Research, Theory, and Practice Within Academic Affairs

SUPPORTING BLACK MALE STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

THE SILENT CRY FOR HELP



Edited by
Antione D. Tomlin
Kenneth Gilliard, Jr.
Rayna L. Simon

Supporting Black Male Students in Community Colleges

Research, Theory, and Practice Within Academic Affairs

Series Editors: Antione D. Tomlin and Sherella Cupid

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Supporting Black Male Students in Community Colleges

The Silent Cry for Help

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Antione D. Tomlin

Anne Arundel Community College, USA

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Antione D. Tomlin, rooted in core values like Autonomy, Flexibility, Learning, Respect, Transparency, Honesty, and Fun, I live and breathe principles that not only shape my life but also guide my interactions with others. As a proud native of Baltimore City, these values have been my compass in navigating life's journey. Being a first-generation undergrad and grad student, I recognize the transformative power of education, a value intricately tied to my passion for continuous learning. This passion steered me into a fulfilling career in higher education, where I've been teaching English since 2013. The classroom, for me, is an ever-inspiring space filled with dedicated students who continually fuel my curiosity and growth. Beyond teaching, I wear the hat of a trained and certified Life and Engagement Coach, proudly holding the Professional Certified Coach credential from the International Coach Federation. Feel free to explore more about my coaching venture, Best AT Coaching!, LLC. As a Baltimore native, I earned my academic stripes from local institutions: a BS in psychology from Stevenson University, an MA in higher education administration and student affairs from Morgan State University, and a PhD in language, literacy, and culture from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. My current research focuses on the experiences of Black and Brown faculty, staff, and students in higher education.

Kenneth Gilliard, Jr., guided by purpose, passion, and people, I am an educator, mentor, and community curator committed to equity, belonging, and leadership development. As Program Manager for Cross-Cultural Student Services, I create spaces that uplift underrepresented students, especially for our Black men, and foster authentic connections across campus. Born and raised in Philadelphia, shaped by years in North Carolina and traveling the world, my journey through K–12 education and higher education has been one of perseverance, creativity, and service. My work spans teaching, coaching, entrepreneurship, and event curation, grounded in the belief that mentorship is not a role but a calling. As a trained Life and Engagement Coach,

I help others tap into their purpose and lead with authenticity. Beyond my professional titles, I consider myself a "community curator and custodian of great experiences," dedicated to building bridges, nurturing growth, and ensuring that those who come after me climb higher than I did.

Rayna L. Simon, dedicated higher education administrator and emerging scholar whose work centers on student achievement, equity, and institutional effectiveness. With 15 years of experience in higher education and a strong focus on Student Affairs leadership, I have devoted my career to creating inclusive environments that empower diverse student populations to thrive from enrollment through completion. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, I am currently pursuing my EdD in the Community College Leadership Program at Morgan State University. I hold both a Master of Social Work and a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from Stony Brook University. As an advocate for student success, I have presented at national and regional conferences and served as an advisor for multiple student leadership organizations. Committed to fostering inclusive excellence in higher education, I strive to integrate research, leadership, and policy development to advance student retention and achievement.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Antoine Deas is the Program Director for Academic and Career Advising at Prince George's Community College, where he leads initiatives focused on strengthening advising services and advancing student success. With more than 20 years of experience in higher education, he has implemented data-informed advising strategies designed to improve student engagement, persistence, and retention. He is recognized for his collaborative leadership and commitment to developing student-centered practices that enhance advising effectiveness across academic departments. Dr. Deas earned his Doctor of Education in Executive Community College Leadership from Wingate University. His professional interests center on promoting and implementing advising models that empower diverse student populations to achieve their academic and career goals. Through his leadership and scholarship, he remains dedicated to improving institutional practices that support student achievement and long-term success.

