EQUITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR STATES:
Amplifying Equity in Perkins V

NAPE

REPORT

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(pictured from left to right)

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(pictured from left to right)

The design for this report was inspired by Academy participant and Peer Leader and Educator Francois Odenthal-Cruz's poem '2 words I don't know yet,' which he wrote and performed for the Cohort 3 Academy Showcase. NAPE partnered with Francois and design consultant Rondell Crier to engage in a student participatory design process to amplify the passion, creativity, and perspective that comes with authentic collaboration alongside students.

We would like to highlight Francois' reflections to frame your experience with this report:

"To use my poem in this project was really gratifying. I had never done anything like this before...it was really nice being asked my opinions on things, getting time to actually think about the emotions and the feelings of what I liked, what made me "me," and what I liked about my poem.

In the poem I talk about the two words [equity and equality] being a dream, and taking part in this [participatory design process] was sort of actualizing that dream in a small way. The honest to goodness thing I hope people can take from this is to include other people. Taking ideas, thoughts, and hopes and dreams of other people and using it in your own work and being like 'I see this dream' …including those people in significant ways I think helps make us as society and culture that much better even if it's in the smallest way possible, and I think that matters a lot."

2 WORDS
I DON'T KNOW YET

By Francois Odenthal-Cruz

Equity or Equality
2 words I don't know
        I understand them sure
                I comprehend them
                        acknowledge them

I'm pretty sure I can spell them without autocorrect too.
        But I don't know them
                they are more than words
                        they are dreams

A dream that I have been told about
        that I hope for
                and think about.
                        But they are a dream I haven't yet met

I'll continue to dream of them
        until I can meet them.
                I'll use my whole mind and heart to ponder them.
                        I hope one day I'll get to know them

Cause they are someone I'm told I should meet Equity or Equality....
        2 words that I don't know after 20 years of living
                after 20 years of being promised to have them
                        Equity AND Equality

I'll get to know you some day

Index

Dear NAPE Community,

At NAPE, we are committed to doing the challenging and necessary work required to transform career and technical education (CTE) by applying a robust equity lens to the Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). We have spent the past year 1) offering on-going and responsive support to past Academy participants through our Peer Learning Community (PLC), 2) training Peer Leaders and Educators to co-facilitate Academy sessions, and 3) moving five member states through the Equity Leadership Academy for States (Academy). The dedication of these individuals to center and embody equity in the CLNA process inspired collective learning and action among all participants and facilitators. Here is what we learned:

Amplifying Student Voice is a Non-Negotiable

The student representatives on each state team were our greatest teachers throughout the Academy. Their perspective, expertise, and candor challenged our equity lens, fueled transformation, and held us accountable to our commitment to serve the most marginalized students in our respective communities and institutions. Thank you Astrid, Eric, Hashan, Jalissa, Kevin, Pleisaie, and River for your leadership and unwavering commitment to student voice and educational equity.

We Must Combat Anti-Equity Policies with Courage, Strategy, and Solidarity

Over the past few years, there has been an unprecedented political agenda to thwart equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in our education systems. This has had a tremendous negative impact on our member states while they navigate the new nuance that is required in their roles to both protect marginalized students while maintaining their ability to work effectively in their institutions. Cultivating a national community of support that creates pathways for hope, courageous leadership with clear strategies, connection, and solidarity has been instrumental in participants' shared learning and thoughtful advocacy efforts.

Intentional Skill Building with Communal Support Creates Change with Integrity

Compassionate, informed direct action at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels is required to achieve our shared goal of equity for all. However, it's all too common for change makers to jump to direct action before nurturing the mental models that are needed to create change with integrity. This work takes practice, skill building, and communal support that prioritizes accountability and transparency. Ample preparation and attention to our own readiness is necessary when transforming systems without replicating patterns of harm.

Longitudinal Models Offer Opportunities for Sustainable Growth

In addition to the traditional Academy model, we also continued engagement with past Academy participants through a Peer Learning Community as well as provided an opportunity for select Academy graduates to take on a leadership role as Peer Leaders and Educators. These two options for longitudinal engagement exponentially improved participants' ability to lead equity work with confidence and further solidified their sense of community with colleagues across the nation dedicated to justice and liberation. Providing more opportunities for long-term engagement will improve equitable outcomes for CTE practitioners and students alike.

Our hope is that these takeaways resonate with you and the wider NAPE community. We sincerely appreciate everyone who contributed to our learning process and feel confident that the work we have been able to accomplish together will have a lasting impact on the students we serve. As we grow this work, we invite each of you to continue to inform and challenge our equity lens and hold us accountable as we move in community toward a shared vision for equity in CTE.

