support programs; engaging local communities of color through extensive outreach programming with youth and families; and educating college faculty, advisors, and career counselors about the needs and strengths of collectivist students. Colleges that are able to adapt their cultures in ways that embrace collectivist orientations will not only allow collectivist students to flourish at college without abandoning their cultural traditions, but also provide a more communal, welcoming environment for all students.

References