Phillip G. Gatling Jr., EdD, is a higher education administrator, educator, and scholar focused on student engagement, leadership development, and student success. He serves as Assistant Dean of Student Life and Engagement at Baltimore City Community College, overseeing student life initiatives, civic engagement, leadership programs, and basic-needs resources across multiple campuses. He also teaches as an adjunct professor. Dr. Gatling began his career as an English teacher before transitioning into higher education leadership. His experience also includes work in the business sector as a fashion merchandizer, where he developed interests in business strategy, marketing, and organizational management and their connection to educational systems. His scholarship explores student engagement and mentorship within the Black college experience. His publication *Connections, Engagement, and Mentorship in the Black College Experience* was published through the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute at Rutgers University. Dr. Gatling holds a Doctor of Education from Widener University and is a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

LaSella L. Hall, PhD, serves as the Director of Student Access and Belonging and African American Studies Certificate, Program Chair, at Chesapeake College. Chesapeake College is a two-year community college located in Wye Mills, Maryland. Hall has been a higher education student affairs professional for over 15 years. He received his PhD in Humanities and African American Studies with a concentration in Political Science from Clark Atlanta University (CAU)—a historically black college and/or university located in Atlanta, Georgia. He earned a Master's Degree in Business Administration from University of Phoenix- Atlanta Campus. Hall is a graduate of La Salle University, a Catholic Liberal Arts Institution, in Philadelphia. His research interests include K12 public school desegregation policies, public education policy, Boots on the Ground Theory, and addressing non-academic barriers impacting students of color and marginalized communities.

Lamoth Haynie, MEd, MS, is a higher education professional committed to increasing access to programs for job training and workforce development. His research focuses on approaches to increase Black male enrollment in workforce development pathways at community colleges. Lamoth promotes fair educational and employment opportunities that strengthen communities and increase economic mobility through his work as a Success Coach at Anne Arundel Community College.

Andrew Johnson has 23 years of experience as an administrator, coach, educator, and mentor. He currently serves as the Executive Director of Student Impact Initiatives at the University of North Georgia but has been a higher education administrator for 17 years. In this role he supports the initiatives focused on supporting the enrollment and retention of strategic populations, identified by the Universities strategic priorities. Prior to taking the role at the University of North Georgia, Johnson was the Assistant Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at Hartwick College. Before taking on these roles in student affairs Johnson served in various roles within physical education and athletics including teacher, coach, and athletic administrator. It was in these roles where his passion for supporting students and mentorship developed. Personally, Dr. Johnson is the husband of his college sweetheart Ildiko Benoit-Johnson and the father of three wonderful children Alaina, Savana, and Ace.

Tanya Johnson, PhD, is a higher education administrator, qualitative researcher, author, and adjunct faculty member with nearly three decades of experience across public, private, and for-profit institutions. Her work centers on cultivating human-centered service practices that enhance institutional effectiveness and student success. Dr. Johnson developed the

Humanization Framework, a model that emphasizes empathy, personalization, transparency, exclusivity, consistency, community, crisis responsiveness, and student prioritization to transform service culture in higher education. Her scholarship and professional practice focus on advancing equitable and supportive environments for historically marginalized student populations, particularly Black male students navigating complex educational systems. In addition to her administrative leadership, she teaches graduate-level courses in research and leadership and consults with individuals and institutions on humanized leadership practices through her firm, Aspire Pinnacle. Dr. Johnson earned her PhD in Higher Education Administration from Morgan State University.

Taziah Kenney, EdD, serves as the Associate Dean of STEM at a community college in New Jersey and has been a dedicated faculty member teaching biology, anatomy and physiology, and health sciences across multiple institutions, including in the Philadelphia region, for ten years. She is passionate about advancing student success in higher education by addressing barriers to achievement and fostering inclusive learning environments where all students experience a strong sense of belonging. Her research focuses on strategies to enhance belonging, expand equitable access to academic opportunities, and support student success in STEM and health science disciplines through innovative, evidence-based practices. Her master's thesis explored the genetic relationship between concussion susceptibility and ADHD, reflecting her broader interest in physiology and neurodiversity. She collaborates with local and national organizations on initiatives aimed at improving access, retention, and outcomes for diverse student populations. Her work bridges research, teaching, and academic leadership to create more equitable and supportive pathways for students pursuing STEM and health science careers.

Kevin Logan, PhD, Social Scientist and Business Psychologist works as a Consultant, Human Capital and Professional Development Coach, and Adjunct Professor. His research and publications are grounded in social science and psychology. He emphasizes the basic human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in remote work and virtual environments in the future of work. His focus further includes entrepreneurship, innovation, human capital, flourishing, thriving, and potential. Dr. Logan brings extensive experience from diverse industries, including Telecommunications, Networking and Infrastructure, Information Technology, Facilities Maintenance and Management, Law Enforcement, Early Childhood Education, Entrepreneurship and Small Business, Higher Education, and Organizational Development. His work has significantly impacted each industry and resides at the intersection of entrepreneurship, human

capital, innovation, and the future of work. His active contributions to numerous work, education, community, and organization initiatives that promote entrepreneurship education, learning, and human development through innovation, technology, and growth are inspiring.

