

Title:

Voices of Power: Shifting Paradigms in Higher Education

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Intro:

Ensuring students from historically excluded communities are seen, heard, and honored at the intersection of their identities on-campus and through policy served as the foundation for this work. Post-secondary administrators, faculty, and staff members encounter a decision-making process that directly impacts the student experience and campus culture, but there are few cases when those who will be most influenced by those choices can give voice to their actual needs, expectations, and lived experiences. The charge of this project was to create a student-facing shift power, share power engagement framework that supports a student's ability to increase their agency and autonomy in decision-making processes that affect both their educational journey as well as the journeys of future college students.

With this in mind, the approach was co-constructed by Kinetic Seeds, Changing Perspectives, and a dynamic group of students (both undergraduate and graduate) from diverse institutions across the country. Our design approach constructed spaces within which we (students, learners, educators, advocates, leaders, policymakers, funders, and others) made meaning together. The steps to project completion included:

1. We recruited a cohort of 6 student fellows who co-led the design process with Kinetic Seeds with support from Changing Perspectives.
2. We interviewed fellows about their lived experiences within higher education and present the current stakeholder framework for feedback and applicability.
3. We developed a recruitment strategy with student fellows and fielded a student in-take survey. Those findings guided the development of an interview group protocol.
4. We conducted virtual 90-minute interview with students. Those findings informed the design retreat.
5. We conducted a 2 ½ hour participatory design retreat to conceptualize a student engagement framework.
6. Disseminated final draft of engagement framework with a survey to participating students.

This research served the purpose of identifying the core needs of students and how to address those needs in a way that results in student involvement and autonomy when it comes to maneuvering their institution-specific power dynamics, maximizing their involvement in salient ways, and informing educational policy and decision-making. We collected data through a mixed methodological approach based on phenomenological inquiry that utilized surveys, interviews, and a comprehensive workshop, allowing participants to share feedback and experiences about their respective institutions. Common themes gleaned from this process included feeling unheard, undervalued, isolated, the need for community, and stronger relationships with staff and faculty. In addition, we find inequity among the student population (especially among Black, First Nations, Hispanic, and students from low-income), which includes financial concerns. A lack of these needs being met presents barriers to students' agency and ability to participate in the decisions that shape their student experience directly and, as a result, silence their voices. For these barriers to be lifted, we present a framework for addressing these challenges that present various methods and approaches for institutions to utilize and ones that students can draw from to understand how to advocate and hold their institutions accountable for the impact they have as they share governance. Displaying actions that align with what students should be getting out of their college experience, such as fair compensation, increased accessible opportunities for active participation in campus governance, policy development, and resource development, and providing an open and accepting environment would allow students the necessary conditions to play vital roles in bringing about lasting change to their campus community.

Institutions that provide clear role expectations and functions regarding transformation efforts increase understanding of the decision-making process and push students toward taking action in those roles. Additionally, without proper opportunities to use their voices, students will not be in, or be aware of, spaces where they can collaborate or communicate with those in places of power. Long-term, the intention is that students will substantially direct change on their campuses by claiming a seat at the table where decisions are made for them. Student empowerment should have a place in higher education; prioritize listening to the students they serve, uplift, encourage students to use their voices, and begin thinking from a place of equity. Student voice should drive the institution's vision, mission, strategic planning, and policy-making, as it ensures a holistic approach in accountability for the ways in which they ensure the success (academically, professionally, and interpersonally) of their student body. In doing so, the campus climate is enriched for all campus community members.

Survey Analysis

Quantitative Research Description

The Voices of Power survey consisted of 30 questions focused on student experiences, perspectives, and relationships on campus. The aim of the survey is to map out undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions of power dynamics on their campus and how it shapes their academic journey. Upon analyzing feedback from a nationwide sample of undergraduate and graduate students, we find that their view on power dynamics is impacted by their ability to lend student voice to drive decision-making or student's influential expression of ideas on issues related to their education and campus life. Below are the details related to the survey data, including participant demographics and response data.

The results yielded 25 student responses. The cohort primarily comprised racial minorities, with:

- 48% (n = 12) being African American and 20% (n = 5) Hispanic/Latino.
- From this sample population, 76% (n = 19) were young adults aged between 18 to 24.
- While 72% (n = 18) of the cohort identified as female, 8% (n = 2) identified as gender-nonconforming or nonbinary.
- We find that of the population, 56% (n = 14) identified as heterosexual and 40% (n = 10) identified as members of the LGBTQAI2S+ community.
- The majority of the cohort were finishing their undergraduate experience (32% were 4th-year students, n = 8) or were graduate students (28%, n = 7).

