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2024

## Teaching Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs: A Deeper Discussion of a Teaching GYO with a College Campus Immersion Experience

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ISSN: 2692-3394

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### Recommended Citation

Escobedo, G. (2024). Teaching Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs: A Deeper Discussion of a Teaching GYO with a College Campus Immersion Experience. *The Interactive Journal of Global Leadership and Learning*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.55354/2692-3394.1060>

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## Teaching Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs: A Deeper Discussion of a Teaching GYO with a College Campus Immersion Experience

### Abstract

While the U.S. has seen an increase of students of color in K-12 schools, the teaching profession faces a shortage of teachers of color. A range of issues, including engaging and retaining teachers of color, learning outcomes, and ensuring academic success for students, all contribute to the shortage. Teaching focused Grow Your Own (GYO) programs have gained popularity as a grassroots effort to diversify the teaching profession to reflect current student demographics. This article explored the commonly used strategies in teaching GYO programs aimed at recruitment and retention of diverse teachers. Additionally, it focused on the Future Teacher Academy (FTA) which is a teaching GYO collaboration with a K-12 district and a post-secondary institution. This article is an abbreviated version of the author's dissertation study.

The qualitative and exploratory study reviewed the benefits of the FTA programming during the college campus immersion experience via a one-week college campus residency for students of color. The study had a total of nine participants. This exploratory research focused on how FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encouraged high school students of color to consider the teaching profession and how the campus immersion experience encouraged high school students of color to enroll in postsecondary education.

The study findings suggest that the FTA five-day college campus immersion experience did have an impact on the participants' decision to matriculate into higher education and in their interest in pursuing a career in education. The study found that the FTA camp impacted the participants' interest in education because of programming, diversity within the field of education, learning more about the teaching career, valuing teachers and the teacher profession, and the decision process in declaring their current major. Regarding the impact the FTA camp had on matriculation into post-secondary, the themes were changes to college perceptions, college exposure and experience, cultural navigators, welcoming and supportive community, confidence and reassurance, and decision to matriculate into current post-secondary institution.

### Keywords

Keywords: Diversifying the teacher profession workforce, Teaching Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs, Changing student demographics

### Author Bio

Gricel Escobedo-Kingwell has a passion for helping others achieve their education goals. She spent over a decade working in higher education. Gricel runs an independent consulting business that specializes in facilitating restorative practices and helping schools review and establish school restorative practices. She collaborates with school administrators, teachers, and support staff to provide comprehensive Social Emotional Learning to students who are new to the United States. Gricel understands the power in sharing one's story, and she is passionate about helping others share theirs. She holds a master's degree in School Counseling and a Doctorate in Education.

## Introduction

This article will focus on the shortage of U.S. teachers of color despite the demographic changes and the increase in students of color across the United States. It will provide literature research on the importance of having teachers of color that represent student demographics. Additionally, it will inform how teaching Grow your own (GYO) programs are being implemented to increase recruitment of teachers of color. Teaching GYO programs are normally partnerships with teacher preparation programs and K-12 districts. These programs typically include education college credit, field experience opportunities, comprehensive student support, and early career opportunities. Specifically, this article will focus on a teaching GYO model, Future Teacher Academy (FTA) that includes a comprehensive sense of belonging model and a 5-day college campus immersion experience. Research on existing teaching GYO programs has identified a gap in the literature concerning teaching GYO programs that include a college campus immersion experience via a college campus residency. This study is adding to the literature on teaching GYO programs while focusing on the importance of adding a comprehensive college campus immersion experience to the GYO program.

The FTA is a teaching GYO program that includes education college credit, field experience opportunities, comprehensive student support, and a one-week college campus immersion experience. While there are many different types of GYO programs, the focus of this study was specifically on teaching GYO programs for high school students of color. This qualitative study primarily focused on the impact the college campus immersion experience had on engaging students of color into the teaching profession and matriculation into post-secondary education. The FTA GYO college campus experience followed Strayhorn's

Cultural Navigator sense of belonging model. Strayhorn defines a cultural navigator as “translators, coaches and guides” (Strayhorn, 2015, p. 59) who help the students navigate the higher education culture. The FTA GYO sense of belonging model had a strong culturally responsive structure. The exploratory research questions were:

RQ1: How did the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encourage high school students of color to consider the teaching profession?

RQ2: How did the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experienced encourage high school students of color to enroll into post-secondary education?

The study consisted of nine participants of color all who had attended the FTA GYO camp and had matriculated into a post-secondary institution at the time of the study. The research questions focused on how the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encouraged the participants to consider the teaching profession and how did the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encouraged the participants to enroll in post-secondary education.

The results of the study were that the FTA college campus immersion experience did impact the participants’ decision to matriculate into post-secondary education and their knowledge and choosing to become educators. All 9 participants valued their participation in the teaching GYO program. For some, the program was a deciding factor for why they chose to become educators.

### **The Teaching Profession: A Demographic Lack of Representation**

The U.S. teaching profession is disproportionately White, despite a student demographic that is racially diverse. In 2011-2012, teachers of color represented 18 percent of the U.S. teacher workforce, while students of color in public schools' equal 49 percent of the total student population (U.S. Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey, 2011). In 2017-2018, about 79 percent of public-school teachers were White (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). Gist (2019) noted that the majority of current high school students interested in the field of education are White women. Specifically in the state of Minnesota, where this study took place, during the "2018-2019 academic year, 85% of the candidates who successfully completed a teacher licensure program identified as White" (Minnesota, Biennial Report, 2021). Minnesota is a state that has seen an increase of diverse students, with an estimated 34% of the state's K-12 students identifying as non-White (Star Tribune 2020). Despite the increased number of students of color in Minnesota, the number of teachers of color remains low. Even in schools that have a significant percentage of students of color, White teachers remain the majority.