Olajiwon K. McCadney, MSEd, is the Associate Vice President of Campus Life and Dean of Students and Deputy Title IX Coordinator at HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College. He leads initiatives that strengthen student engagement, success, and retention while advancing equity, accountability, and care across the campus community. McCadney is a certified professional coach and restorative practices facilitator and serves as a national facilitator with the Center for Restorative Justice at the University of San Diego. He holds postgraduate certificates in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace from the University of Florida, the Study of Race and Equity in Education from the University of Pennsylvania, and Post-Crisis Leadership from the University of Florida. He is a doctoral student at Northeastern University. He serves on the Leadership Council for ACPA, College Educators International, chairs the International Adopt A School Committee, and serves as Education Area Coordinator of New York for Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated. His writing and presentations focus on Title IX, restorative justice, and expanding student success.

Kellie McCants-Price brings passion and purpose to her role as the third Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC)—a position she stepped into after years of making an impact as an award-winning tenured psychology professor. Beyond the classroom and campus, she is a life and engagement coach, conference speaker, and equity and leadership coach who helps individuals and organizations turn ideals into action. As a diversity, equity, and inclusion practitioner and social justice advocate, Dr. McCants-Price fights to ensure everyone—especially those historically pushed to the margins—does not just get a seat at the table, but has their voice heard and amplified. Her work has not gone unnoticed: Anne Arundel County honored her with the 2024 Michelle Obama Award for her tireless efforts to advance equity. She's also received AACC's 2019 IDEAL Faculty Equity Champion Award and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Zeitgeist Award, recognizing her commitment to inclusive excellence. Beyond campus, she lends her expertise to the equity subcommittee for the Crownsville Memorial Hospital redevelopment—formerly Maryland Hospital for the Negro Insane, the only mental hospital accepting Black patients for most of the early 20th century—and serves on Anne Arundel County's Multidisciplinary Advisory Team for the Shepard Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention grant. A self-proclaimed pop culture and social media enthusiast, Dr. Kellie harnesses the power of digital platforms to spark

timely—and sometimes uncomfortable—conversations about mental health, human development, gender, sexuality, race, socioeconomic status, immigration, religion, and intersectionality. Her signature blend of data-driven insights and "the new and now" of social media made her a student favorite in the classroom and keeps her professional development sessions fresh, relevant, and impossible to ignore. Dr. McCants-Price is a proud graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County and one of the first women admitted to UMBC's prestigious Meyerhoff Scholarship Program. She earned both her master's and doctoral degrees in child clinical/pediatric psychology from The Ohio State University and holds certificates in Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace and Ethical and Inclusive Leadership from the University of South Florida Muma College of Business.

Clarence McFerren II, EdD, is an Assistant Professor of Performing Arts Education at Texas Tech University. A Memphis native and former community college professor, his scholarship explores the intersections of representation, belonging, and culturally sustaining pedagogy in education. His research centers on the retention and experiences of Black male educators and students across K–12 and higher education systems. Dr. McFerren's work integrates narrative inquiry, arts-based research, and healing-centered pedagogies to reimagine educational spaces that affirm identity, dignity, and possibility.

Latonia Moss currently serves as a full professor at a Baltimore City Community College teaching literature and communication courses and when she is not teaching, she is writing. She has written broadly, penning poetry, plays and book chapters. She holds both a Doctor of Education and Master of Fine Arts. Her latest publications: "The Illusive Rank and Promotion Journey" in *Faculty Success in the Academy: Tips, Tools, and Resources for Success*, and "Removing the Cape – Sometimes" in *Escape the Cape, From Existing to Evolving: Amplifying Voices of Black and Brown Women in the Mental Health Profession* chapter contributions were published late 2025. Beyond teaching and writing, Dr. Moss enjoys traveling and exploring new cultures and cuisines. Her journeys have taken her to Africa, Europe and South America. She lives in Baltimore City.