With deep gratitude,

The NAPE Team

Ashley Conrad   Kayla Santana-Linares   Nakeia Alsup

Silvia Ramos   Alea Tveit

Thank You

The success of the Equity Leadership Academy for States was made possible by our participants and Peer Leaders & Educators who co-created the learning and engagement space alongside us. We offer an additional thank you to the numerous Cohort 1 and 2 graduates who continue to stay engaged in this work through the Peer Learning Community. This process was also made possible by individuals and teams who worked behind the scenes to support our participants' experience and our capacity to highlight the successes of the Academy, including Iris & Aperture, Social Policy Research Associates, the Atlanta Airport North Holiday Inn staff, Rondell Crier, and Francois Odenthal-Cruz.

Maryland
1. Robin Bowden
2. Dr. Michael Grubbs
3. Brian Hammond
4. Renee Stout
5. Jalissa Thomas

Minnesota
1. John Fields
2. Dr. Marnie Glazier
3. Kevin Gutierrez
4. Eric Kelling
5. Hashan Kodippilige
6. Kari Koenig
7. Dr. Jeff Pool
8. Katlyn Tamaalii

North Carolina
1. Dr. Kimberly Forbes
2. Charlisa Hall
3. Dr. Mark Maxwell
4. Dr. Effie McMillian
5. River Owens

Pennsylvania
1. Dr. Karen Kozachyn
2. Richard McFadden
3. Dr. Marian McGorry
4. Dr. Dawn Moscariello
5. Dr. Momodu C. Taylor
6. Astrid Whitlam Escobar

Vermont
1. Marissa Barbieri
2. Mary Brodsky
3. Marcus Denice
4. Ruth Durkee
5. Pleisaie Kabasela
6. Candace Lewis
7. Andrea Van Liew

Peer Leaders & Educators
1. Monica Morrison
2. Francois Odenthal-Cruz
3. Dr. Esperanza Zenon

...I'M PRETTY SURE I CAN SPELL THEM WITHOUT AUTOCORRECT TOO...

The Academy was developed to help postsecondary state agencies center equity within Perkins V and the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment. The opportunity available to states and local education agencies through the CLNA process is broad and powerful, but it is hampered by the complexity of implementing such a process in a responsive and transformational manner at the local level. NAPE brought its many years of supporting CTE leaders and educators to the Academy to craft a space where state leaders, community college faculty and staff, and, most importantly, students could come together and begin the important conversations necessary to transform our education systems. Having successfully completed a pilot Academy in 2021 with 10 state teams, and a second cohort in 2022 with seven state teams, NAPE was eager to extend this opportunity to support an additional five state teams in their equity journey.

The Academy progressed through five distinct phases: **1) Co-creation, 2) Equity Training, 3) Action Research for Equity Project, 4) Academy Showcase, and 5) Evaluation**. This purposeful construction reflects the equity principles guiding the Academy, namely the importance of grounding work within participant experience.

Phase 1: Co-creation

Designing an Academy that was responsive to our participants was an important priority, especially given our commitment to grounded action in our equity work. To do so, this initial phase began with focus group interviews conducted with each team. The sessions were constructed to understand each stakeholder group's experience with equity, particularly within CTE programs at community colleges. Participants were also asked to provide guidance on their desires for their Academy experience in alignment with the Academy's goals.

Phase 2: Equity Training

The equity training phase was initiated in December 2023 and concluded in February 2024. The Academy training was divided into two components: equity training and capacity-building engagements. The equity centered professional learning sessions were composed of four 2-hour virtual sessions where all participants were engaged in various topics around equity, including NAPE's Equity Principles to frame the CLNA. All participants came back together for three 2-hour virtual sessions where central topics were revisited once more and expanded context and space was provided for nuanced, regional-specific support.

Phase 3: Action Research for Equity Project

Academy participants were encouraged to approach a problem they were facing in their local context and utilize the Equity Leadership Academy framework to move from theory to practice via an Action Research for Equity Project (AREP). The AREP process offered an opportunity for participants to solve a problem, answer a question, or understand something in their state's equity initiatives utilizing the guidance of the Equity Leadership Academy framework. The AREP was formally introduced in January 2024 with the expectation that teams would share their progress and reflections in community with the national cohort at the Academy Showcase in March 2024. Teams were able to engage in purposeful conversations and pose questions to peers and facilitators during Technical Assistance calls designed to support teams in their AREP process.

Phase 4: Academy Showcase

On March 13-14, 2024, teams gathered both in-person in Atlanta, Georgia and virtually via Zoom for a hybrid reflection and celebration of their learning journey as state teams and as a national cohort. Academy participants presented their learning from the AREP process and developed action plans for next-steps and community accountability.

Phase 5: Evaluation

The final phase of the Academy provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on the value and impact of the engagement. Focus groups and post-training surveys with participants yielded important data that we are using to guide changes to the Academy for future implementations.

What Will I Learn

Adopting an equity lens:
You will learn how to place equity at the coee of your work and build the skills necessary to have equity-minded conversations with colleagues in planning and oimplaementing your state CLNA process.

Build institutional capacity:
Our guidance and technical assistance will prepare you to support LEAs conducting the new analysis of special populations, particularly on how to analyze date to identify performance gap root cause.