Below is a breakdown of the age, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation of students.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

	n	%
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	19	76
25-34	3	12
35-44	2	8
45-54	1	4
<i>Gender Identity</i>		

Female	18	72
Male	5	20
Gender queer	2	8
<i>Sexual Orientation</i>		
Heterosexual	14	56
LGBTQAI2S+	10	40
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
African American/Black	12	48
Asian	1	4
Hispanic	5	20
Mixed Race	2	8
White	4	16
Not applicable	1	4

A significant percentage of the cohort, 84% (n = 21), received financial aid or scholarships. However, 64% (n = 16) indicated that this support was inadequate to cover tuition, let alone fees. Consequently, 76% (n = 19) of the group were employed, which might explain why only 20% (n=5) of students felt they were consistently thriving in their college experience. Nonetheless, 40% (n = 10) of the cohort still felt they were somewhat thriving, and a significant number of participants (64%, n = 16) felt a sense of belonging at their university.

We find that students were heavily involved on campus in organizations and on-campus events; 56% (n = 14) engaged anywhere from three to more than five times in the semester. As a result, 54% (n = 13) of the population felt that campus organizations always considered student opinions and feedback when making decisions, while 12% (n = 3) felt that both faculty and administration do this. Surprisingly, 52% (n = 13) also indicated that they had not personally offered feedback to their universities about their experiences, which coincides with 76% (n = 19) of the population having never been involved with student government meetings. Thus, 40% (n =

10) of the cohort did not engage in initiatives and programs that allow for student participation and input in decision-making.

Key Insights:

- Financial aid options institutions offer do not meet the rising costs of college enrollment. Institutions are responsible to plateau cost-of-attendance and increasing financial aid and scholarship options (including those available to undocumented students, justice-impacted/formerly incarcerated students, and First Nations students).
- Students have to maintain full-time or part-time employment to supplement cost-of-attendance, which impacts their ability to engage on campus and care for their interpersonal needs.
- There is an overall sense of belonging, as students feel their ability to thrive is not hindered, which is correlated with their active involvement on campus in various organizations, clubs, and university-sponsored activities.
- Most students have not offered institutional feedback and are not included in decision-making processes.

Breakdown of Interview Analyses

The purpose of the qualitative inquiry was to allow students an opportunity to expand on topics that may have been more nuanced but could not provide full context due to the natural limitations of quantitative data gathering via the initial survey. The essential point of this interview was to highlight power imbalances, lack of resources, and community issues within the perspective of an institution. One of the primary goals of this project was to understand the power dynamics as understood by students and then to find the best framework to shift that power dynamic between them and their institutions to help improve student outcomes; as a result, when asked about how they understand power, their combined definition was, "Being the individual with the power to change/make decisions towards upward mobility."

Results

The demographics of the participants for the interview:

- Most of our participants were Black women at 50% (n=10); white men and Hispanic women represent 15% (n=3) equally. The remaining sample consisted of mixed-race men at 10% (n=2) and Black men and white women at 5% (n=1), respectively.

Below is a breakdown of race/ethnicity and gender of students.

Student Interview Demographics

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Interviews

(20 Participants)

	n	%
<i>Race/Gender Specific Identifier</i>		
Women	14	70
Men	6	30
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
African American/Black	11	55
White	4	20

Hispanic	3	15
Mixed race	2	10

After gathering the transcriptions and using notes from each interviewer, a comprehensive and thematic summary of the interviews was made. The analysis of these interviews was then evaluated to find commonalities and themes that guide the results section in summarizing critical points of each interview. The primary themes discovered throughout the inquiry were:

- Students felt their voice did not matter regarding institutional power, with over half the participants stating that their voices are not being heard within the interview.
 - “I was very satisfied last year when we did the roundtable. When I think about it though, I don’t really know if things changed from there.”
- Many students felt they wanted a more substantial and closer relationship with the faculty on campus. Conversely, we find conflicting data where students felt supported by their on-campus community while others did not. In addition, students voiced concerns about not feeling supported by faculty and the lack of resources available on campus.
 - “I think it’s important for the faculty to always express that it is a safe place where everyone can share their opinions but actually mean it.”
- In addition to not feeling there is enough space for people of color or those with marginalized identities, this sense was exacerbated due to the socio-political makeup that parallels their state's socio-political background.
 - “It negatively impacts students that are people of color or identify as part of the LGBTQ community...If you look at the positions of power, you don’t see diversity within the people in positions of power.”
- Financial instability is a powerful indicator of belonging and student success.
 - “Too many issues with FA to see where money is going, there's a vote where they vote on where money is going, but this year they canceled students ability to vote was removed so they don't have a say anymore - used to itemize the bill but now it just says fee and that’s not helpful and wants to know more details - so don't remove the knowledge that helps people make informed decisions and know where their funds are going (it led to the removal of the student wellness center because they said students wouldn't use it).”