Kizzy Ross Pittrell received her doctorate degree in education from Argosy University in Washington DC. Dr. Pittrell received her Master of Counseling from Towson University and Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Bowie State University. Dr. Pittrell is a Licensed Professional Counselor, an Approved Drug and Alcohol counselor, and an Approved Clinical Supervisor in Maryland. Dr. Pittrell has worked in the community sector providing mental health and addiction counseling and treatment to adults and

adolescents for 20 years. Currently, Dr. Pittrell is owner of Strengthening Families Building Communities outpatient mental health program. Dr. Pittrell is also part-time professor in the allied human service and addiction program both Baltimore City Community College. Dr. Pittrell is also a trained mental health first aid instructor for the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. In addition, Dr. Pittrell has conducted several discussions and training related to grief, trauma, COVID, and effective ways to cope with mental illness. Dr. Pittrell is passionate about educating the community about mental health and reducing the stigma of mental health. In her spare time Dr. Pittrell loves exercise, spending time with family, and reading. She is also an author and publisher of a children's book about maternal depression. She is past President of the Maryland Counselors Association Social Justice committee and Member-at-Large for the Licensed Professional Counselors of Maryland.

Nathan Stephens, PhD, MSW, is an Assistant Professor in Social Work at Illinois State University. He completed his bachelor's degree in social work at Columbia College and his master's and PhD degrees at the University of Missouri (Mizzou). For his dissertation, he examined the impact of a Black male initiative on the post-college lives of the program's inaugural cohort. Dr. Stephens' research explores how racialization and systemic oppression impacts the life trajectories of Black boys and men. For over 25 years he has researched and worked with Black boys and men from mentoring local youth, advising Black student organizations, and even creating the Mizzou Black Men's Initiative. As an African Centered educator he has researched, published, and presented on topics like Black boys in juvenile systems, Black men in higher education, the erasure of Black men from social work history, and the racialized stress/trauma associated with anti-Black misandry.

Reginald Stroble is a higher education leader and student success strategist with extensive experience advancing college access, persistence, and completion for first-generation and historically underrepresented students. He currently serves as the Managing Director of College Thrive at College Track, where he leads regional teams across the country to support scholars from high school through college graduation. Dr. Stroble has held senior leadership roles in student success and enrollment management at institutions including Trinity Washington University, where he served as Director of the Center for Student Success. In addition to his work in higher education, Dr. Stroble is the founder of He Inspires Youth Inc., a nonprofit focused on mentorship, academic support, and youth development. His work bridges higher education leadership, community impact, and strategic partnerships to expand opportunities for students and families nationwide.

Deanna Vaughn is a teacher, mentor, coach, activist, and altruist from Washington, DC, though currently residing in Prince George's County MD. She has been a Part-Time English 101/102: Academic Writing and Research I/II Instructor at Anne Arundel Community College since Fall 2003 and a Part-Time ESL Instructor at Howard Community College since Spring 2024. She graduated from Towson University in 2007 with a Bachelor of Science degree in English and in 2014, she earned her MEd from Howard University. Her formal teaching career began in the District of Columbia Public Schools in August 2010 as a Middle School English/Language Arts teacher. In June 2020, she transitioned to teach high school English and ESL in DCPS, garnering Highly Effective evaluation ratings for eight of her thirteen years in secondary education. Her roles in public education have helped Deanna to prioritize student-centered approaches to the learning experiences of her students, not only to boost their academic growth, but also their social/emotional development.

Tasha Wilson, MSW, MEd, is a transformative leader dedicated to empowering individuals to discover their strength, confront past challenges with courage, and move forward with confidence. An educator, international best-selling author, and speaker, she is passionate about fostering environments where students thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. Two of her books are used as discussion guides at Johnson C. Smith University, helping shape socially conscious leaders. Beyond higher education, Tasha serves on the Board of Directors for Kids' Chance of Maryland, Inc., advocating for scholarship access for children affected by catastrophic workplace injuries. Her work focuses on removing systemic barriers and expanding opportunities for underserved communities. Her impact has been recognized by *RAINN*, *Canvas Rebel Magazine*, *VoyageBaltimore*, and *BOLD Journey Magazine*. Her honors include the Governor's Volunteer Service Certificate (2016), the Christian Woman in Leadership and Marketplace Forerunner Award (2022), and APG Media of Chesapeake's Women to Watch (2024, 2025). In 2021, she contributed to the launch team for Checking In by Grammy Award-winning artist Michelle Williams.