Creating community:
The Academy will provide a platform to build relationships with other states spearheading CLNA efforts.

Sharing lessons learned:
Sharing participants' lessons learned with members across the nation will help us create sustained support paths to implement the CLNA in accordance with Perkins V.

Demographic Data

"No one is better situated to speak to the problems within CTE and education in general than the very students and families experiencing depressed outcomes."

NAPE's Equity Principles for the Perkins V CLNA

Of central importance to the success of the program was the matter of who was present at the Academy. At the outset, team leaders from State Departments of Postsecondary Education who applied for the program were instructed to prioritize a diverse team inclusive of the key stakeholders that reflected the various groups being served at its colleges. Thinking of students and of professional participants, team leaders thoughtfully recruited participants that belong to the groups identified as Special Populations within Perkins V, also considering gender and race/ethnicity and the multitudes of ways people may self-identify beyond the data structures our institutions have historically upheld. The diversity of experience reflected within the state teams led to extremely rich discussions and interactions during Academy meetings.

Cohort 3 Academy Participants

Note: *Several state teams reconstructed their membership after this demographic data was collected.*

Gender

Professionals

MEN
26.7%

WOMEN
73.3%

Students

MEN
42.9%

WOMEN
57.1%

Race/Ethnicity

Professionals

ASIAN	3.3%
BLACK	20%
WHITE	76.7%

Students

ASIAN	14.3%
WHITE	14.3%
LATINX	28.6%
BLACK	42.9%

State Representation

MARYLAND	5
NORTH CAROLINA	5
PENNSYLVANIA	6
VERMONT	7
MINNESOTA	8

Stakeholders

STATE DEPARTMENT STAFF
8.1%

OTHER
21.6%

POST-SECONDARY FACULTY STAFF
51.4%

CURRENT STUDENT RECENT GRADUATE
18.9%

Peer Leaders and Educators

Gender

MEN
33.3%

WOMEN
66.7%

Stakeholders

CURRENT STUDENT
RECENT GRADUATE
33.3%

POST-SECONDARY
FACULTY STAFF
66.7%

State Representation

| LOUISIANA | 2 |
| TENNESSEE | 1 |

Race/Ethnicity

ASIAN	25%
BLACK	25%
WHITE	50%

Peer Learning Community

Stakeholders

POST-SECONDARY
FACULTY STAFF
33.3%

POST-SECONDARY
SYSTEM OFFICE
23%

STATE DEPARTMENT
STAFF
44.4%

State Representation

ARIZONA	1
IOWA	1
NEW JERSEY	1
OREGON	2
LOUISIANA	4

Gender

MEN
33.3%

WOMEN
66.7%

Race/Ethnicity

ASIAN	11.1%
LATINX	22.2%
BLACK	33.3%
WHITE	55.6%

Highlights from the Academy

The Academy was initiated in October 2023 and all phases will be successfully completed by the end of November 2024.

By the numbers

10 hours of Co-Creation Sessions
8 hours of Equity Training Sessions
4 hours of Technical Assistance Calls
2 hours of Student Sessions

6 hours of Capacity-Building Sessions
10-hour Hybrid Showcase
7.5 hours of Peer Leader & Educator Training Sessions
9 hours of Peer Learning Community Sessions

Total hours: 53.5

"Two pieces that I found to be really most useful for us is thinking about how we can be more intentional about our partnerships [...] working together to help the students, and having a concrete action plan. Coming out of the Academy with steps that we are going to take and a plan that we are going to implement moving forward is incredibly useful."

-Mary Brodsky, Dean of People and Culture, Community College of Vermont

"This Equity Leadership Academy for NAPE was a great opportunity. It was a community being developed of people doing the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It was something that I think has been really impactful on the work, and just noticing that you're not by yourself in this community."

-Dr. Momodu C. Taylor, Vice President of Institutional Equity, Delaware County Community College

...I'LL CONTINUE TO DREAM
OF THEM UNTIL
I CAN MEET THEM...

Academy

Co-Creation Phase

Interviews with Academy participants established key aspects of the culture of the Academy: inclusion, vulnerability, and intentionality. All state team members' voices, from students to state leaders, were valued in conversations naming what equity and inequity looks like in their institutional and state context. Participants highlighted the personal impact that being a leader for equity has on their lives and identified the ways in which they hoped the Academy could support them and their efforts.

Using information gathered in these co-creation conversations, the Academy training framework was designed to focus on three key areas of need: **1) authentic community engagement, 2) engaging in conversations about equity, and 3) creating systems of support and accountability.**

Goal for Co-Creation Meetings: To provide each state with the opportunity to share input on current challenges, academy expectations, and preferred curriculum design and facilitation.