Table 3 (20 participants)

Theme	n	%
Feeling like student's voice is NOT heard	15	75
Feel unsupported by faculty and the lack of resources available to students	12	60

Students want more collaboration/stronger relationships with faculty	11	55
Student organizations are pivotal when making connections with students	11	55
Inequity amongst students, like feelings as though athletic students are more prioritized	10	50
Struggle Financially	10	50
Feel supported by the community	10	50
Feelings of isolation and wanting more community	9	45
Has witnessed abuse by professor/faculty/Greek Life	8	40
Expressed the need for a student liaison	8	40
Witnessed no abuse	5	25
Not enough valued space for BIPOC	4	20
Feeling like the student's voice is heard	3	15

Overall, the interviews highlighted the divide amongst campuses where student voices are not valued, and resources such as community, guidance on campus, and relationships with faculty members are a continuing issue.

Key Insights:

- There is a lack of standardization related to the financial aid process; financial aid professionals are often seen as unhelpful, and the support received by students solely depends on individual employees rather than simply being a part of the process.
 - “I feel like I’m kind of at the whim of financial aid packages. I don’t really understand how those work and the same with the registrar. Right now, we have a really good registrar who has helped me transfer credits toward my degree and I’ve heard the same experience with other students. Whereas with the previous registrar, students weren’t able to transfer credits like they’d hoped so that feels like institutional mandates.”
- Institutional leaders performatively ask for the perspectives of their students but do not include the available feedback on how the universities and colleges are governed. This

leads to the perception that students truly have no power on campus. The best mechanism for shifting this dynamic is for students to be actively involved in institutional governance, for feedback to be consistent, and for strategic planning to directly align with student concerns.

- “It’s not enough to just give students a seat at the table; they have to actually listen and work on actively implementing the hinges that matter to students.”
- “Feedback from students needs to be taken seriously, and be conducive of all students concerns, wants, and needs. “
- “School should provide more transparency on decision making, and follow up with students afterwards (keep them informed).”
- “The administration is very selective on what they hear and pay attention to.”

Design Studio Suggestions

On December 1, 2023, our research team and ten student participants came together for a virtual design studio. This space was intended to serve as an opportunity for students to reflect on the ongoing research findings and engage in collaborative brainstorming to help reimagine how institutional power dynamics can be transformed. Our team shared insights from the survey and qualitative interviews to obtain student input and feedback. Next, we facilitated a co-design activity that led participants through a series of "power-play scenarios" reflecting student concerns that impact academic success and well-being. Participants developed a strategy for how to address each of these scenarios to ensure equitable outcomes in service of student empowerment and institutional transformation. Our gathering concluded with reflections on the experience and visions for creating a student-centered framework to center student voice and engagement.

Several areas of exploration emerged throughout this experience, validating some of the research findings that surfaced earlier, especially pertaining to institutional power, personal empowerment, student advocacy, and change-making efforts. Below, we will share some highlights from the power-play scenarios:

Student Agency and Informed Decision-Making: Often, in situations where students feel lost, powerless, or do not have the answers they are looking for, it can become increasingly difficult to seek out support. Thus, it is essential to validate their experiences and remind them that they have the agency to choose what makes sense for them and their needs while offering support and guidance to help them make informed decisions. However, it is important to highlight that there are limitations to student agency based on the available resources due to institutional decision-making and allocation. Student perspectives should be integrated into these decisions to ensure their needs are met and represented.

Awareness And Transparency of Student Resources: Students can find it challenging to navigate the complexities of institutional structures when seeking support. They may be unaware of available resources, or their expectations may not align with what is being offered, stemming from the gap between lived student experiences and institutional decision-making. Thus, there is a need to ensure that students are not only aware of support resources but can access them timely and effectively.

Bridging The Communication-Action Gap: It is important to create channels of feedback, such as a monthly meetings with faculty and administrators for students to personally voice their concerns or an email set up expressly for students to be able to communicate any need at any time, ensuring their interests and experiences are being represented. In some situations, these conversations do not happen effectively, and student concerns are overlooked and neglected, leading to students feeling alone in their academic journey and negatively affecting their grades and social life on and away from campus. However, there is a broader concern about the effectiveness of providing student feedback if it is not actively shaping institutional policy, culture, and decision-making.