### **Importance of Having Teachers of Color**

The presence of teachers of color in our K-12 education system benefits all students. The Comprehensive Center Network (CC Network) (2021) noted that teachers of color support White students, as those interactions help with "dispelling myths about people of color, particularly those who do not often interact with people of color" (p. 4). For students of color, having a teacher that looks like them can encourage students to choose teaching as a future career (Gordon, 2002). Statistically, teachers of color tend to have higher expectations of students of color, which can lead to higher persistence and academic achievement

(Villegas, 2010). For example, Bradbury (2021) found in their work with American Indian students that the lack of teachers of color in their schools was harming the American Indian students through lower expectations for the students. Additionally, Bianco & Marin-Paris (2019) in their work with communities of color in the educational system found a similar trend in that schools have not traditionally been a welcoming space for students of color. Based on these findings, it can be understood that teachers of color can help create an educational system that has high expectations and a welcoming educational space for students of color. Gordon (2002) added to this understanding by emphasizing the importance the teachers' identity has in the classroom setting. Gordon noted that teachers have identities and images from their own cultures and local communities embedded in their kinfolk and these can be useful in the classroom especially if they can reflect similar identities and images to those of the students. Okezie (2018) emphasized the importance teachers have on building and nurturing internal and external protective factors, building resiliency, and offering comprehensive and tailored student structures. These findings continue to emphasize that teachers of color, who look like the students, and who can relate to the students' culture and shared lived experiences, can improve the overall academic performance of students of color.

### **Teaching GYO Models as a Possible Solution**

In view of the current literature, the need to recruit and retain teachers of color continues to be a top priority for states, school districts, and for post-secondary institutions. These entities play a different, but significant role in the recruitment and retention structures built to support teachers of color and diversify the teaching profession.

Teaching Grow your Own (GYO) programs are homegrown models that focus on the

racial representation of teachers of color who live in the community and can relate to students' shared experiences (Gist, 2019). Their primary goal is to provide an integrated system covering all major areas of the educational system including the curriculum, pedagogy, recruitment, student support structures and retention models with a culturally appropriate lens (Gist et al., 2019).

Although data on teaching GYO outcomes are limited due to the different integrated systems involved, there are some positive results coming from this work. Hanover (2019) found that teaching GYO “programs have demonstrated positive effects on outcomes, including students’ expressed interest in teaching and pursuit of teaching degrees” (p. 3). The number of teaching GYO programs are expected to increase to fill the shortage of diversity in the teaching profession and include culturally responsive strategies with integrated student support.

### **Benefits of Teaching GYO Programs**

According to Gist (2019), the teaching GYO models are gaining in popularity because of their focus on the racial representation of teachers of color who live in the community and can relate to students' shared experiences. Garcia et al., (2019) agreed that teaching GYO programs help to develop the whole person and added that they can create and implement multiple pathways into the teaching profession by utilizing effective strategies relevant for those communities. Having different teaching pathways or bridges are important aspects in teaching GYO programs, as these allow the program to meet the needs of the community.

### **Addressing Student Diversity & Equity through Teaching GYO Models**

Bradbury's (2021) historical overview of the teaching system noted that assimilation was a part of the educational process, and diversity was not valued until recently. This assimilation process clearly has impacted the recruitment and retention of teachers of color, which the teaching GYO programs seek to correct. According to Carver-Thomas (2017), teaching GYO programs are "able to recruit candidates from non-traditional populations that are more likely to reflect local diversity and more likely to stay in their communities" (p. 20). Teaching GYO programs include program curricula that are intentionally designed to engage with students of color to encourage students of color into the teaching profession (Gist, et al., 2019). These teaching GYO models are specifically addressing ethnoracial diversity and teacher of color shortage by recruiting from within the local community (Zinger, 2019).

### **Understanding the Teaching GYO Partnerships**

Teaching GYO programs are collaborations and grassroots efforts that allow the programming to focus on the needs of the local community. Effective teaching GYO partnerships between post-secondary and community institutions can impact the long-term success or failure of the program (Hanover, 2019). Most of the existing teaching GYO collaborations include a K-12 district and a post-secondary institution. It should be emphasized that K-12 districts and institutions of higher education both benefit from the GYO partnerships. For K-12 school districts, the partnership with an institution of higher education can allow for additional resources and opportunities for their students (Hanover, 2019). For the institutions of higher education, the partnership can result in a pipeline of future students (Gist et al., 2019). A fundamental purpose of the teaching GYO models is to have the teaching workforce reflect the community and student demographics and create a



more equitable educational system.

In general, teaching GYO programs include concurrent enrollment or college credit options, culturally responsive teaching pedagogy, field experiences, and a direct focus on recruitment and retention of students of color (Gist, 2019; State of Washington Professional Educator Standards Board, 2016). Teaching GYO programs that follow these comprehensive strategies are seeing positive results and are “moving the needle” toward having the teaching profession reflect current student demographics (Adams & Manuel, 2016).

### **Teaching GYO’S Comprehensive Recruitment Strategies**

Existing teaching GYO models discuss the importance of community collaborations, but each GYO program follows different recruitment strategies. Most teaching GYO programs do not specifically address their recruitment strategies. The nature of teaching GYO models is to follow strategies that work for the local community, and this can pose a challenge since there is not a set process.

Recruiting is an important phase of any teaching GYO model, and one issue programs can face is that despite having strong community connections and collaborations, recruiters can still struggle to “operationalize outreach ideas that prioritize diversity and equity that may increase the number of teachers of color” (Hill-Jackson, 2020, p. 430). The typical recruiting efforts such as posting fliers or web-based recruiting do not tend to work well for recruiting underrepresented populations (Hill-Jackson). Carver-Thomas (2017) argued that using high-touch recruitment methods such as actively following-up, building relationships and offering support are fundamental strategies to recruit teachers of color.

Some research has emphasized the importance of using Special Emphasis Recruiting (SER), which is “defined as intentional recruitment of underserved populations” (Hill-

Jackson, p. 433). SER's purpose is to center on diversity and race when recruiting underrepresented populations (Hill-Jackson). SER is a recruiting process that could work for GYO programs, as it includes a specific set of approaches focused on teacher recruitment that requires the recruiters to go beyond traditional recruiting methods to recruit teachers of color into the profession (Hill-Jackson, 2020). SER prioritizes the group needs over those of the individual and this strategy could work well for teaching GYO models since most of the communities of color come from collectivistic societies.

### **Teaching GYO's Gap in Literature**

Research on the existing teaching GYO programs has identified that there is a gap in the literature concerning programs that include a college campus immersion experience via a college campus residency. The Future Teacher Academy (FTA) is a teaching GYO program that includes education college credit, field experience opportunities, comprehensive student support, and a one-week college campus immersion experience. This qualitative study took place at a midsize public university in the Midwest, and it was primarily focused on the impact the college campus immersion experience had on engaging students of color into the teaching profession and matriculation into post-secondary education. The researcher was the FTA GYO program coordinator and had a professional working relationship with the participants.