1. **North Carolina Co-Creation Meeting:** 3:00 - 5:00 PM EDT, Wednesday, October 11, 2023
2. **Vermont Co-Creation Meeting:** 3:00 - 5:00 PM EDT, Thursday, October 12, 2023
3. **Minnesota Co-Creation Meeting:** 11:00 - 1:00 PM EDT, Wednesday, October 18, 2023
4. **Pennsylvania Co-Creation Meeting:** 3:00 - 5:00 PM EDT, Tuesday, October 31, 2023
5. **Maryland Co-Creation Meeting:** 3:00 - 5:00 PM EDT, Wednesday, November 1, 2023

Training

NAPE's approach to the Academy was important in modeling the equity principles that would be shared with participants. One pivotal component of the initial training centered the voices of students. By bringing career and technical education students into a place of authority and as experts of the student experience, NAPE effectively illustrated an important change that schools and state agencies must make to bring about equity.

Goals for Equity Training Sessions

Meeting 1: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Tuesday, December 12, 2023
Goal: Provide an overview of NAPE's equity principles and participate in internal reflection to support our equity goals while caring for ourselves and our community.

Meeting 2: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Thursday, January 18, 2024
Goal: Offer strategies that foster authentic community engagement in the CLNA process while also amplifying and thoughtfully integrating student voice into decision-making that directly impacts their lives in postsecondary education.

Meeting 3: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Thursday, January 25, 2024
Goal: Equip teams with the tools and support to engage in tough conversations about equity so team members are able to move from agency into action in their work and learning environments.

Meeting 4: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Thursday, February 1, 2024
Goal: Demonstrate how to create systems of support within institutions while simultaneously creating healthy systems of accountability that foster community, wellbeing, and belonging.

Goals for Technical Assistance Calls

Meeting 1A: 2:00 - 3:00 PM EST, Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Meeting 1B: 3:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Wednesday, February 21, 2024
Goal: Prepare state teams for a successful AREP that puts student and community engagement at the center of their work.

Meeting 2A: 2:00 - 3:00 PM EST, Tuesday, March 5, 2024
Meeting 2B: 4:00 - 5:00 PM EST, Wednesday, March 6, 2024
Goal: Highlight the importance of developing trust as state teams and as a national coalition to intentionally build supportive and sustainable learning communities.

Goals for Student Sessions

Meeting 1: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Friday, February 9, 2024
Goal: Facilitate students through a process where they define student voice and explore the hallmarks of support to prepare them to co-facilitate an activity at the Academy Showcase.

Meeting 2: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Friday, March 1, 2024
Goals: Gain information regarding student needs and concerns with the Academy experience. Explore student interest in virtual or in-person facilitation. Explore student engagement needs and preferences for showcase participation.

Goals for Capacity-Building Sessions

Meeting 1: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Wednesday, February 7, 2024
Goal: Highlight the importance of internal work (personally and as a leadership group) and the importance of equitable decision-making as we move into action through our Action Research for Equity Projects.

Meeting 2: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Goal: Reiterate what was previously shared around student voice. Specifically ask participants to bring potential questions, protocols, or plans regarding their Action Research for Equity Projects to receive constructive feedback from the team and NAPE. Share some specific resources on forming focus groups and speaking with students in a respectful, empowering way.

Meeting 3: 2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Wednesday, February 28, 2024
Goal: We know this work is difficult and that pushing against the grain and momentum of institutions can be exhausting. Mirroring the culture we set out to establish, this session revisits utilizing equity-aligned self-care frameworks and practices to build community, integrity, and sustainability that nurtures connection.

Showcase

The Academy Showcase served as a final gathering for all Academy participants both in-person and virtual through a hybrid experience to celebrate in community their learning journey as state teams and as a national cohort. Community and self-care are central to humanizing equity work and to the structure of the Academy as a whole. Cultivating a showcase environment that centered the participants' joy and humanity encouraged vulnerability in sharing learning reflections and developing plans for next steps.

Showcase Day 1: 9:00 - 4:00 PM EDT, Wednesday, March 13, 2024
Goal: Provide critical feedback for state teams' AREP presentations as a national cohort and begin reflections on the foundational frameworks for long-term and sustainable systems change to support the progress they have started.

Showcase Day 2: 9:00 - 12:00 PM EDT, Thursday, March 14, 2024
Goal: Explore the mindfulness, commitment, action planning, and community accountability necessary to build capacity at participants' institutions to continue the next phases of their AREP projects.

Peer Leaders and Educators

Student and Professional participants from Cohort 2 of the Academy were invited to co-facilitate sessions for Cohort 3 under the role of "Peer Leaders and Educators" (PL&Es). These individuals were identified based on their demonstrated skill set in embodying and communicating shared equity values as well as their ability to commit to the agreed-upon timeframe of engagement.

Goals for PL&E Trainings

Orientation Meeting: 11:30 - 1:00 PM EDT, Friday, July 28, 2023
Goal: Prepare participants with the information they need to make an informed decision about becoming a Peer Leader and Educator while building a strong sense of community.