Creating Avenues for Peer Support and Advocacy: Amidst a backdrop of institutional resources not "working" effectively to support student success and wellbeing, students often rely on informal networks of peer support, such as GroupMe, text message group chats, and after-class meetings with self-formed peer groups. When the student's voice is ignored and not reflected in institutional actions, students often attempt to take additional steps to advocate for themselves. However, they also feel that there are not many opportunities to advocate efficiently for their needs and that they do not have a peer community to turn to for support unless they are heavily involved in extracurriculars, which encompasses a problem due to the constraint on time most students face. Students have found solace by joining student-led groups such as Greek fraternities or sororities for comradery and offering feedback to the engagement offices on their campus when time allows. However, even then, the effectiveness is very little due to these organizations still having to answer to the higher-ups and work within the confines of the present institutional structure. The current avenues for advocacy, such as completing surveys or reaching out to administrators and department heads, have been primarily tokenized and used to appease students without any real action or change to the inadequacies brought forth. This can be exhausting and negatively impact students' ability to thrive at academic institutions. This has also resulted in students turning to informal networks for more adequate peer support.

Shift Power. Share Power. Engagement Framework:

Shifting and sharing power with students is not just a theoretical ideal but a practical pathway to more effective education. It involves creating mechanisms for feedback, dialogue, and co-creation between students and educators and utilizing these insights to guide institutional policies and practices. Institutions must move beyond "performative" engagement and invest in sustained, meaningful interactions that empower students to take a lead role in their education. It means dismantling barriers to student engagement, such as financial constraints, cultural misunderstandings, and bureaucratic hurdles.

As we culminate our exploration into fostering student empowerment, our research offers a framework to amplify student agency and ensure their active participation in their education. Key to this framework is the dual emphasis on student self-advocacy and institutional support. Acknowledging the challenges students face when feeling disempowered, it is crucial for all higher education professionals to affirm their experiences, underscore their decision-making power, and provide the necessary guidance for well-informed choices. Simultaneously, higher education professionals must understand that student agency involves recognizing that student constraints are shaped by the decisions of institutional leaders and programmatic boundaries, which far too often dictate the resources they can access.

It is more than establishing a culture of shared governance and continuous improvement. It is about acknowledging that many factors impact student decision-making and that each student responds differently based on their identities and lived experiences. The people who make up the institutions that serve today's students must take the time to understand and appreciate the diversity of student populations, including the complexities of intersecting identities. This may seem daunting, but it requires faculty, staff, and administrators to be aware of their positionality and assume shared responsibility for all students' success.

Therefore, below, we offer a student-driven approach to shifting and sharing power that offers actions to ensure that student perspectives are continuously integrated into institutional decision-making and that student experiences are actively improved, fostering environments where student agency and autonomy are cultivated and respected.

Empowerment Essentials: Strategies to Shift and Share Power

What Students Need to Feel Empowered	Ways to Boost Students' Agency and Autonomy
<p><i>Acknowledge the inherent power dynamics in the college experience and use them to benefit and support student needs rather than control or limit their potential.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Channel faculty and staff influence and resources towards issues and problems that are important to students. ● Avoiding over-exerting authority and treating students, if not as equals, as adults with meaningful thoughts and opinions. Fostering a space of mutual respect
<p><i>Clear communication helps students understand and engage with the systems affecting their education.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish transparent and open communication channels between administrators, faculty, and students. ● Regularly share updates on institutional decisions, policies, investments, and future plans. ● Shift to proactively reach out to students to inform them about opportunities and resources.
<p><i>When students see themselves as influential participants in their education, their sense of initiative and self-direction is significantly strengthened.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equip students with self-advocacy skills through workshops on communication, negotiation, and navigating institutional systems. ● Develop peer-led sessions on understanding and influencing policy. ● Engage in ongoing training for faculty and staff on student engagement and inclusive practices. ● Develop ongoing research to understand today's student needs and challenges.
<p><i>Social barriers that inhibit free expression and participation mean that not all students can equally put their power to use.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Join or form groups that welcome all kinds of students. ● Look for or start mentoring programs that help students navigate challenging social situations.

<p><i>Having the right connections and resources affects how much control and choice students feel they have, and the ease with which students can navigate these networks translates into greater capacity for self-direction and problem-solving.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a student mentorship program where they are paired with an upper-level student and faculty member to ensure they have the human capital necessary to ensure needs are met, and holistic advocacy is a reality. ● Upper leadership Coffee/Tea chats during dedicated times each semester open to all students; meant to serve as an opportunity for students and leadership to connect personally and share ideas across the institution.
<p><i>Supporting initiatives led by students shows a commitment to actualizing student empowerment.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allocate resources and funding to support student-led initiatives, projects, and events. ● Acknowledge and celebrate student successes and advocacy efforts.
<p><i>Involving students in governance gives them a real stake in their education and nurtures their autonomy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create advisory boards or committees with student representatives to contribute to institutional decisions. ● Include students in faculty hiring committees and policy development discussions.
<p><i>Regular feedback loops are critical for continuous improvement and for students to feel that their voices lead to real change.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schedule regular interactions where students can directly voice their opinions and concerns to faculty and administration. ● Facilitate open dialogue, allowing for the direct exchange of ideas and immediate responses from decision-makers.
<p><i>A supportive community is essential for students to feel connected and empowered to share their ideas and challenges.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create and maintain safe spaces where students can freely express their concerns and experiences without fear of judgment or reprisal. ● Leverage online forums or platforms for ongoing discussions between students and faculty.