While there are many different types of GYO programs, the focus of this study was specifically on a teaching GYO program for high school students of color. The researcher felt that by narrowing the focus on teaching GYO programs that focus on recruiting and retaining students of color into the teaching profession, the data would present more in-depth and targeted information. Additionally, research on the existing teaching GYO programs has identified that there is a gap in the literature concerning programs that include a college

campus immersion experience via a college campus residency. As previously noted, the FTA GYO program includes a comprehensive sense of belonging model and a five-day college campus immersion.

### **A Brief Explanation of the Future Teacher Academy (FTA) GYO Program**

The current study explored the FTA teaching GYO program and the impact that the college campus immersion experience had on the participants' decision to become educators and to matriculate into a post-secondary institution. Below is a brief history and explanation of the FTA GYO program to provide some context.

The FTA is a collaboration between a K-12 culturally diverse school district and an institution of higher education. Both educational institutions are in central Minnesota, an area that has seen a rapid increase in diversity. Despite the increasing numbers of students of color, the teacher workforce in the region is predominantly White. The FTA GYO program began as a direct financial grant from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) in 2019. Its purpose was to create a grassroots collaboration, modeling some of the existing GYO best practices, to recruit high school students of color into the teaching profession from within the community. Its overarching goal was to highlight and “motivate students of color to enter the teacher workforce and see the profession in a positive light, the cycle of poor schooling experiences must be broken” (Leech et al., 2019).

During the planning phase of the FTA GYO program, a needs assessment was completed, and different voices and perspectives were included from students, teachers, counselors, and local community members. This wider community collaboration allowed for a more comprehensive support structure. Additionally, during the planning stages, the core FTA staff attended micro-aggression training to minimize unconscious biases and/or micro-

aggressions. The FTA program structure has broad student support including high school early engagement opportunities, support during college matriculation, and support and follow-up during the participants' college education career.

The format of the FTA program is that participants enroll in an introduction to education course during the summer and while enrolled in the course, they live on a college campus for a week. The education course uses the overarching lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion while examining the existing educational system. The course was designed to give participants opportunities to understand the educational system in its current stage, to discuss their own experiences within the system, and to formulate what change(s) are needed to support students of color and recruit teachers of color. The purpose of following this format was to allow the participants to learn and discuss their own educational experiences while reflecting on educational systemic racism as this reflection can significantly motivate students to pursue a career in teaching (Gist et al., 2021).

The FTA includes a comprehensive recruiting process in which teachers, counselors, cultural liaisons, and community members can invite students to participate. The FTA team has identified different organizations that work with students of color in the community and reached out to these organizations to widen the recruitment efforts. The FTA uses a comprehensive recruiting process similar to SER in which the student's background is central. A core belief of the program is to include as many students as possible instead of excluding or putting barriers for students to participate in the program. Because the Introduction to Education course is a college level course, the FTA college team, in collaboration with FTA K-12 team, work together to assess the students' academic needs to assure that participants can successfully complete the course and program. The FTA recruits

students of color who are sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled at the K-12 partner district high schools, and who have an interest in teaching.

The FTA program includes the participants' family and community throughout the different phases of the program. The program was created using a collectivistic perspective and therefore, family, community, religion, and culture are all important pieces to this program. For example, this wider collaboration begins with the FTA coordinators (consisting of cultural liaisons, an equity coordinator, and post-secondary coordinators) meeting with the prospective families to explain the program, discuss expectations and goals, answer questions and have the families tour the dorms where their student will be staying during the college campus immersion experience. Additionally, a complete schedule of the program is shared with the parents. The FTA coordinators are available for home visits during any of the FTA phases. The families have numerous opportunities to connect and meet with the core FTA planning team to ease any concerns about their student participation. For all the past FTA participants (close to 50), this was the first time that they have stayed overnight on a college campus. For many, this was the first time they ever visited a college campus. Therefore, there was hesitation and concern from the participants and families regarding this aspect of the program.

### **Conceptual Framework: FTA Cultural Navigator Sense of Belonging Model**

This study explored the FTA GYO cultural navigator (Strayhorn, 2015) sense of belonging model that was used during the college campus immersion experience. The FTA coordinators understood the importance of having a comprehensive and culturally responsive sense of belonging model and felt that creating a cultural navigator sense of belonging would have the best results.

Strayhorn (2015) discussed the importance of cultural navigators who build a student-centered sense of belonging within post-secondary institutions. The culture of higher education includes its own lingo, structures, systems, etc. and these can be challenging for someone who is not used to navigating these systems. Cultural navigators can play a crucial role in helping students navigate the system and culture of higher education (Strayhorn). Cultural navigators are especially important for “students whose cultural backgrounds are qualitatively different from the (White) majority or from the dominant codes and values that operate on campus (Strayhorn, p. 58). Cultural navigators have knowledge about the system, know how to be successful within the system, and serve as a bridge for students to achieve their success within the post-secondary institution. They “know the codes of conduct, customs, dominant values, language, requirements, rules, traditions and so much more” (Strayhorn, 2022, p. 29). They are individuals who know about the culture of the institution and are “altruistically inclined or contractually obligated to share that information with a newcomer” (Strayhorn, p. 29). They provide their support during this journey by demonstrating, navigating, and following along with the students. Cultural navigators know the student’s culture, interest, goals, and bridge these important factors with the post-secondary institution to create a sense of connection from the student to the institution and from the institution to the groups of students that share similar lived experiences. Students who feel a positive sense of belonging tend to obtain better grades, have higher retention rates, and adjust better to post-secondary structures (Strayhorn, 2015).

During the different phases of the FTA, the team gets to know the students, their cultural background(s), their strengths, and their interests and uses this information to create tailored student supports (Strayhorn, 2015). By using the cultural navigator approach, the

hope is that the participants feel welcomed and supported throughout their FTA campus college immersion experience. Additionally, the FTA program was planned to use a collectivist rather than individualistic model. The FTA participants are students of color and most of their cultures value collectivistic over individualistic goals. From past cohorts, the students seemed receptive to the collectivistic approach, and it helped to build community within the FTA staff, institution of higher education, and other FTA participants. The FTA staff in their role as cultural navigators work with the participants so they can understand the individualistic post-secondary approach while still retaining their collectivist views and goals.