Training 1: 11:30 - 1:00 PM EDT, Friday, August 18, 2023
Goal: Review the roles and responsibilities of a Peer Leader and Educator and co-create a definition for what it means to facilitate as a guide.

Training 2: 11:30 - 1:00 PM EDT, Friday, August 25, 2023
Goal: Strengthen Peer Leader and Educators' facilitation skills in nonlinear and iterative facilitation styles and create ample space for continued community building.

Training 3: 9:30 - 11:00 AM EDT, Friday, September 8, 2023
Goal: Deepen Peer Leader and Educators' understanding of the content and structure of the Academy and begin to identify areas in which PL&E's unique gifts and strengths would best facilitate Academy conversations.

Training 4: 11:30 - 1:00 PM EDT, Friday, September 15, 2023
Goal: Invite Peer Leaders and Educators to co-create a vision for how student voice will be centered in the 3rd Academy cohort and deepen PL&Es understanding of how to create a community of support while facilitating.

Peer Learning Community

Academy graduates from Cohort 1 expressed a desire for continued connection beyond the Academy training to further deepen their knowledge, awareness, and equity-centered leadership skills as a national community of equity leaders. Participants met on a bi-monthly basis from April 2022 through March 2023, and were eager to welcome Cohort 2 graduates to their learning community beginning in June 2023 to build relationships and sustain their learning together.

Goals for Peer Learning Community Sessions

Peer Learning Community Session 1: 12:30 - 2:30 EDT, Tuesday, June 6, 2023
Goal: To create a space for Academy graduates to connect/reconnect, build community, and deepen our conversations on how we can continue to honor participants' needs through the selection of topics for future meetings, with the expanded lens of our growing community.

Peer Learning Community Session 2: 2:00 - 3:30 PM EDT, Tuesday, August 22, 2023
Goal: To discuss the ongoing politicization of equity, diversity and inclusion by encouraging participants to explore how to address fear, assess risk, and cultivating the courage to speak up in their roles and community.

Peer Learning Community Session 3: 2:00 - 3:30 PM EDT, Thursday, October 26, 2023
Goal: To engage participants in a conversation around the benefits of authentic youth engagement in policy and advocacy, and provide practical guidance on key resources, mindsets, and strategies that support this work through guidance from Nia West-Bey and a youth collaborator from a New Deal for Youth.

Peer Learning Community Session 4: 2:00 - 3:30 PM EDT, Wednesday, March 27, 2024
Goal: To reflect in community on our opportunities for championing equity and advocacy in our local contexts, utilizing the documentary How to Sue the Klan and a follow up discussion with the film's director John Beder as the framing for our discourse.

Peer Learning Community Session 5: 3:30 - 5:00 PM EDT, Thursday, October 3, 2024
Goal: To equip educators and state leaders with perspectives from trans and nonbinary students and professionals to help inform and create a healthy learning environment for all students.

Peer Learning Community Session 6: 1:00 - 2:30 PM EDT, Thursday, November 7, 2024
Goal: To center institutional policy and practice impacting trans and nonbinary students and professionals.

EQUITY AND EQUALITY

... I'LL USE MY
WHOLE MIND AND HEART
TO PONDER THEM...

Lessons Learned

The Cohort 2 Equity Leadership Academy focus groups provided invaluable lessons to ensure the Academy curriculum and structure continues to be responsive to the ever-changing needs of postsecondary educators and students. This iterative Academy design process yielded impactful additions to the Cohort 3 Academy, including deepening the opportunities for mentorship from Peer Leaders and Educators, providing more check-ins and support throughout the AREP process, and a more formalized way to provide deeper conversations and feedback for projects during the Academy Showcase.

In this same spirit of continuous reflection and aligning Academy goals with impactful experiences, Cohort 3 Academy participants provided feedback in focus groups conducted in partnership with Social Policy Research Associates, which resulted in four key lessons learned to benefit future iterations of the Academy.

Level-setting Educational Equity Vocabulary and Resources

Each Academy participant's lens for educational equity is informed by their unique personal and professional experiences. In order to encourage all participants to feel supported and prepared to engage in group discussions, focus group participants suggested providing a 'level-set' document containing a curated list of acronyms and terms that would be used throughout the Academy, as well as relevant resources to support their learning. This tool could serve to both make engagement more accessible as well as provide an organized reference page for participants to return to throughout their learning journey.

Explicit and Supportive Connection-Building

One of the main goals of the Academy is to build participants' capacity to center equity within the CLNA and begin the important conversations necessary to transform our education systems. NAPE's approach to systems transformation includes examining the values and mindsets that undergird the education system because sustainable long-term change starts with the very individuals who uphold the conditions that result in inequities. In addition to nurturing participants' equity lens through coalition building, resource sharing, and developing foundational equity knowledge and skills, participants expressed a desire for additional support in explicitly connecting their learning to their institutional CLNA processes. For future implementations, NAPE will facilitate action-planning conversations directly related to the opportunities and barriers participants anticipate when applying their learning to the CLNA.