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INTRODUCTION

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Black males, too often, have been marginalized in the spaces of higher education. Many times, they are stereotyped as lazy, uncooperative, or even difficult; their voices have gone unheard, and their abilities overlooked. This work is a collection of scholars, like ourselves [Antione, Kenny, Rayna, and Lamoth], who are passionate about education and supporting Black male success. This work is a call to action and a collective offering from those of us who are united by a shared passion for education and equity. Together, we examine the experiences of Black male students in community colleges and beyond, presenting strategies and recommendations. These strategies are not just tools, but beacons of hope, designed not only to improve outcomes but also to transform institutions and practices.

As you delve into the different experiences, this collection is not just theory and research. It is an archive of lived experiences, pedagogical knowledge, and tested, practical approaches. This work is a valuable resource for educators seeking to gain insight and expand their previously acquired skills. This work is also for practitioners looking to support Black male students not just on their educational journey, but also on their journey to succeed beyond the classroom. Within the next sections, we share the overview of the book, the themes that emerged throughout, and a call to action from the editors.

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OVERVIEW OF BOOK

This text has three essential themes that we, as authors, and Black persons, believe are pivotal for understanding some of the experiences of Black male students in community colleges and how to begin supporting them in more effective, intentional, and meaningful ways. The three themes explored in this text are: Theme 1: Belonging, Humanization, and Community Support, Theme 2: Mental Health, Resilience, and Personal Growth, and Theme 3: Systemic Barriers, Equity, and Institutional Reform. We note that these themes and chapters that align with them are heavy, and while academia has made some great progress on supporting Black male students, these stories, narratives, and expertise insights suggest that we still have much work to do. Additionally, as editors of this text, we also note that what you will read is just the surface of the challenges, opportunities, and experiences that come along with being Black male students, and practitioners who support Black male students.

THEME 1: BELONGING, HUMANIZATION, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Theme one centers Black male students and is intentional about analyzing belonging and the impact that support, love, and attention or lack of can have on their experiences. Additionally, this theme focuses on creating inclusive, supportive, and empowering spaces for Black male students, emphasizing humanization, community, and belonging. Dr Clarence McFerren II, Dr Taziah Kenney, Olajiwon K. McCadney, Dr Tanya Johnson, Dr Phillip G. Gatling Jr, and Dr Reginald Stroble all come together to form this theme.

Chapter 1, *They Not Like Us: But We Still Show Up,* is grounded in narrative inquiry and healing-centered pedagogy, which explores how three foundational themes, Representation Matters, Teachers Create Teachers, and Student Centeredness can inform institutional strategies for enhancing the success of Black male students in community colleges. This chapter also includes an autoethnographic account of Dr McFerren II's experience teaching in a predominantly white, affluent community college, where he could count the number of Black male students he encountered on one hand. This chapter is grounded in culturally responsive and healing-centered frameworks, offering practical, equity-minded recommendations for both Black and non-Black practitioners. Moreover, while rooted in historical exclusion, this chapter also offers a vision for what's possible if institutions choose to evolve.

Chapter 2, *Belonging Matters: Strengths-Based Strategies for Black Male Success in Community Colleges*, observes the language of "underrepresented" or

"minority." used in higher education to describe Black males. Dr Kenney shares that while these terms are well-intentioned, they can contribute to feelings of exclusion among historically marginalized students. Theories such as the black sheep effect and tokenism highlight the psychological impact of being perceived as different or isolated within a group, reinforcing these concerns. Although acknowledging gaps in representation is important, fostering a strong sense of belonging for Black males in community colleges is equally critical. A key step in addressing this challenge is implementing a strengths-based approach for academic and student success, one that offers support without making students feel singled out. That said, this chapter explores strengths-based approaches and their application in creating a sense of belonging for Black males through targeted academic and student success initiatives.