The FTA staff emphasizes the value and importance each student brings to the FTA program and to the college campus. The college campus immersion experience is designed to make the participants feel important, connected, and that they matter and belong in the teaching profession and in post-secondary education (Strayhorn, 2015). This theme is reinforced in the day-to-day interactions, the classroom environment, recreational activities, and the daily debrief meetings. The participants can share meals with the university president, senior administrators and the FTA participants often discuss how they feel like they are the VIPs on the college campus. Additionally, university and school district leaders stayed overnight in the dorms to better support the students during the FTA week.

The FTA staff in their role as cultural navigators “help students build supportive connections with others on campus so they can find that sense of belonging that means so much” (Strayhorn, 2015, p. 60). The FTA staff are available to help the participants after the FTA programming and “stick with students even through turns, detours, roadblocks, dead ends, and even the OCCASSIONAL head-on collision” (Strayhorn, 2022, p. 30). The FTA

participants know that they are now part of the FTA family, and they can always reach out for help, guidance, or to simply chat.

### **FTA GYO Data**

At the time of the study, the FTA GYO had welcomed three student cohorts starting with 2019. The first FTA GYO cohort had 12 participants, 11 students of color and one White student. In 2020, (due to the pandemic), the FTA was unable to hold the college campus immersion program and it transitioned to online activities including bi-monthly meetings and a book club. The book *Stamped* written by Jason Reynolds and Ibrahim X. Kendi (2020) was read and bi-monthly Zoom meetings were held to discuss. This book was chosen due to its focus on racism, antiracism, and the role each citizen plays in societal systems. The “Living Room Conversations” protocol was used during the book club meetings to allow participants to take turns sharing and leading the conversations (Living Room Conversations, 2010). The online meetings and book club were opportunities to stay connected with the participants and be able to address the inequalities that students of color and American Indian students face in educational systems.

In the Summer of 2021, the second FTA cohort was able to participate in the college campus immersion experience and 17 students of color were welcomed to the host campus. The third FTA cohort in Summer 2022 welcomed 19 students of color. Every year the FTA program continues to grow, and much of that growth is happening via student and family referrals. As of 2022, the FTA participants had an 82% matriculation into post-secondary institutions. Most of the FTA participants who enroll into a post-secondary institution have enrolled at the FTA host post-secondary institution or local community college.



Anecdotally, there are many stories of personal and interpersonal growth during the college campus immersion experience. For most of the FTA scholars, this was the first time that they had stepped onto a college campus. For many of them, they were the first person in their families to enroll in a college credit course. The FTA scholars expressed how special they felt during the week. They often discussed how they felt that they were “the VIPs” on campus who were sharing meals with the university president, a state senator, and numerous community members. During the daily debriefs with the FTA staff, the students would share they felt comfortable and understood, despite being in this new educational setting.

The FTA provides individual support before, during, and after the college campus experience week. The FTA scholars have access to tailored support provided by the university FTA leadership, K-12 district leadership and local community members. If the FTA participant attends the FTA host higher education institution or the local technical and community college, then the student will have continued support by the FTA coordinators and local community. If the FTA participant matriculates at another institution, then the coordinator checks in from time to time.

### **Qualitative Methodological Approach**

A qualitative study can be used to empower individuals to share their stories, hear, and uplift their voices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was a qualitative phenomenological study focused on the realities of the FTA GYO participants during the college campus immersion experience. The aim of the study was to explore the participants’ realities and their perceptions around the college campus immersion experience and therefore a qualitative study was used. The purpose of the study was to note whether any of the experiences during the college campus immersion experience impacted the participants interest in teaching

and/or matriculation into higher education. The study focused on the participants and the construction of their own knowledge regarding the college campus immersion experience (Okezie, 2018). Fundamentally the study wanted to hear the voices of the participants and understand their experiences during the college campus immersion experience and exploring if Strayhorn's cultural navigator sense of belonging model was helpful in creating community between the FTA staff and participants.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore if the FTA GYO college campus experience helped the participants decide to matriculate into post-secondary education and if it impacted their decision to become educators. This phenomenological qualitative study used a constructivist paradigm focused on the realities of the FTA GYO participants around the college campus experience.

### **IRB Approval**

The researcher completed the Social and Behavioral Research training through Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative to assure that the participants were protected throughout the different phases of the study. Additionally, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study on August 25, 2022, and since the research was conducted at a different institution of higher education, that institution also granted permission to conduct the study. The IRB approval ensured the wellbeing of the participants in this study.

### **Setting**

The study took place in Central Minnesota and the participants were students of color. The participants had completed the GYO FTA college campus immersion experience at a midsize public university in the Midwest. The interviews were held at the same post-

secondary institution where the students had their college campus experience. The interviews were conducted in person or via Zoom. The participants had all graduated from high school, were still living in Central Minnesota, and had matriculated into the university where the FTA experience was held.

### **Participants**

This study focused on understanding the participants' experiences during the FTA GYO program. Therefore, all the possible participants were students who participated in the FTA college campus experience during the Summer of either 2019, 2021, or 2022. The participants were high school graduates who had enrolled in a post-secondary institution in Central Minnesota. The participants were all students of color of Somali descent and most of them were first-generation college students. Convenience sampling was used for this study as the researcher had a professional relationship with the participants due to her role in the FTA GYO program. The researcher coordinated the FTA GYO program as part of her employment at a post-secondary institution and supported the participants' post-FTA program completion.

### **Instrumentation & Exploratory Questions**

For this study, semi-structured interviews were used to give the participants the opportunity to share more in-depth information and allow the researcher to ask clarifying questions if necessary (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The semi-structured interviews were approximately 30-45 minutes long. Additionally, the interviews gave the participants the space, freedom, and comfort to discuss their experiences during the college campus immersion week. An interview protocol was used to create consistency among the different interviews. A Qualtrics survey was used to collect descriptive data. The exploratory research

questions were:

RQ1: How did the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encourage high school students of color to consider the teaching profession?

RQ2: How did the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encourage high school students of color to enroll in post-secondary education?

