



Spring 2022 Newsletter

Leading The Way Forward

Bringing Theory to Practice

Todd Rosendahl

During the fall of 2020, BT2P staff grappled with several vital questions. How should BT2P respond to the intersecting crises currently facing society and higher ed, including the pandemic, systemic racism and its devastating effects, and the global economic collapse? How might we use the success of BT2P's Multi-institutional Innovation Grants (launched in 2019) to inform new integrative, intersectional work? How could we use our resources to impact the national conversation in a way that goes beyond emergency management, leading to transformative change that centers students who have been historically excluded or marginalized?

We answered these questions by launching [The Way Forward](#) (TWF), a program aimed at catalyzing positive responses to the crises confronting US higher education and American society. It included two linked initiatives:

- a [podcast series](#) featuring open-ended conversations with educational thought-leaders and innovators about paths for transformative change in education during a time of crisis
- a grants initiative supporting multi-institutional projects responding to the crises through collaborations that advance the core educational purposes to which BT2P is committed

For the grants initiative we supported fifteen proposals comprising partnerships among more than fifty higher education institutions, consortia, and community organizations (see a full list of grantees [here](#)). Both the project themes and the institutions reflect our goal of centering equity, especially racial equity. The projects offer varied and significant responses to the crisis, and some two-thirds of the participating institutions are minority-serving institutions, community colleges, and non-flagship public universities. Taken as a whole, they feature important cross-project themes: course and curriculum development centering civic engagement and climate justice; making enrollments and the transfer experience more inclusive; support for underserved student communities, including BIPOC, refugees, and immigrants; faculty professional development; and projects focused on cultural narratives and public history.

We hosted virtual convenings for the national grantee cohort in spring 2021 and spring 2022. These gatherings have allowed faculty, staff, students, and community partners to share details about their ongoing work, engage in conversations on common themes across projects, and begin to develop a national community of practice. Numerous intersections were explored in 'unconference' breakouts and group discussions, including working across institutions and systems, transfer pathways, participatory action research, new pedagogies (e.g. culturally responsive and trauma-informed approaches), student engagement, storytelling and counternarratives, and the intersections of racial and environmental justice.

This summer we plan to welcome members from all fifteen projects to our host campus at Elon University. This will provide an opportunity for folks to build lasting relationships, develop connections to advance current and future work, and confront recurring challenges identified across projects – for instance, combating faculty fatigue and hurdles to inter-institutional collaboration. We look forward to telling you about this gathering in a future edition of our biweekly email letter, [Bringing It](#).

This issue of the Newsletter features reflections from the leaders of five of these remarkable projects. It presents an array of innovative responses to the crises that, while diverse in focus and approach, align in centering equity and addressing the needs of historically excluded and marginalized students. These projects are at different stages. Although some may have completed the activities initially proposed in their plans, you will see that all continue to develop new avenues for supporting students and extensions of the original work.

In this Newsletter you will learn about:

- the Community Campus Collaborative’s work supporting refugee students and their communities in upstate New York.
- a partnership between College Unbound, Brown University, and Providence College on a series of workshops and a seminar course that reimagines the role of community engagement for public problem-solving.
- Psychology Professionals of Tomorrow, a mentoring program created at Rutgers University – Newark for undergraduate students of color wishing to pursue a career in clinical psychology.
- a collaboration among public, private, technical, and tribal colleges and universities in Wisconsin to host a statewide gathering for post-secondary instructors centering student equity and indigenous knowledge and communication.
- the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development’s workshop series on how trauma manifests in classrooms and how to incorporate trauma-informed teaching practices to better support all students.

We are proud to support these projects and those of all the TWF grantees. Alongside conversations with thought-leaders in the first season of the podcast, these grantee projects have inspired and informed the development of BT2P’s next phase of work. The projects in The Way Forward cohort, and those featured in this Newsletter, offer glimpses into possibilities for change through the innovative approaches like those enacted by these project leaders. We hope you enjoy learning more about these projects and that you will join us in the important work ahead as we launch our new national initiative, the [Paradigm Project](#).