Chapter 3, *Brotherhood Beyond Barriers: Elevating the Success and Retention of Black Men in Community Colleges,* in this chapter, Olajiwon McCadney highlights the practical, culturally grounded strategies developed at Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC) through the Center for Male Engagement (CME) and its student-led engagement group, Men of Connection & Integrity (MOCI). Drawing from a blend of data, real-life narratives, and practitioner experience, this chapter emphasizes culturally responsive mentoring, affinity spaces, and holistic support frameworks. McCadney spotlight practices like peer mentoring, barbershop-style dialogues, and financial literacy workshops while exploring the broader need for institutional accountability and systemic change. Educators and policymakers alike will find a call to action in these pages, an invitation to redesign community colleges as spaces where Black men are not merely present, but are empowered to persist, lead, and excel.

In Chapter 4, *Humanizing the Experience: A Framework for Centering Black Male College Students,* Dr Johnson explores the critical role of humanization in fostering success among Black male students within community college settings. Grounded in her Humanization Framework, this chapter blends personal narrative, professional practice, and research-informed strategies to illuminate how empathy-driven, relational, and culturally responsive practices can disrupt systemic barriers and foster belonging. Reflecting on her experiences as a higher education administrator and advocate, Dr Johnson offers actionable guidance for practitioners, faculty, and policymakers committed to equity, justice, and transformative student experiences.

Chapter 5, *Breaking Barriers: Innovative Mentoring Approaches for Black Male Students at Community Colleges,* explores how authentic mentorship and leadership can be elevated to effectively reach Black male students. Dr Phillip G. Gatling Jr shares the model he developed for building new, student-led programs and initiatives designed to provide an outlet and safe space for Black students. This model not only fosters a sense of community, but also empowers students to develop life skills, practice authority, and gain

autonomy, skills transferable to their future careers. Using Blake McCoskie's *Start Something That Matters* as a guide, Dr Gatling Jr created a student-led leadership program that offered one-on-one mentoring and leadership training, while allowing students to take the lead in creating programming, advising peers, and networking both on campus and within the broader community college network across the state. Through the implementation of this model, Dr Gatling Jr has observed significant growth in student leadership and engagement. Throughout this chapter, he explores the use of this model and its impact on Black male students at my community college.

Dr Reginald Stroble, in Chapter 6, *Bridging the Gap: Strategies for Supporting Black Male Students through Access, Mentorship, and Community Engagement*, shares his professional journey and practice model for supporting Black male community college students through relationship-centered, equity-minded advising. Drawing on appreciative advising and coaching, he describes how transformational, not transactional, advising advances belonging, identity affirmation, persistence, and degree attainment. He connects literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, sense of belonging, and early/proactive support to concrete strategies he has implemented and scaled: structured intake assessments, strengths-based success plans, early alert systems, and mentorship and community-building efforts. He also outlines a professional development approach that builds advisors' relational competence alongside technical skills, strengthening institutional capacity to close equity gaps. The chapter offers role-specific action steps for students, faculty, staff, and administrators, emphasizing how aligned practice and accountable leadership create conditions for Black male student success across campuses. Ultimately, it argues that advising, when anchored in trust, empathy, and data-informed coaching, can transform outcomes for Black male community college students.

THEME 2: MENTAL HEALTH, RESILIENCE, AND PERSONAL GROWTH

This theme centers on the importance of mental health awareness, emotional resilience, and personal growth as foundational elements in the success and well-being of Black men in higher education. It examines how systemic barriers, cultural expectations, and internalized pressures intersect to shape the educational journeys and self-concepts of Black male students. The chapters in this section highlight the urgent need for environments that foster healing, empowerment, and belonging while challenging stereotypes that limit emotional expression and self-discovery. Collectively, Dr Kizzy Ross Pittrell, Dr Latonia Moss, Dr Antoine Deas, and Dr LaSella L. Hall explore these dynamics through lenses of mental health advocacy, intersectionality, and mentorship, offering powerful insights into

how institutions and educators can nurture the holistic development of Black men as scholars and individuals.

In Chapter 7, *From Silence to Support: Building Mental Health Awareness and Resilience in Black Male College Students,* Dr Kizzy Ross Pittrell discusses how Black male college students often face compounded challenges in higher education, shaped by sociopolitical barriers and cultural expectations. She notes that many are first-generation students or see college as a path out of limited opportunities, such as reliance on athletics. However, unresolved childhood trauma and mental health concerns frequently accompany them to campus. In many communities, young men are taught that showing emotions—anger, fear, or sadness—signals weakness. This belief leaves students carrying unspoken emotional burdens while striving to meet academic demands and family expectations. The inability to safely express vulnerability can hinder both performance and well-being. This chapter will highlight the importance of supporting Black male students' mental health, recognizing their unique experiences, and creating spaces that foster healing, growth, and resilience.