Call to Action:

Fostering student agency and autonomy is not a one-dimensional endeavor but rather a multifaceted process encompassing influence over decision-making, personal choice in academic and career pursuits, and the ability to voice opinions freely and effectively. Central to this process is the need to recognize and actively address the power dynamics within the college environment. It is imperative to acknowledge how these dynamics disproportionately affect marginalized student populations, often inhibiting their opportunities to participate and succeed in their educational journey.

Administrators, faculty, and staff must shift from a command and control paradigm to one of shared power, actively involving students in decision-making processes. This shift is crucial in breaking down barriers marginalized students face, ensuring their unique perspectives and challenges are heard. Empowering these students is essential to creating a truly inclusive and equitable environment.

This research is not a fixed model but a living structure that must evolve with ongoing student input and institutional reflection. It is a call to action: to embrace a culture of shared governance and continuous dialogue, ensuring students are not just passengers but co-pilots. We urge institutions to consider these insights strategically, recognizing the intrinsic value of integrating diverse student perspectives into the core operations of higher education. By doing so, they commit to an educational ethos that values and uplifts the voices and choices of all its students, thereby enriching the entire community and addressing systemic inequalities.

Appendix A

Survey Questions:

1. What is your age?
2. In which region of the United States are you attending college?
3. How would you describe your gender identity?
4. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
5. How would you describe your racial identity?
6. Are you a first-generation college student?
7. Are you an international or F1 visa student?
8. Year in College?
9. What is the name of the college or university you are currently attending?
10. Have you declared a major?
11. Are you currently receiving financial aid or scholarships to support your education?
12. If you answered yes to question 11, how satisfied are you with the financial aid package or scholarships you have received?
13. Do you work for pay?
14. If you work for pay, do you work:
 - a. On Campus
 - b. Off Campus
 - c. Both
15. Approximately how many hours per week do you work for pay?
16. Do you know how to access on-campus federal work study opportunities and/or non-federal work study opportunities?
17. Think about your life RIGHT NOW - this week– as a college student and answer these next questions using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) scale.
 - a. I feel like I belong here at my college/university.
 - b. Being a student at this college/university fills an important need in my life.
 - c. There is a strong sense of community on this campus.
 - d. It's important for me to make a contribution to my college/university community.
 - e. Overall, the actions of faculty, staff, and administrators on this campus are consistent with the mission of the college.
18. Thriving is often defined as “to grow vigorously, to flourish, to prosper,” while surviving can be described as “managing to keep going in difficult circumstances.” IN THIS MOMENT, to what extent do you think you are either thriving or surviving as a college student?
 - a. Consistently thriving
 - b. Somewhat thriving
 - c. Somewhat surviving
 - d. Consistently surviving
19. What is contributing to your current sense of thriving or surviving?
20. Trust is a critical feature of everyday life. How much trust do you place in the following groups?
 - a. My family
 - b. My home community or network
 - c. My college/university leadership (chancellor, president, provost, deans)
 - d. My faculty

- e. My academic advisors
 - f. Student service support staff
 - g. My campus peers
21. During the previous semester, how often did you participate in following activities?
- a. Campus Organizations
 - b. Campus Events and Activities
 - c. Community Service
 - d. Internships
 - e. Student Government Meetings
 - f. Reading campus newsletters or newspapers
22. Please rate your agreement with each of the items below:
- a. I believe my college wants to maintain a healthy relationship with me and my peers.
 - b. My college is very concerned about the welfare of my peers and me.
 - c. My college is genuinely interested in hearing what I have to say about my college experience.
 - d. I feel listened to by my college leaders.
 - e. I am confident that my student government represents my views.
23. Which communication channel does your college primarily utilize to reach out to you and provide information about resources and opportunities? (Select all that apply)
- a. Email
 - b. Student portal/website
 - c. Social media platforms
 - d. In-person events
 - e. Printed material (posters, brochures, etc.)
 - f. Other (please specify)
24. What is your preferred communication channel?
25. How do you define “power” in the context of the college experience? Please provide your own interpretation.
26. To what extent do you believe power dynamics POSITIVELY influence interactions between students, faculty, staff, and leaders within the college environment? (1-10)
27. Rate your perception of the level of equity in power dynamics within your college experience. (1-10)
28. Rate the impact of institutional power dynamics on equitable access to opportunities and resources for different student groups. (1-10)
29. Do you believe that students CAN play an active role in challenging and reshaping power structures on your campus? (1-10)
30. Have you encountered any initiatives or programs at the college that aim to address power dynamics or promote a sense of empowerment among students?
- a. Yes
 - i. If yes, please share your thoughts on their effectiveness
 - b. No
31. In your view, what steps can the college take to encourage open discussions and reflections on power, privilege, and equity among students, faculty, staff, and leadership?
32. Rate your agreement with the following statements:
- a. Students treat each other with respect in the classroom.