### **Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis**

The participants were initially contacted via email inviting them to participate in the study. All the participants had participated in the FTA academy and had a professional working relationship with the researcher. For those interested in participating in the study, the researcher scheduled an interview via Zoom or in-person at the university where the FTA camp experience took place. The researcher was mindful that their working professional relationship could impact the participants' interview responses especially those that may not have had a favorable experience during the FTA camp experience. To mitigate this factor, the researcher offered interested participants the opportunity to have their interview administered by someone other than the researcher. The researcher had a member of the Somali community who had offered to conduct the interviews for those that were interested. All the participants declined this option, and the researcher conducted the interviews. Before the interviews were conducted, the participants completed the informed consent and a descriptive Qualtrics survey. A total of nine participants were interested in participating in the study.

The qualitative data analysis occurred concurrently as the interviews were being conducted, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018). The interviews were transcribed

within 24 hours. Inductive coding was used for the data analysis. This meant that all themes and codes were created after the data was analyzed (Creswell & Poth). No preconceived notions or ideas were created before the data analysis. The data analysis used phenomenological methodology by using significant phrases that provided essence to the information as suggested by Creswell and Poth. An audit trail was created, and it included verbatim comments and member checking. The verbatim comments were used to develop codes that lead to themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018) The themes created a description of what the participants experienced during the FTA camp and included textual descriptions of the experience, with verbatim examples (Creswell & Poth).

At the completion of each interview, the researcher invited the participants to reach out with additional feedback or questions after they had time to process the interview questions. None of the participants reached out to the researcher providing additional information after the interview. Once the researcher had reviewed the transcripts two times, they reached out to each individual participant to do member checking. Member checking is when the researcher obtains and documents the feedback from the participants on their interpretation of the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Out of the nine participants, six decided to participate in the member-checking phase of the study. No changes were made to the findings after the member-checking phase.

### **Description of the Sample**

The study took place during the 2022-2023 academic year and consisted of nine participants composed of three (33.33%) freshmen, four (44.44%) sophomores, one (11.11%) senior, and one (11.11%) other (the participant decided not to disclose their grade level) all who are currently attending a public university in central Minnesota. Regarding academics,

two (11.11%) participants identified their GPA between 2.1-3.0; seven (77.78%) participants identified their GPA as 3.1 to 4.0; and one (11.11%) participant was not willing to disclose their GPA. All the participants identified as Somali and four (44.44%) identified as men and five (55.56%) identified as women.

### **Survey and Descriptive Data Results**

The Qualtrics descriptive survey included questions on parent's highest level of education to better understand the participants' post-secondary exposure and knowledge. Statistically speaking, students whose parents have attended college are more likely to finish their bachelor's degree. For example, the Pew Research Center (2021) found that "among 22- to 29-year-olds, those with a college-educated parent are more than twice as likely to have completed a bachelor's degree as those without a college-educated parent (72% vs. 28%)." Regarding the participants' fathers' highest level of education, four (44.44%) answered less than elementary school; one (11.11%) responded middle school or equivalent; one (11.11%) college or equivalent; two (22.22%) responded as other; and one (11.11%) preferred not to answer. Regarding mothers' highest level of education, four (44.44) participants responded less than elementary school; two (22.22%) participants responded high school or equivalent; one (11.11%) other; and two (22.22%) participants preferred not to answer.

Additionally, the descriptive survey included questions about the participants' exposure to college and their overall experience in the FTA camp. For six (66.67%) participants, the camp was the first time they had ever visited a college or university campus. For three (33.33%) participants, this was not the first time they had ever visited a college or university campus. For all nine participants, this was the first time they had ever stayed overnight at a college or university campus.

The researcher wanted to include questions that related directly to the research questions in the anonymous Qualtrics descriptive survey, as they wondered if students would be more open and willing to respond candidly knowing that their information was anonymous. In the Qualtrics survey, all nine participants disclosed feeling extremely welcomed and supported by the staff. At the time that the survey was administered, eight (88.89%) participants replied that they still feel extremely supported by the FTA staff and one (11.11%) felt very supported by the FTA staff. When it came to the support, they felt from their fellow FTA participants, four (44.44%) participants felt extremely supported, three (33.33%) participants felt very supported, and two (22.22%) participants felt moderately supported by other FTA students. When asked about if the camp experience was useful in helping them decide to go to college or university, a total of eight (88.89%) participants felt that it was extremely useful, and one (11.11%) participant felt that it was very useful.

The next set of Qualtrics survey questions were designed to assess whether the FTA experience helped the participants understand college or university better. The participants were asked if the FTA experience was effective in showing them what college or university was like. The responses were that eight (88.89%) participants felt the FTA experience was extremely effective in showing them what college or university was like, and one (11.11%) participant felt it was very effective in showing them what college or university was like.

The participants were asked if the FTA experience helped them to learn more about education and teaching. All nine participants strongly agreed that the FTA experience helped them to learn more about the field of education.

Additionally, the participants were asked if they felt that the FTA experience was effective in showing them what being a teacher was like. Seven (77.78%) participants found

the FTA extremely effective, one (11.11%) participant very effective, and one (11.11%) participant moderately effective. As a result of the FTA camp, six (66.67%) participants said yes to becoming teachers; two (22.22%) said maybe; and one (11.11%) participant said no to becoming a teacher.

### **Results: Themes for Research Question 1**

The first research question was “how did the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encourage high school students of color to consider the teaching profession?” The themes were programming, diversity within the field of education, learning more about the teaching career, valuing teachers and the teacher profession, and the decision process in declaring their current major. In the following section, each theme will be discussed in greater detail.

#### **Programming**

The FTA camp programming was important for the participants’ decision in choosing or not choosing to become educators. The programming that was discussed in the interviews included the introduction to education course, the field placement hours at the different childcare centers, the read-a-loud assignments, and the extracurricular experiences. The participants found the introduction to education course interesting as it allowed them to see what a college class was like. Participant #3 referred to the importance of the class as the decision-maker for declaring education as their major due to the knowledge they gained. They said, “understanding the development of kids because we learned about that in the class, so after that, I was like, yes, this is what I want to do. This is my new passion – teaching” (Participant #3, 2023).

All nine participants discussed the importance of their time at the childcare center as



being fundamental in their decision to become or not to become educators, and many felt surprised about this experience. Participant #6 was surprised at the connection they felt when they spent time at the childcare centers. They described the experience as “some sort of like connection. And I just felt some type of way and reading to kids, and it was fun” (Participant\_#6, 2023). Participant #4 described their experience as “I didn’t think we would be having fun with kids, but once we got to the childcare centers and got to read the kids, it was fun” (Participant\_#4, 2023). The participants generally discussed the importance the FTA camp activities had and how they were able to understand how each activity related back to teaching and education.

