

# TRANSFORMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEAD TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM LEARNING COMMUNITY

YEAR 3, SESSION 3 NEWSLETTER



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## GENERAL OVERVIEW

During this virtual session of the Year 3 Learning Community, we focused on the role of deans in early childhood higher education leadership and how education leaders can think about engaging with and leveraging their deans to address the needs of students and the community. April's session included a live Q&A from our featured guest experts that covered practical strategies for supporting faculty to scale innovation while working with system leaders across the higher education system.

### LEARNING GOAL

Learn from national experts about innovative approaches to strengthening the early childhood workforce.



## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

### Q&A

For Session 3, we welcomed **Valerie Sakimura** from Deans for Impact and **Dr. Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy**, dean of the School of Education at American University, who provided some context and perspective about the role of deans in fostering a culture of innovation within teacher preparation programs.

**Valerie Sakimura** is the Executive Director of Deans for Impact. She brings a belief that great teachers have incredible power to honor and lift up children and 15 years of experience supporting leaders and teams in education, nonprofit, and for-



**VALERIE SAKIMURA**

Executive Director of  
Deans for Impact



**DR. CHERYL  
HOLCOMB-MCCOY**

Dean of the School of Education and  
a Distinguished Professor at  
American University



profit organizations to strengthen their impact. She previously served as Vice President of Programs at Deans for Impact, Associate Partner at NewSchools Venture Fund, and a consultant at Monitor Group. Valerie holds an AB in social studies from Harvard College, an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business, and an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

**Dr. Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy** is currently the Dean of the School of Education and a Distinguished Professor at American University (AU). An American Counseling Association (ACA) Fellow, Dr. Holcomb-McCoy has written extensively and is the author of the best-selling book (including a revised edition) *School Counseling to Close Opportunity Gaps: A Social Justice and Antiracist Framework for Success* (Corwin Press) and the recent edited book *Antiracist Counseling in Schools and Communities* (ACA Publishing). In her eight years as Dean, Dr. Holcomb-McCoy has significantly increased enrollments via the launch of successful online graduate programs and through new partnerships, such as becoming the higher education partner with Urban Teachers, a national teacher residency program. In addition, she founded AU's Summer Institute on Education, Equity, and Justice and the AU Teacher Pipeline Project, including an early childhood educator stackable credentialing partnership with Trinity Washington University and Martha's Table, a DC-based nonprofit organization. Prior to leading the School of Education at AU, she served as Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs campus-wide and as Vice Dean of Academic Affairs in the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, where she launched the Johns Hopkins School Counseling Fellows Program and the \$25M Faculty Diversity Initiative. Dr. Holcomb-McCoy has also been an associate professor in the Department of Counseling and Personnel Services at the University of Maryland College Park and Director of the School Counseling Program at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. A decorated scholar, she has written more than 100 publications, including articles in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and white papers. From 2014 to 2016, she served as a consultant to former First Lady Michelle Obama's Reach Higher Initiative, a program dedicated to supporting first-generation students in making it to and through college. Dr. Holcomb-McCoy holds her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Virginia and a doctorate in counseling and counselor education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



In their [fireside chat](#) video, Valerie and Cheryl shared with us their backgrounds and experiences in the field of higher education, as well as how they strive to support leaders in higher education. During the virtual session, grantees had the opportunity to dive deeper into conversation with both of these guest experts.

## **How do you make sure deans get and stay engaged, and how do you sustain that engagement?**

### **CHERYL:**

- It is important to communicate clearly and strategically with deans and be prepared to share and present ideas to the provost board. Most deans are not trained in collaboration outside of universities, something many have to learn. It is beneficial to foster relationship-building through organic opportunities by inviting them to events.
- Partnerships can help deans accomplish their goals for the provost, such as at AU, where a stackable credentialing program led to a gathering of presidents for breakfast, facilitating shared goals and progress.

### **VALERIE:**

- Facilitating conversations and interactions with potential partners helps ensure deans remain engaged.

## **What strategies have you used to share ideas with a dean and refrain from it becoming a conversation about competing with other projects or schools within the university?**

### **CHERYL:**

- The conversation should center on the program but also share the big-picture vision. The current financially constraining times create competition, making it crucial to get the dean in a place where the discussion focuses only on one's program and the vision for the future.
- Summer is a great time to schedule meetings with deans, bringing ideas on how to attract more funders and donors.
- Educating the dean about how early childhood education is related to postsecondary readiness/success can help make connections between multiple components and the impact the program will have beyond the immediate scope of the program itself.

### **VALERIE:**

- Finding a way to tie in policy to the presentation or bringing in people who can speak to it emphasizes important points during conversations with the dean.
- Planning opportunities for the dean to see the important work firsthand can provide stories that aid in decision-making in favor of the program. It's important to utilize storytelling as a tool to shift the conversation.

## **There is a dean who is finding it challenging to facilitate collaboration within the university. How can I support that effort?**

### **CHERYL:**

- Change in behavior often occurs when individuals are given some incentive or reward for changing, such as making sure they understand they don't lose anything by collaborating. Identifying what the barriers are, such as interpersonal history, and talking about what can be done is crucial.

### **VALERIE:**

- Collaboration can start small, which can be powerful and entice others to want to try.

## **What is one thing people should know about effective deans?**

### **CHERYL:**

- Deans are trying and have people they have to answer to who are most likely disconnected from what is happening day to day, often doing things because of outside influence.
- A piece of advice: Bring information and experiences to your dean. They may not have full familiarity with your field.

### **VALERIE:**

- Effective deans are clear on priorities and values and how to line things up behind these priorities and values. A piece of advice is to work to find out what those values and priorities are.



# FINAL SESSION APPRECIATIONS

Grantees shared reflections and appreciations from their learnings across the three learning community sessions this year. They expressed gratitude for the dedicated space for learning and appreciation for the supportive resources and sense of community that this effort has provided.

**“Thankful for all of the work SRC in collaboration with The Collaborative have invested in our Professional Learning Communities! THANK YOU! You have truly helped foster and create a sense of community!”**

**– GRANTEE**

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

### WEBINAR

### Highlighting Innovations in Early Childhood Lead Teacher Preparation: Nebraska and Hawai‘i Spotlights

During this fireside chat, early childhood education experts Julia Torquati, from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and Dr. Theresa Lock, from the University of Hawai‘i Mānoa College of Education, explore the common challenges and innovative solutions in higher education that are shaping the future of the early childhood education workforce. Both guests are at the forefront of initiatives aimed at removing obstacles for students pursuing early childhood education careers. Together, they delve into their respective projects, emphasizing the development of competency-based frameworks and centering equity. This discussion highlights the transformative potential of these frameworks in breaking down barriers, creating accessible pathways, and ensuring the success of diverse students on their journey to becoming highly qualified early childhood professionals.



You can tune into the recorded session [here](#).