- b. Students treat faculty with respect in the classroom.
33. Rate your perception of the power dynamics in your college classrooms between students and faculty. (1-10)
34. How comfortable do you feel expressing your opinions or asking questions in class?
- a. Very uncomfortable
 - b. Uncomfortable
 - c. Comfortable
 - d. Very Comfortable
35. Express the degree to which you think faculty members actively promote student input and value student perspectives in class discussions.
- a. Not At All
 - b. To a Small Extent
 - c. To a Moderate Extent
 - d. To a Great Extent
36. How often do you perceive instances of faculty members misusing their position in the power dynamic occurring in interactions with students?
- a. Rarely or never
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Often
 - d. Frequently or always
37. If comfortable, can you provide your insights on specific situation(s) where faculty members abuse their position of power when interacting with students?
38. Please share any suggestions or feedback on how the power dynamics between students and faculty in college classrooms can be improved to create a more inclusive and conducive learning environment.
39. The concept of student voice is often defined as having a say in getting the most out of your college experience. In your own words, how would you define the concept of student voice?
40. Rate your perception of the level of influence students have in shaping campus policies and decisions.
- a. No Influence
 - b. Some influence
 - c. High Influence
 - d. Describe a specific instance where you felt students' voices were heard and had a significant impact on a campus decision policy
41. Please rate your agreement with each of the student voice and engagement opportunities below.
- a. I am aware of the channels for relaying my opinions, concerns, and ideas about my college experience to university leaders.
 - b. I am happy with the opportunities available at my college/university to voice my opinions, concerns, and ideas about my college experience.
 - c. I feel comfortable contacting the leaders of my university to express ideas on how to better my college experience.
 - d. I feel comfortable contacting the leaders of my college/university to share problems or challenges I have about my college experience.
42. Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following:

- a. Whenever leaders of my college/university make an important decision that will impact students, I know they will consider the perspectives and experiences of students like me.
 - b. I believe my institution takes the opinions of my peers and I into account when making decisions.
 - c. My university believes that the opinions of my peers and I are legitimate.
43. How frequently do you feel that student opinions and feedback are taken into consideration by the following stakeholder groups:
- a. Faculty
 - b. Administration
 - c. Student services
 - d. Student government
 - e. Campus organizations
44. How empowered do you feel as a student in influencing positive change on campus? (1-10)
45. Are there specific initiatives or programs in place to promote student engagement and input in decision-making?
- a. Yes
 - i. If you answered 'Yes', please describe one of these initiatives and how it has impacted the relationship between students and stakeholders.
 - b. No
46. Have you personally offered feedback to your college or university about your college experience?
- a. Yes
 - i. If you answered 'Yes,' how satisfied were you with the interaction?
 - b. No
47. What decision-making or change-making topics/efforts would you like to have a say in to improve the college experience of you and your peers? Choose 3 topics.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol:

This interview protocol serves as a guiding tool for Raising Advocates student researchers as they gather qualitative data related to the student-facing engagement framework project. In doing so, their work aims to create a student-facing shift power, share power engagement framework that supports a student's ability to increase their agency and autonomy in decision-making processes that affect both their educational journey and the journeys of future college students.

By utilizing a questionnaire and interviews, the researcher can understand the meaning and authentic lived experience of what participants are comfortable sharing (McWhither, 2023). This enhances the phenomenological research process by exploring a type of human experience specific to an individual as the researcher composes information about how and what the experience entails (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2009).

In order to do so successfully, Raising Advocates Researchers will use prompts and encourage a more profound response and reflection while engaging in active listening. Sometimes, a participant can benefit from prompts or probes, such as providing examples or inviting the participant to expand. As an example, "what else?" or "what was that like?" after a participant shares. Paraphrasing what was mentioned to you after responses were given and validating the experiences of the participant with verbal ("that's interesting," "wow," "thank you for sharing that") and non-verbal cues (head nods, smiling, "eye contact," reducing distractions to show maintained attention), assists with developing rapport, trust, and ensuring you're truly capturing the spirit of their statements.