### **Diversity within the Field of Education**

Diversity within the field of education was a theme discussed by the participants who chose to become educators. Five participants discussed the importance of having diverse teachers in the classrooms while reflecting on the fact that many of them had not had many or any diverse teachers in their own education. The participants felt that diverse teachers would understand their situation, culture, and be able to better support them. These participants discussed that this realization directly impacted their decision to declare education as their major following the FTA camp. Participant #1 mentioned having an interest in education before the camp, but they were not sure they would become a teacher because of the lack of teachers of color they had seen in their own education. They said, “I was a little anxious about becoming a teacher because I had never seen diversity before (in the field of teaching)” (Participant #1, 2023). Participant #4 shared that before the camp they wondered if kids from other races would respect them as a teacher. They said, “before I thought that once I become a teacher, maybe kids of other races would not like me because

I'm like wearing a hijab" (Participant\_#4, 2023). During the field placement experience, this participant noticed that kids loved spending time with them because they made them laugh and they were no longer worried about how her students would perceive them because of their culture or race. For participant #6, they realized that their community needs teachers like them. They mentioned, "the kids need me, and I will be able to understand them more" (Participant\_#6, 2023).

The participants who chose to declare education as a major disclosed in the interviews that a motivator for this decision was to support other students of color. They realize the importance of diversity in the field of education since many of them had not seen that when they were students.

### **Learning More about the Field of Education**

The participants at large discussed an increased interest in learning more about the field of education after the introduction to education class and field experience during the FTA camp. Participant #1 described this process as "I just wanted to learn more after taking those few courses in this program" (Participant\_#1, 2023). Participant #7 described the learning as being important because it showed them what they would be doing if they became a teacher. They said, "they've covered a lot of components and aspects to teaching and that was really interesting to me. So, my decision went more to education." (Participant\_#7, 2023). During the FTA, camp participant #8 reflected on their knowledge by saying, "a teacher is more important than a doctor, because a teacher taught them to be a doctor" (Participant\_#8, 2023).

Additionally, participants shared that they felt more comfortable with college classes after taking the course during the FTA experience. Finally, participants described feeling

comfortable with the faculty, which was surprising to them. Finally, they felt that the faculty were caring, knowledgeable, and presented the information in a fun way.

### **The Value of Teachers**

The participants felt that their understanding of teachers' role and their importance in our society had changed after the FTA experience. The participants reflected on the contributions teachers made to others. Participant #5 described this realization, stating that "it made me realize how important teachers are, and it made me feel that I would be doing something good, not only for me but for others" (Participant\_#5, 2023). For this participant, their decision to become an educator was attributed to their desire to help others. Participant #8 realized that choosing a career was not only about making money but also about helping others. They said, "you work with people, you help out people, you help out kids. You change people's lives (referring to teachers and their work)" (Participant\_#8, 2023). Participant #2 was very impressed to meet a man who served as a professor and that experience changed their view of the teaching profession. They said, "he taught us about education and what they did. And I was like okay, I am impressed" (Participant\_#2, 2023). Participant #4 who was interested in teaching before the camp mentioned, "teaching was always what I wanted to do, so like I didn't change my decision, but it made me want to teach more" (Participant\_#4, 2023). After the FTA camp, participant #9 decided not to become a teacher and they learned that they still want to work with others and help improve people's lives (Participant\_#9, 2023). For many of the participants, this was the first time they had explored the teaching career. During this exploration, they realized the importance of teachers in their own lives, and some of them used this information to decide to become future educators.

### **Declaration of Major**

The participants described that the FT camp directly impacted their decision-making in choosing their current major. Participant #1 realized that teachers learn so much from their students, they mentioned, “I know you are teaching, but you are also learning more every day. That’s what I want for my career” (Participant\_#1, 2023). Participant #7 described this process as:

Before going in (to camp), I was thinking about nursing. Kind of quickly changed because we had different professors and different people in the field of education come in and talk about the benefits of pursuing a career in education (Participant\_#7, 2023).

Participants discussed that learning more about the teaching profession impacted what major they chose. Participant #8, “it impacted my decision because I learned that it's important to go for things you have passion” (Participant\_#8, 2023). Even those participants that were undecided or decided not to pursue education commented on how the camp made them realize what was important when declaring a major. Participant #9 said, “I decided to go into nursing because I'm still able to work with people” (Participant\_#9, 2023) and this career still allows them to educate others and improve people’s lives.

Overall, the participants concurred that the FTA camp experience gave them knowledge that they used when deciding their college major. In terms of actual number of participants who choose education as a major, the numbers are as follows: three women participants were interested in teaching before the FTA camp, and the camp solidified their decision, and they declared education as their major after the FTA camp. An additional three participants (two men; one woman) were undecided before the camp and after the camp; they

choose education as their major. One man was undecided before the camp and after the camp, they are now interested in becoming a K-12 school counselor. Moreover, one participant was undecided before the camp and after the camp they discovered that they wanted to pursue a career in the medical field. Finally, one man was undecided before the camp and after the camp, they were still undecided at the time of the study.

### **Results: Themes for Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 was, “how did the FTA GYO comprehensive student support during the college campus immersion experience encourage high school students of color to enroll in post-secondary education?” The themes for this question were changes to college perceptions, college exposure and experience, cultural navigators, welcoming and supportive community, confidence and reassurance, and decision to matriculate into current post-secondary institution. In the following section, each theme will be discussed in greater detail.

#### **Changes to College Perceptions**

All the participants discussed a change in perception about college after experiencing the FTA camp. For all of them, this was the first time they had spent significant time (including spending 5 nights) at a college or university campus. Participant #1 said, “I learned that college is not only about a degree so you can make money” (Participant\_#1, 2023). This participant went on to discuss the importance college will make in their life and all of the valuable lessons they will learn in college. Participant #3 believed that college was “just a dorm, and nothing outside it,” (Participant\_#3, 2023) and they were surprised to realize everything else that was on a college campus. Participant #9 described thinking that college was “you would take your classes, you go home, and you do your homework” (Participant\_#9, 2023) and not realizing the different activities and communities that exist

within a college campus.