Pacing the Learning for Depth and Relationships

Cohort 3's Showcase was redesigned to allow for extended community building time based on the previous Cohort's feedback. This change was appreciated by Cohort 3 participants and resulted in them requesting even more time for group discussions with participants who have similar institutional roles across state teams. The Academy was intentionally designed to foster relationships across titles, institutions, and local contexts because of the depth of learning that naturally occurs when diverse perspectives and experiences are brought to the table. Participants' request to increase the amount of peer to peer discussions and communal processing highlights the importance of establishing a foundation of connection and reciprocity in any learning experience.

Sustaining Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability Levers Post-Academy

At the Action Research for Equity Project Showcase, each state team presented on their progress to date. They also developed an action plan to continue their efforts in support of their short-term and long-term goals for amplifying student voice and centering equity in the CLNA. Participants discussed at the showcase the ways in which their learning journey was a cyclical process in which every strategy and resource they implemented would inform their team's direction and progress moving forward. Following the showcase, focus group participants shared the value that continued engagement beyond the Academy could have on the success of their projects. In addition to receiving additional support from NAPE as their action plans materialize into lasting institutional change, increasing the engagement length would also mean receiving feedback and support from their fellow Academy participants. This change could motivate and humanize the highs and lows that participants expect to experience on their learning journey. This request by participants informs NAPE's approach to developing and funding programs of work that support participants' long-term monitoring and evaluation goals and create a level of sustained accountability for participants to progress their projects to completion.

Academy Outcomes

NAPE partnered with Social Policy Research Associates to evaluate the effectiveness of the Academy for Cohort 3 participants, as well as the Peer Leaders and Educators and Peer Learning Community members. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through survey and focus group data to determine programmatic impact.

Academy Participant Outcomes

Professional Participants

At the end of the Academy, 100% of professionals expressed confidence in their "ability to recognize differing student experiences across varying intersecting identities", their "ability to identify ways to include the voices of marginalized students and their families in evaluation processes", and their "ability to apply strategies that will lead to equitable outcomes for marginalized students". These three skill sets related to supporting students were among the statements rated with the largest positive difference between the pre-survey average and the post-survey average. Each state team successfully recruited at least one student member to participate in the Academy, **and the impact of the student members' vulnerability in sharing both their own and their peers' experiences had a direct impact on professional participants' learning journey.**

"I think that [the student voice framework] has been really impactful for me in terms of being sure that we're not just checking the box where we say we have student engagement taking place, and just be sure that we have true student involvement…I thought that was a really impactful and useful tool." -Professional Academy Participant

"How we engage our student voice…having those students who met with us consistently, talking to us about how they wanted things to be and how they felt it would be important to move certain things forward. Having those disparate voices at the table was really important…it's given us a lot to think about." -Professional Academy Participant

Over 90% of professional participants expressed confidence in the following skills: ability to garner support from key leaders to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity; ability to guide others to center equity in their role and work; and facilitation skills to effectively lead equity-focused conversations. **100% of Academy professionals also agreed that they have the capacity to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity in their work.** In addition to their expressed knowledge in this skill set, all of the surveyed professional participants agreed that they receive support from key leaders in their organization, which NAPE acknowledges is a unique privilege, especially in light of current anti-DEI initiatives many communities are experiencing on the local and state levels. The Academy provided participants with a learning cohort to discuss their reflections, questions, and goals for leading equity initiatives in their institutional roles.

> *"I think it's always helpful to have these conversations [with] a community of people. As we're talking about what we do with equity, it's always helpful to just get another person's perspective."*
> *-Professional Academy Participant*

> *"Participating in the Academy with people from across the country really helped me to understand what are the common issues that we're facing, what are the different ways that we are addressing those issues, and what are the ways that we can support all of our young people to experience more equitable outcomes in our programs?" -Professional Academy Participant*

Post Academy, 100% of professional participants agreed with the statements "I know how to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity in my work," "The knowledge I currently have around centering equity is strong enough for me to share with my colleagues," and "I know how to identify systemic and institutional inequities that impact marginalized students."

When asked about whether they have incorporated a new method of student voice engagement in CLNA planning and implementation, the majority of professionals indicated that they have not yet done so but plan to in the future. **Throughout Academy discussions, teams recognized that sustainable systems transformation is an iterative process that requires prioritizing authentic and reciprocal relationships with stakeholders before jumping straight to action.** Many participants expressed a need to re-evaluate their institution's relationship with student engagement and collaboration before partnering in student voice engagement work. Additionally, many Academy teams reflected in their Action Research for Equity Project presentations that their state's CLNA process was already complete for the current Academic year, but that their learnings from the Academy would inform their initiatives engaging student voice in the CLNA moving forward.