Be present and prepared to revise your protocol in the moment (if your research design allows it). You may recognize a need to re-order your questions based on the flow of conversation with your participants. You may also see a need for follow-up questions. Adding questions as you go is considered to be an "emergent design" (Creswell, 2007). Be sure that you take note of added questions, as you may notice a pattern where you're asking the same prompt to most participants

Be mindful of the time. Don't let your interview last too long (many researchers encourage 1.5 hours or less). Be thoughtful about your participants' needs, such as their emotional and physical well-being, not to mention the labor and time they are taking to support your study. 6-10 interview questions tend to provide substantial information in a reasonable amount of time. Check in with your participants throughout the interview, and encourage breaks (encouraging them to eat or drink their beverage as they speak to aid in comfort).

Remind participants about the limits of confidentiality, how information will be shared, and their right to terminate participation at any time. Ensure you've disclosed that you will be recording and using the recording and transcription to assess central themes amongst participants.

Taking notes during your session may help you stay organized; keep in mind that you are recording, so if this is distracting to you and/or your participant, feel free to refrain from doing so.

Approximate length of interview: 60 minutes, ten central questions

Participant Name _____
Participant Institution _____
Date & Time _____
Interviewer _____

Hi, my name is _____, and I will be facilitating today’s interview. The goal of this project is to learn more about your experiences as a student so that we can work toward building a framework that shifts the power dynamic within post-secondary institutions to ensure that students’ voices and perspectives are not only heard but share governance in policy development, decision making, and resource development across our schools. Thank you for being open to sharing your perspectives, and we value your opinions and insights. The information gleaned from this effort will be shared with various community stakeholders, higher education leaders, and policymakers.

Prior to the interview, you completed an online survey, and those responses also aid in our ability to add depth to this work. This interview process allows you an opportunity to expand on your statements, as we want to honor your intersecting identities, experiences, and thoughts about how we can better support power-sharing. The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes and follow a designed interview protocol. You do not have to answer any questions you don’t want to. If you are uncomfortable for any reason at any time, we will discontinue the interview. You will still be compensated fully for your time.

We will also be recording this interview via zoom to help with note taking, and to ensure that all thoughts and perspectives are honored holistically. No voice, video, or names will be directly attached to the information shared from today’s interview with those outside of the Raising Advocates research team. As an incentive to attend, each person will receive a monetary honorarium of \$50 that will be sent electronically via the method you selected for the survey within one week of this interview.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

[Notes:

- *During interviews, you can offer back the answers to the questions students gave in the survey.*
- *You can find the individual surveys in the [recruitment spreadsheet](#). Links are tagged to participant names. We recommend you create separate protocols for each interview. A demonstration of how the full protocol would be adapted is [here](#).*
- *Questions would look something like this:*

Question 1: In the survey you said that you are in a state of “consistently surviving.” What’s contributing to that feeling on campus? What can your institution do to ensure thriving is a core reality?

Question 5: In the survey, you defined “power” in the context of the college experience as a belief that “there are specific people that hold power in a place” and that you “think it’s

important that they use the power to help others.” Can you say a little bit more about that?]

Question 10: In the survey, you listed three change-making topics that you would like to have a say in to improve the college experience for you and your peers. They are: more awareness on DACA, better payment plans, and yearly due instead of semester. Can you share a bit more about why these three topics are important to you and what changes you would like to see?

If there are no further questions, let’s get started with the first question.

HIT RECORD AND ENABLE TRANSCRIPT!

[Note: the researcher will use phrases such as “Tell me more”, “Could you give me an example?”, “Could you explain that?” as prompts to solicit more detailed information when needed.]

1. To get started, let's introduce ourselves. In your introduction please tell me who you are, the university you attend and your overall feelings of belonging, feeling included, and feeling supported since you started your degree program?

2. What’s contributing to your feeling of thriving or surviving on campus and what can your institution do to ensure thriving is a core reality?

3. What activities, resources, or individuals do you rely on the most in order to get through our day-to-day activities at school? Throughout the academic year as a whole? What supports are missing that you wish were there?

4. How do you define “power” in the context of the college experience? Please provide your own interpretation. How do institutional power dynamics influence equitable access to opportunities for students from different backgrounds?

5. Do you feel like you have control of your college experience - from the degree you want or selected, to the classes you take or want to take, to the experiences you enjoy or want to enjoy, to the connections you make or want to make? How do you think having control over your college experience influences your overall satisfaction and success as a student?

6. How much influence would you say you have as a student to shift campus/classroom policy, decision making, and resource offerings? Do you feel like your voice would be heard when trying to make positive changes on campus?

7. Have you witnessed any abuses of power from faculty members, administrators, or students and what impact has that had on you and your peers?