Most of the men participants described hearing that university was too hard and challenging and how before the camp, they had all decided that they would start their college career at a 2-year community college first. Participant #2 said, “college is too hard because some of my friends, they said going to college is a lot of stress. When I came here, I saw a whole different life and I was going to try to come here (for college)” (Participant\_#2, 2023). Participant #6 described thinking that professors were going to be too strict and after having the FTA class, they realized they were open and very helpful. The participants discussed how their perceptions about college changed to a more positive and realistic outlook after the FTA experience.

### **College Experience and Exposure**

All the participants discussed the importance the FTA camp had in giving them college experience and exposure. Most of them discussed that they did not understand what college was like and the FTA camp helped them to understand college life. Several participants elaborated on this topic by sharing that the FTA camp was the first time they had had such a positive experience with educators. Participant #5 put it best by saying, “I’ve never had an experience with adults in school that well in my life... positive, positive experience with adults” (Participant\_#5, 2023). Participant #2 said, “every day, we had someone come to tell us about college, about life, about education and that changed my life” (Participant\_#2, 2023). Several participants discussed how staying on campus lowered their anxiety about college. Participant #4 described college as “safe and secure” and after the FTA camp, they decided to live on campus during their freshmen year.

Most of the participants reiterated the importance of knowing the different resources

that exist on a college campus. Participants discussed not being aware of the student support resources that were available and how knowing this information gave them confidence and support in their decision to matriculate into post-secondary education. For example, participant #9 discussed knowing where the different resources were on campus after the FTA week, and this made them feel comfortable knowing the university layout. Overall, the participants discussed that the FTA camp experience created a positive experience that allowed them to be exposed to college, its resources, and it supported their decision to matriculate into post-secondary education.

### **Cultural Navigators**

Participants described the significant effect that the FTA camp coordinators had in their journey to matriculate into post-secondary education. The participants described the coordinators as cultural navigators (Strayhorn, 2015). Cultural navigators are defined as individuals who are there to support the participants in their education journey. Participant #5 described it as “I mean you (researcher) even helped me with the application for this university. So yeah, I feel like I had a personal connection with you, and I could call you anytime that I needed some help” (Participant\_#5, 2023). Similarly participant #4 felt, “FTA brought us closer to the FTA staff, and if I needed help, I could just contact one of the staff and they would help me with anything” (Participant\_#4, 2023).

Furthermore, the participants described the coordinators as guides. Participant #3 said, “there was guidance, and I never really had that much support from teachers and staff” (Participant\_#3, 2023). The participants described that the coordinators made them feel comfortable and fostered a family feeling during the FTA camp. Participant #2 described that the coordinators made them feel like they were at home. The bond the participants had with

the camp coordinators and staff was a deciding factor in their decision to matriculate into college.

### **Welcoming & Supportive Community**

The participants discussed the FTA camp experience as a welcoming and supportive community. Since the theme of welcoming and supportive community was quite prevalent throughout the interviews, the researcher asked further questions to understand what the participants understood to be a welcoming and supportive community. Participant #2 discussed that they were not accustomed to feeling welcomed and supported. They mentioned that they are used to “everyone doing their own stuff but when I came here everything changed for me (because of the community)” (Participant\_#2, 2023). Participant #5 described feeling welcomed because “I felt very comfortable with everyone, and honestly, I’ve never felt that comfortable with school and adults” (Participant\_#5, 2023). Multiple participants described the community as a “family” and that made it feel welcoming. Participant #6 further elaborated on this topic by saying that they felt welcomed, “because we mostly did everything together” (Participant\_#6, 2023). Moreover, participants shared the feeling of being welcomed and supported because they felt that they were treated equally, they felt comfortable with everyone, and they felt understood. The participants at large discussed feeling that they were always able to ask questions from anyone in the FTA camp staff, and this made them feel welcomed and supported. Several participants commented the importance of having students and staff that were Somali as this truly made them feel welcomed, supported and that they all belonged in the FTA camp. Moreover, several participants noted feeling welcomed and supported because the FTA coordinators wanted to try Somali food during the FTA camp. For them, this meant that they were respected as



individuals and as members of their culture and community. For the participants, the welcoming and supportive community made them feel more at ease with their decision to matriculate into post-secondary education.

### **Confidence and Reassurance**

All the participants shared the theme of confidence and reassurance at the FTA camp, especially when it came to their journey in deciding to pursue higher education. Participant #5 mentioned that after the FTA camp, they said to themselves, “Oh, you're going to go to college; don't second guess it anymore” (Participant\_#5, 2023). Participant #3 shared this sentiment by saying, “I was like I'm going to go here for education for sure” (Participant\_#3, 2023). Participant #7 specifically explained this feeling,

Yeah, confident. And I understand how it (college) works. I would say it made me more confident that I can handle university life. I know the resources, and I could find help from the people that want to help me. So, yeah, it made me more confident (Participant\_#7, 2023).

Participant #8 described feeling confident because they felt that the FTA “opened a lot of doors for me” (Participant\_#8, 2023). Overall, the participants felt that their feelings of confidence and reassurance in the FTA camp carried over, as they became college students.

### **Decision to Matriculate into Current Institution of Higher Education**

During the interviews, the participants disclosed the reasons why they chose to attend the university where the FTA camp was hosted. Even though this was not an intended result of the study, the researcher wanted to understand what factors contributed to this decision. It is important to note that all nine participants were attending the university where the FTA camp was held at the time of the study. A reoccurring idea was the familiarity the

participants felt with the campus and the relationship they had with the coordinators that worked at the university. Participant #6 mentioned, “you (FTA staff) were welcoming like a family” (Participant\_#6, 2023). Participant #1 discussed that their decision to attend their current university was because the FTA camp staff helped them with the matriculation process. Participant #4 discussed, “the FTA was at the university campus, and I'm living in the dorms now, because I just knew where to go” (Participant\_#4, 2023). Participant #5 felt that the coordinators were like their older sisters, and they would always support them, so they decided to matriculate at the university. Participant #9 discussed that “there's lots of resources out on campus, and it's easier to find the resources because it's not like a humongous school” (Participant\_#9, 2023). Finally, participant #7 described the importance of their relationship with the coordinators by saying,

“they're part of the university and they represent the university and they're really pushing that university life is not as hard as you think, and we are here to support you. We can help you through the process, and so on, so forth, and that just got me on board to go to the university” (Participant\_#7, 2023).