> *"Two pieces that I found to be really most useful for us [was] thinking about how we can be more intentional about our partnerships and working together to help the students and having a concrete action plan. Coming out of the Academy with steps that we are going to take and a plan that we are going to implement moving forward is incredibly useful."*
> *-Professional Academy Participant*

Student Participants

Post Academy, the majority of students expressed a notable shift in their knowledge around centering equity and their ability to identify strategies to support the varying experiences of students and their families, including those who hold marginalized identities. **100% of student participants noted that their confidence in their skills to effectively lead equity-focused conversations shifted to a large extent after their participation in the Academy.** While professional participants shared that their learning experiences were positively impacted working alongside student members, it is also important to highlight the ways in which reciprocal and collaborative relationship building in turn nurtures students' self-confidence and leadership skills.

> *"The most valuable thing I learned from the Academy [was that] there is value for our voice… When I start[ed] the Academy, I was afraid to [say] some things. But after two/three sessions, I realized that we are free to say our ideas…All my life I [thought that] if we say something, if we [go] against something, it'll be a bad effect to us [and] our education. But I learned, no, there is a place for our voice." -Student Academy Participant*

The smallest shift on average for students was in their ability to actualize these plans and apply strategies that will lead to equitable outcomes for marginalized students as well as their ability to guide others to center equity in their role and work. Only a quarter of student participants shared that by the Academy's end they had been invited to participate in equity centered student voice initiatives, so **NAPE is hopeful that as teams progress in implementing their projects, student members will gain more opportunities to apply the strategies they have learned as equity leaders and in effect continue to build their confidence in these skill sets.** Similarly, there was no shift from pre to post surveys in student members' level of agreement with the statements "equity is important to me" and "I am committed to advancing equity on my college campus." Because these statements were initially highly rated by students, it is possible that even without having yet fully implemented their team project on their campus, they are still highly invested in this opportunity to collaborate with their team members to be change agents for equity.

> *"It's really important for educators to be intentional in the way they incorporate student voices in the classroom because the students, present and future, will be able to feel that impact. The students in the future will know the challenges that we faced, you know, leading up to that point where we gave them a good lending hand to better their future." -Student Academy Participant*

Peer Leader and Educator Outcomes

Following their involvement as a Peer Leader and Educator (PL&E) for Cohort 3, all PL&Es expressed confidence in their ability to guide Academy participants in how to educate others to center equity in their role and work as well as how to apply strategies that will lead to equitable outcomes for marginalized students. **All PL&Es also expressed confidence in their ability to guide participants to identify systemic and institutional inequities that impact marginalized students and to recognize differing student experiences across varying intersectional identities.**

In a post-Academy focus group, PL&Es shared that the reason they felt prepared to co-facilitate the Academy sessions was because of the training and support NAPE provided to allow them to identify their strengths and the topics they would be co-facilitating. In a slight change from Cohort 2 PL&E's time allocation, Cohort 3 PL&Es were invited to attend every Academy session, including ones they were not directly responsible for facilitating. In addition to the comprehensive training program, this increase in engagement may have accounted for the confidence Peer Leaders and Educators experienced at the Academy's close.

> *"I knew that I needed a strong network of people who understood the work…having the opportunity to be a Peer Leader and Educator really helped me do that and now I feel more competent and confident in navigating conversations and talking about equity and diversity and inclusion, and about helping others to challenge themselves to be introspective…and do the difficult work it takes to make cultural change at a local level." -Peer Leader and Educator*

Peer Learning Community Outcomes

On average, the majority of respondents felt that their participation in the Peer Learning Community (PLC) sessions led to a moderate to large increase in their confidence across the following skills: consensus-building for institutional equity initiatives, active listening in difficult equity conversations, collaborative agenda setting, articulating community assets when advocating for student voice, and relationship-building as a foundation for equity work. Participants reported that participating in the PLC sessions had impacted the following "to a very large" or "to an extremely large extent":

- Maintained my equity lens (66.6%)
- Amplified my equity lens (66.6%)
- Created space for my peers and I to voice the topics and activities we were most interested in discussing (55.5%)
- Allowed me to develop meaningful relationships with other Academy participants to attend PLC sessions (33.2%)

The most valuable aspects of PLC sessions that respondents reported were:

- Opportunities to have thoughtful and engaging conversations where they shared and listened to one another
- Having a safe space for difficult conversations
- Sharing lessons learned
- Exchanging resources and solutions
- Having a diverse group to discuss thought-provoking topics

EQUITY AND EQUALITY

...I'LL GET TO KNOW YOU SOME DAY.

Recommendations

Throughout the Equity Leadership Academy, there were a number of recommendations that emerged from Cohort 1, 2, and 3 that can be used to help guide postsecondary leaders across the nation working to keep equity at the core of the Perkins V CLNA process.

Internal Work

Systemic change first begins with our individual, internal work. Our experiences, our awareness, and our perspective constrain our ability to deeply engage in transformational change within our institutions. **Too often the rush to interventions meant to uplift marginalized student groups reinforce and replicate existing power structures that limit student access.** To truly counter institutional momentum and explore new solutions, educators must first interrogate their understandings with the help of professional learning before launching system wide change. This is magnified for state department staff responsible for guiding Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in implementing the CLNA process.

