



## **ESG, OCCRL, and DVP-PRAXIS to Support Lumina Foundation Initiative to Create Equitable Credential Pathways for Adult Students of Color**

[Lumina Foundation](#) has selected Education Strategy Group (ESG) and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at the University of Illinois to lead and coordinate technical assistance for the [Racial Equity for Adult Credentials in Higher Education \(REACH\) Collaborative](#), a new national initiative focused on creating equitable credential to associate degree pathways for adult students of color. DVP-PRAXIS LTD will serve as the learning and evaluation partner for the collaborative which will include nearly 200 community colleges from California, Colorado, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

Community colleges participating in the REACH Collaborative will develop between four and eight academic pathways that align with in-demand career fields. Equity champions, community partners, and workforce leaders will be engaged at the state and local levels to support colleges in designing the pathways. Culturally sustaining practices and sequenced supports that account for and address the unique needs and lived experiences of Black, Hispanic, Latino and Native American adults will be embedded in the pathways.

Persistent systemic barriers in higher education have resulted in inequitable attainment of quality credentials and degrees. REACH Collaborative's intentional focus on adults and on closing racial equity gaps, which disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic have threatened to further widen, is in direct alignment with the expertise of selected partners.

[Education Strategy Group](#) (ESG) is a mission-driven, national consulting firm focused on increasing educational attainment and expanding economic mobility. ESG provides thought-leadership and evidence-based approaches to education leaders across the K-12 and higher education systems to improve student outcomes and advance equity. In addition to an experienced, diverse team, ESG has worked to advance work that will support the efforts of the REACH Collaborative. These efforts have included development of tools to improve non-credit to credit pathways for students as well as a comprehensive framework with promising strategies and concrete examples for fundamentally transforming how institutions serve adult learners.

For over 30 years, [OCCRL](#) has conducted research on programs, policies, and practices that span P-20 education and strengthen pathways to postsecondary education and careers. With an intense focus on how community colleges impact education and employment outcomes, OCCRL promotes holistic approaches to bolster equitable engagement and outcomes for diverse youth and adults who want to transition to and through college to further their education in high-quality academic programs and/or their gainful employment in careers across the education pipeline. OCCRL employs culturally responsive and equity-centered approaches to studying and supporting comprehensive college and career pathways that include opportunities

for students to pursue their immediate goals (basic skills, training, certificates, degrees) while providing them with seamless opportunities for further education.

Since 2005, [DVP-PRAXIS LTD](#) has provided formative and summative evaluation services informed by culturally relevant and equity-focused principles by designing project activities and data collection efforts using participatory and inclusive approaches. DVP-PRAXIS led several multi-site evaluations highly relevant to advancing equitable non-degree credentials to associates pathways, documenting evidence-based practices on strengthening non-credit to credit pathways, the benefits of non-degree credentials on employment and earnings for adults, and the impact of comprehensive supports on adults' completion of non-degree credentials. Additionally, DVP-PRAXIS has engaged in several evaluations of new and promising strategies to address students' basic and recently completed a five-year randomized controlled trial evaluation of success coaching at 10 North Carolina community colleges that validated the impact of personalized and proactive student supports on student retention, especially for Black students.

**Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation:**

"There is an urgent need to provide functional and equitable pathways to attainment for adults of color. Lumina is proud to support the REACH Collaborative, not only as a necessary effort to reach our own attainment goal but as a moral imperative. Community colleges are uniquely suited for this critical work because of their long history as diverse engines of social mobility, addressing the needs of both students and the workforce."

**Matt Gandal, President and CEO of ESG:**

"ESG is honored to lead this important work with our national, state and institutional partners. Increased educational attainment for adults of color and low-income students is our top organizational priority and the pandemic has increased the urgency of this work. Ensuring that higher ed is responsive and ready to support diverse adults' needs is vital to individual economic mobility and our collective recovery."

**Eboni Zamani-Gallaher, Director of OCCRL:**

"The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) is pleased to work with Lumina and ESG to amplify outreach, recruitment, improve student experiences and outcomes. We are excited to support colleges in strengthening the associate degree pipeline for racially minoritized adult learners with a focus on equity and endeavor to build the capacity of educators relative to culturally sustaining practices. Our Continuum of Culturally Sustaining Postsecondary Practices (CUSP2) framework will serve as a premier virtual resource for unpacking the varied ways racial inequities are perpetuated and exacerbated as racially minoritized adults pursue workforce relevant credentials and their associate degrees. Individuals and colleges that are motivated to be culturally proficient educators will find CUSP2 to be an outstanding go-to resource, and we are excited to delve into what this technology can offer."

**Derek Price, Principal and Founder of DVP-PRAXIS LTD:**

"We are excited to support the complex undertaking of the REACH Collaborative to scale equitable pathways for adult students of color by evaluating the change processes undertaken

and by providing timely feedback on accelerants and obstacles to progress. In doing so, we hope the evaluation will provide insights for scaling equitable pathways effectively that can be used by the Collaborative and for future state systems that want to pursue this important work to increase post-high school credentials for adults of color.”

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### **About Lumina Foundation**

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. We envision a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation’s need for talent through a broad range of credentials. Our goal is to prepare people for informed citizenship and for success in a global economy.

### **About ESG**

Education Strategy Group is a mission-driven consulting firm that works with K-12, higher education, and workforce leaders to achieve greater impact. We work across sectors to move the needle on issues that are critical to improving student success and advancing equity.

### **About OCCRL**

The mission of the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) is to use research and evaluation methods to improve policies, programs, and practices that enhance community college education and the transition to college for diverse learners at the state, national, and international levels.

### **About DVP-PRAXIS LTD**

We are an action-oriented, culturally responsive, and equity-focused consulting firm providing formative and summative evaluation services, strategic facilitation and advising, and technical assistance and training to support efforts to inform implementation and measure impact across postsecondary education and training systems.