The relationship with the FTA staff and university campus seemed to be a deciding factor as to the reason why they chose to attend the university where the FTA experience was hosted. All nine participants were at the time of the study attending the university where the FTA camp was held (the same university at which the researcher is employed). The researcher wanted to further understand the impact the FTA camp had on the participants' decision to matriculate in a post-secondary institution, therefore they asked the participants about their plans of college before the camp and compared those to where the students were at the time of the study. Before the camp, three students did not think they were going to

attend college. Before the camp, two students thought they would be attending a 2-year college because it would be easier. Before the camp, four students knew they would be attending college but did not know where they would be going.

### **Summary of Study Results**

The findings suggest that the FTA five-day college campus immersion experience (FTA camp) did have an impact on the participants' decision to matriculate into higher education and in their interest in pursuing a career in education. The study found that the FTA camp impacted the participants' interest in education because of programming, diversity within the field of education, learning more about the teaching career, valuing teachers and the teacher profession, and the decision process in declaring their current major. Regarding the impact the FTA camp had on matriculation into post-secondary, the study found changes to college perceptions, college exposure and experience, cultural navigators, welcoming and supportive community, confidence and reassurance, and decision to matriculate into current post-secondary institution.

### **Discussion of the Findings with Previous Literature and Theoretical Framework**

The literature review consistently showed that having teachers or staff of color could benefit all students, especially students of color. Similar to the literature findings, the participants of this study (all of whom identify as students of color) described the importance of having FTA GYO staff of color, especially staff from their same ethnic and cultural background. They described feeling more at ease, understood, and being able to be themselves. Furthermore, the participants commented that their parents felt a similar ease because they were able to speak with the staff in their first language and this reassured them that their student was going to be safe during the college campus immersion experience.

Lastly, the participants described the importance of having other students of color in the FTA GYO program. The diversity of the staff and students helped the participants feel that they belonged in FTA GYO camp and in the university. For some the FTA GYO program made them feel welcomed in the teaching profession.

The theoretical framework used in this study was Strayhorn's Cultural Navigator Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2015) as this model is used throughout the FTA GYO program to build community. The cultural navigator sense of belonging allows participants to have someone who understands the higher education culture and who is going to support the student through the thick of their journey within this system. The FTA GYO program uses this sense of belonging model to motivate, support, and advocate on behalf of the student. Furthermore, the FTA staff gets to know the participants and their families and support them as they navigate higher education alongside their students. The interviewed participants disclosed feeling supported by the FTA staff and knowing that no matter what challenges they would face in university, they could always reach out to the FTA staff. The participants mentioned that they could tell that the FTA staff cared about them and their well-being. Most of the participants discussed that before the camp, they did not know where they were going to attend college or if they were even going to attend college. After the FTA GYO camp and their familiarity with the campus and the support they felt from the camp staff, they decided to matriculate at their current university. A recurring theme was that the participants felt that they would get support from the staff at any time while they were completing their college degree.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

A convenience sample was used, and the researcher already had a professional

working relationship with the participants. The participants were all former FTA GYO scholars, and the researcher coordinated that program. Another limitation was the low number of participants. There were a total number of nine interviews. The research study was delimited to the former FTA participants who live and attend college or university in the Midwest. The participants were enrolled in a post-secondary institution, and this study did not include participants who moved out of the state of Minnesota or had decided to not pursue higher education opportunities. The participants of this study had the same ethnic and cultural background, lived, and studied in the upper Midwest and their experiences of the may not reflect the experiences of participants from other teaching GYO programs. The participants all attended the same institution of higher education, which may not represent other teaching GYO programs. Finally, this study did not focus on external factors that could have impacted the participants' matriculation into post-secondary schools or interest in education.

### **Researcher's Positionality**

The researcher coordinated the FTA program and the college campus immersion experience so their perspective could be biased towards the study. Additionally, the researcher ran the interviews, and had a working professional relationship with the participants. The reason the researcher decided to run the interviews was because they already had built trust with the participants. The researcher's relationship could have impacted the students' decision to participate in the study. Additionally, the researcher worked at an institution of higher education in the Midwest and a large portion of the material in this study was from the perspective of recruiting students to a post-secondary institution, which might not be applicable to other institutions of higher education or

geographical areas.

### **Future Recommendations**

Additional teaching GYO studies that include a college campus immersion experience are needed. This study showed that for the participants, (all who identified as students of color and many as first-generation college students), the college campus immersion experience supported them in their decision to matriculate into post-secondary education. Additionally, it supported their decision to matriculate into the institution where they experienced the FTA GYO college campus experience. The study demonstrated that teaching-focused programming did help the participants understand the education field and to understand the importance of having diverse teachers. For some, these factors were why they chose to declare education as their major. Future studies should include larger sample sizes, include participants who chose not to matriculate into post-secondary education, and include participants in different geographical areas.

Longitudinal studies are needed to measure the long-term effects of teaching GYO programs. For example, a longer study could measure if the teaching GYO students are more likely to graduate college after having participated in the GYO college campus immersion experience. For those participants who chose to become educators, the longitudinal studies could measure the percentage of students who graduate and enter the teaching profession. Finally, following the teaching GYO participants through their college career would show some of the barriers students of color are facing.

### **Conclusion**

The U.S. teacher profession continues to be disproportionately White despite the changing demographics. Having diverse teachers will benefit all students (Garcia et al.,

2019). This study explored if a teaching GYO college campus immersion experience program, which used the cultural navigator sense of belonging model (Strayhorn, 2015), was effective at supporting high school students of color into matriculation into post-secondary education and increase their interest in teaching. First, the results showed that the comprehensive sense of belonging model used during the Future Teacher Academy (FTA) GYO did support and encouraged the students to attend university. Secondly, it supported them in enrolling at the university where the FTA program was held. Thirdly, the programming helped many of the participants decide to become educators. In a more holistic view, the participants described the FTA GYO college campus immersion as an experience that gave them confidence, created positive association with school staff, and exposed them to a first-year college experience all while having the teaching profession as the focus. More GYO programs that include a college campus immersion experience are needed in order continue to “move the needle” toward diversifying the teaching profession and supporting students of color in post-secondary education.

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