8. Please share any suggestions or feedback on how the power dynamics between students and faculty in college classrooms can be improved to create a more inclusive and conducive learning environment.

9. Have you personally offered feedback to your college or university about your college experience?

10. What decision-making or change-making topics/efforts would you like to have a say in to improve the college experience of you and your peers?

11. Are there any last minute thoughts you have related to sharing power on your campus, and what institutions can do to ensure equitable student access, resources, and psychological safety?

Follow Up Questions Asked:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Closure

- Thank you to interviewee
- Reassure confidentiality
- We are planning a virtual 2 1/2-hour workshop with students who participated in these interviews along with a trusted group of stakeholders who are genuinely interested in advancing this work. We anticipate the workshop happening in early November and it comes with an additional \$125 stipend. Would you be interested in participating? (If yes, expect an email invitation in a few weeks.)

- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- McWhirter, D. (2023). *Collectivism vs. individualism: A cross-cultural analysis of the intersectional experience in the workplace through the lens of black womanhood in the U.S. and Spain* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation/master's thesis]. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.
- Moustakas. (1994). Phenomenological Research Methods. In *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412995658>

Appendix C

Student Power Design Studio:

Topic	Slide	Talking Points	Time	Point Person	Links
Intro slide while we wait	2	Continue welcoming people and ask them to introduce themselves and their song choice in the chat	5 min		
Team intros and game plan	Slides 3 and 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome and Introductions of Team ● Agenda and Activity Set 	2 min	Chris	
Setting the Table	Slides 5 through 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What this project is about ● Description of our student cohort ● Approach we are taking to develop framework ● Community guidelines for the design studio ● Ways to participate 	6 min	Emeka	
Mindful Activity	Slide 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Breathing exercise 	1 min	mayed	
Breakout Activity	Slide 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introductions in Smaller Breakout Rooms ● Activity Directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask students to introduce themselves: name, preferred pronoun, class year and college. ○ Question to ponder: Within any area of your life, can you share an instance when you utilized your own influence or authority to initiate a change - either for yourself or in support of others? ○ Ask students to share their answers 	8 min	Breakout 1 Breakout 2 Breakout 3 Breakout 4	
Research Reveal	Slide 15 - 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We want to begin our discussion by talking about power and its many 	5 min	mayed	

Part 1 Defining Power		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> forms. 			
Discussion Prompt	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What thoughts, emotions, words, phrases, questions arise for you from these definitions? 	8 min	mayed	
Research Reveal Part 2	25-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More on power and power dynamics 	10 min	mayed	
Freedom Dreaming Jamboard	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the future, how can you positively engage with or challenge existing power structures? 	5 min	mayed	https://jamboard.google.com/d/1jkZPKd24R1ftkvqv4cIt9q7z6PezLKgHPObY4UC9n0U/viewer?f=0
Take Ten	34		10 min		
Brainstorming set-up	35-42	To deepen our understanding of power dynamics in different contexts we would like to engage your creative minds within various power-restricting scenarios.	10 min	Breakout 1> Synia Breakout 2> Saige Breakout 3> Debbie Breakout 4> Layla	
Breakout Brainstorming		Brainstorming in Breakout rooms	25		
Reveal		Teams return to center stage to present their step by step guides	15	Leila Leads	
Final Reflection		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caroline will lead us in a sharing circle 	10	Caroline	
Thank		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gratitude for your time 	3 min	Leila	

You and Next Steps		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stipends ● Framework development 			
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Breakout Room Scenarios:

Scenario 1: You have a Black male student contemplating switching majors because they have a hard time with the tutors in academic services. The student informs you that the tutors dismiss, overlook, and sometimes are rude to them. Their professor will only assist during their office hours, and they have a hard time understanding their graduate assistant. As a result, he feels defeated and is contemplating changing his major and questions their intelligence.

Scenario 2: You have a Latinx male student having a difficult time receiving financial resources. The student informs you that every time they go to the financial aid office, they only can talk to front desk workers and feel like the other staff members are afraid of them. The student admits that sometimes he has difficulty understanding people because he has a hearing issue and English is not his first language. To compensate, he often gets close to people and tries to read their lips.

Scenario 3: In a specific dormitory, students are increasingly frustrated with the poor management that has led to the prolonged disrepair of critical facilities, including a non-functional laundry room. This ongoing issue not only disrupts their daily routines but also adds to the stress of managing academic responsibilities without basic amenities.

Scenario 4: A student, coping with a non-visible disability, faces significant challenges due to the lack of adequate support services, compounded by a language barrier that hinders effective communication of their needs. This situation leaves them feeling isolated and underserved, struggling to access the necessary accommodations that are crucial for their academic success and well-being.