Reflection Questions:

- *How have your experiences shaped your perspective?*
- *What work can you do to expand your understanding of the space that you occupy as a professional and educator?*
- *What resources are readily available to support your personal growth?*

Framing and Defining Equity

Defining equity and developing a framework of action are necessary steps to guide the work of institutions. J**ust as an individual must grow in their understanding of their place in privilege, power, and marginalization, so too must governments and schools.** To help ensure teams work from a similar place of understanding, Departments of Education and institutions must begin by crafting a shared vision and understanding of equity. Interdepartmental and intradepartmental conversations on important issues will ensure that the collective is moving forward together, both engaging in self-analysis within, and guiding groups externally in a cohesive manner.

Reflection Questions:

- *Does your department and organization have a common understanding of equity, marginalization and the role of the organization in dismantling bias?*
- *What would it mean for your organization for individuals to regularly engage in difficult and honest conversations centered on systems of marginalization?*
- *Is your department honestly ready to support colleagues and other educators on issues of access and equity?*

Student & Community Engagement

All too often, student and community voice is viewed as an afterthought when addressing equity gaps in CTE. While stakeholder engagement is mandated in Perkins V, student and community engagement is not often done in a way that **honors the lived experience and expertise of the very students, families, and communities our institutions are meant to serve.** When our grounded action is driven and guided by authentic student and community voices, equity gaps will narrow and solutions will be driven by the very populations who are all too often excluded from decision-making that directly impacts their opportunities and success. This practice can be readily accessible by including student voice in data collection and design.

Reflection Questions:
- *Reflect on your own experience as a student. Were you engaged in decision-making that directly impacted you? If so, what did that process look like? Did you feel heard? How does that relate to your current engagement with students?*
- *Are you actively cultivating relationships with the students you serve? If so, what students are you currently listening to? Why? Who's missing?*
- *Do you have the appropriate staff and training to authentically amplify and integrate students in your institutional decision-making? If not, what support do you need?*

Community Accountability

Perkins V legislation provides states and local education agencies with a critical framework to center equity within CTE through the CLNA. The needs assessment process is the primary lever within Perkins V for educators to identify and analyze factors limiting the success of marginalized communities and underrepresented student groups in CTE. However, the regulations provided within this legislative framework should not be the only levers of accountability to ensure we are meeting the needs of students. Community accountability results in transformed systems by creating pathways that address the social context and conditions that fuel and feed a culture of harm. **We must create a culture of shared accountability within ourselves, our institutions, and the larger systems we participate in if we are to truly create the change our students deserve.** This level of accountability relies heavily on trust, relationships, shared goals and a commitment to redistributing power and resources to ensure the most marginalized students get to define and achieve what success means to them.

Reflection Questions:
- *What does community accountability mean to you? How does community accountability differ from compliance in your role?*
- *How are you holding yourself accountable to the voices of the most marginalized students?*
- *How do you ask for accountability when you don't have it? What support do you need to facilitate healthy systems of shared accountability in your institution (i.e. How do you define who is an ally and who is a gatekeeper)?*

Long-Term Engagement and Support

Equity-centered work is frequently encouraged to scale-up and move quickly rather than focus on the transformation of people and systems which requires time and careful capacity building. There is power in learning in small groups over an extended period of time where community, knowledge sharing, skill building and trusting relationships can be built with intention. **When individuals get the opportunity to share their personal stories and show up as their authentic selves, equity work becomes possible.** While it is imperative that we remain unapologetically focused on removing barriers and supporting all students with expediency, this must be done in a way that is grounded in relationship while addressing root causes in order to create change that lasts. We must prioritize and dedicate the necessary time and the resources that are required to truly center and learn in community with the most marginalized students that we serve.

Reflection Questions:

- *How has long-term, small group engagement and support impacted your equity learning journey?*
- *In what ways do you and your institution provide equity-centered learning opportunities rooted in relationship and community-building?*
- *How has the power of storytelling impacted your understanding of students, colleagues, and community members?*

Conclusion: Next Steps

The Equity Leadership Academy for States continues to address the need of postsecondary institutions to have opportunities to be in community with one another and skill build towards ensuring the Perkins V CLNA is a true lever for equitable and systemic change. Increasing capacity at the local, state, and national level necessitates continued learning, growing our community of support, co-creating systems of shared accountability, and amplifying authentic student voice.

We also know the responsibility to achieve equity in CTE programs nationwide cannot rest upon the actions and commitment of a handful of members in our communities. Transforming our systems requires us all. While the funding for this grant is currently complete, the Equity Leadership Academy for States will be integrated into NAPE's professional development offerings and be made available for purchase to clients across the country.

Visit our website *https://napequity.org/special-programs/equity-leader-academy/* for ways to stay involved.

We look forward to continuing this important work alongside you!