Chapter 8, *Getting Black Men to Unmask the Weight of Patriarchy,* Dr Latonia Moss shares that despite the depictions of Black males, they have their own understanding of what it means to be Black Americans. The daily terrain Black males experience in America although their strength, pride, community and family ties are infused with an understanding of their struggles in a racialized America. Patriarchy does not offer them the same privilege as it does their white male counterparts. The intersections of race and sex play an adverse role in their acquisition of the American Dream. Hence, intersectionality can now be used to theorize Black men's oppression offering insight into their intersecting marginalized identities that stand as a threat to their upward mobility. The community college is an accessible and affordable pathway to higher education and upward mobility. Therefore, many Black males have chosen community colleges as a route to ascertain their own piece of the often-elusive American Dream. The paradox that Black men face is that patriarchy does not benefit them the same as their white male counterparts. Their maleness does not offer them the safety of privilege because of their race. Black men are reminded how race remains an oppressing identity in which they must combat along with Black women. An educator with two decades of experience in the community college sector, she has witnessed Black men struggle to find a sense of belonging and persistence when they enter the classroom. Nonetheless there are strategies that offer them hope toward persistence, such as effort. They understand that skills can be learned with effort, not just academic prowess. Effort becomes a muscle they can learn to use to gain the requisite skills to persist to degree completion that offers better opportunities and economic power, which her chapter explores.

In Chapter 9, *Mentorship Matters: The Success of African American Males Through Mentorship,* Dr Antoine Deas, shares that retention and persistence

rates of African American males in higher education remain a significant concern, as these students often face academic challenges that begin as early as pre-school and continue through K–12 education. Research indicates that African American males are frequently underprepared for college-level coursework and are often perceived through negative stereotypes that contribute to their marginalization in educational settings. Consequently, many African American males enroll in community colleges, which serve as accessible entry points due to open enrollment policies. However, community colleges face the challenge of effectively supporting this population of students. With that, this chapter examines the critical role of Student Affairs professionals in fostering meaningful connections with African American male students and highlights the importance of mentorship and supportive spaces to promote their academic success and persistence.

Dr LaSella Hall, in Chapter 10, *Boots On the Ground Theory: Removing Non-academic Barriers to Black Male Success at Community Colleges*, notes that Black men attending community colleges face many academic and non-academic barriers. He goes on to note that community colleges offer various means to support a student's academic challenges while few offer, if any, means to address non-academic barriers. Non-academic barriers show up in many forms such as deficient housing, inefficient transportation, financial need, inadequate childcare, meager resources for the larger family unit, and others. When non-academic barriers are not addressed, it leads to low retention and persistent rates and increased dropout drop out among black male students. With this, he shares experiences about these non-academic barriers, provides a framework, and suggests recommendations to obtaining more resources for black men at community colleges.

THEME 3: SYSTEMIC BARRIERS, EQUITY, AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

This theme examines how deeply rooted systemic inequities and institutional structures continue to shape the educational experiences of Black male students in community colleges. It explores the ways in which racialized expectations, cultural stigmas, and inequitable policies hinder access, belonging, and academic success, while also highlighting the transformative power of reform, advocacy, and resilience. The chapters within this section challenge educators and institutions to confront bias, reimagine traditional pedagogies, and design learning environments that affirm identity and promote justice. Together, Dr Kevin Logan, Deanna Vaughn, Dr Kellie McCants-Price, Tasha Wilson, Dr Andrew Johnson, and Dr Nathan Stephens illuminate how dismantling systemic barriers and cultivating equitable practices can lead to sustainable change. Ensuring that Black male students are not only seen and supported, but truly empowered to thrive.

Chapter 11, *Barriers and The Invisible Hurdles,* Dr Kevin Logan notes that the silent cry for help is often a voice that is faint and hesitant, particularly for Black males in community colleges. Stigmas tied to their identity and cultural challenges that arise before they even arrive on campus contribute to the difficulties they face. This chapter explores the unique challenges confronting Black male students, highlighting barriers created by traditional educational structures and the lack of culturally responsive approaches. It underscores how eurocentric curricula and teacher-centered methods fail to meet the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness creating gaps in connecting, communicating, and discovering. Emphasizing self-determination, the chapter illustrates how intrinsic motivation, and tailored support can empower Black males. It also discusses the role of mentoring and coaching, as well as alternative learning environments that align with the cultural and social contexts. Overall, it calls for a reimagining of higher education to create inclusive and equitable spaces for Black male students.

Chapter 12, *Grit and Grace: The Community College Journey of Black Men,* examines the Academic Resilience framework and explains how resilience results in personal and academic success for Black males on community college campuses. Furthermore, Deanna Vaughn discussed the critical and transformative role that practitioners play in creating a conducive environment in the college classroom for Black male students to blossom, thrive, and prosper. The chapter highlights the systemic deterrents that Black males encounter in post-secondary education and beyond and suggest effective approaches that can help disrupt and thwart those challenges. With that in mind, the chapter intends to provide statistical data that supports the urgency for this framework as part of the mission and efforts of practitioners in community colleges. Moreover, the chapter helps to reshape the purpose of educators through an informative and anecdotal style, while also serving as a source of inspiration of Black male students who desire to research and discover more about academic resilience and their own assets and mentalities.

In Chapter 13, *Breaking Barriers: Confronting Systemic Challenges and Defying Institutional Biases,* Dr Kellie McCants-Price and Tasha Wilson empowers readers to understand and confront the systemic challenges and institutional biases that Black male students face in community colleges. They explore how historical inequities continue to impact their academic success, mental health, and overall well-being. By shedding light on barriers such as faculty biases, limited resources, and unequal access to support services, the chapter inspires action toward meaningful change. It offers actionable strategies for dismantling these obstacles, focusing on institutional reforms and bias reduction. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive and supportive environments for Black male students. By drawing on research, it provides insights that can drive

meaningful change. Ultimately, it calls on educators, administrators, and policymakers to take bold steps in promoting the success and resilience of Black male students.

Dr Andrew Johnson, in Chapter 14, *Coaching Belonging: An Athletics Approach to Supporting Black Males at Community Colleges*, talks about athletics being the perfect model for supporting Black Males at Community Colleges. He notes, athletics is a space where Black Males feel comfortable, have thrived, and have familiarity from their participation or even being a fan. Three themes stand out from his research and professional experiences as a Community College Athletic Director, and as someone who has mentored and supported Black Males on various campuses. The themes of Sense of Belonging, Lack of Support, and Lack of Orientation are addressed in the chapter, showing how athletics can positively impact academic success and well-being for Black Males. To be successful in sports athletes often feel positive levels of belonging and receive more than adequate support and orientation. Coaches are adept at creating cultures centered on these themes. This chapter also provides practical steps to create an environment focused on belonging, success, and accountability through the lens of a Coach.

Dr Nathan Stephens, in Chapter 15, *From Tired Man to Fireman: Towards a Sangoma model of mentoring Black male college students,* introduces the "Sangoma model" and how it contrasts with traditional mentoring or coaching models. The chapter discusses the concept of Sangoma as practiced in South Africa, best embodied in Western society by the character Rafiki in the Disney movie The Lion King. Dr Stephens notes that too often mentors or coaches can appear as an older "know it all" person who can foster the mentee's success if they listen and do what they are told. Comparatively, a Sangoma is a traditional healer and spiritualist whose actions and engagement are culturally rooted and centers on self-empowerment of Black males, in addition to guidance and direction. Moreover, the success of Black male collegians is not simply a psychological matter, but a physiological matter requiring intervening with their minds, bodies, and spirits. The chapter also includes a case study a non-traditional Black male collegian who describes his engagement with an African Centered instructor who strives to embody the Sangoma model as fundamental to his academic success. The Sangoma model emphasizes life path and purpose, and it extends beyond graduation. As such, the faculty was also involved with helping his former student to become a fireman, the career of his childhood dreams.

Dear Readers,

We invite you to take in each chapter individually and appreciate the beauty, boldness, and depth of the messages within. While this text does not claim to represent all Black male student experiences, it offers valuable insight into the ongoing conversations and scholarship surrounding how