Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

NaJeana Henderson  
M.A. in Counseling, May 2017, Missouri Baptist University.  
B.S. in Mass Communications, May 2014, Southeast Missouri State University

Maritza Sloan  
M.A in Education, May, 1997, Hamline University, Saint Paul, Minnesota  
B.A. in Spanish Education, December, 1992, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater Oklahoma

Douglas J Swanson  
M.S. in Labor Studies, May, 2014, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
B.A. in Union Leadership and Administration, June, 2010, National Labor College  
A.A.S. in Management, May, 1988, Sauk Valley Community College

Barriers to Post-Secondary Success

Date: March 30, 2021  
Time: 5:00 P.M.  
Place: Remote

Abstract  
This study reviews factors that prior studies have identified or failed to consider as barriers to post-secondary success. The three main areas include: academic success for Latinx students after high school, organizational systems and its impact on African-American students ‘postsecondary readiness, and what workers think of their high school education with regards to career preparedness.  

Five factors are identified as major barriers for Latinx students to continue in a higher educational system. A survey of former students from the Saint Louis, Missouri and Dallas, Texas metroplex area identified 56 Latinx students that participated in an initial survey. This led to a follow-up survey with 16 former students from the first group. Four Latinx students were selected to be part of a face-to-face interview where the qualitative study of this project was derived.  

College Preparation Programs play a major role with the success of post-secondary education opportunities. The lack of these successful programs is responsible for some of the barriers for post-secondary success that inner-city minority students may face while trying to transition from high school and on to Colleges and Universities. Further exploration of perspectives of high school graduates on college preparation programs have led to the creation of a survey of former Saint Louis City Public Schools high school graduates. The survey collected 20 student perspectives.

The absence of research on post-secondary education success from the perspective of workers led to a nationwide online survey of workers in the construction industry that produced 175 responses. The survey was followed up with 12 more detailed interviews with construction workers in the St Louis area. Together the survey and interviews identified whether construction workers believe their high school education prepared them for success in their choice careers, whether they are preparing current students better, or worse, and what secondary education systems need to do differently to improve students’ success in this industry.

The authors hope that their studies will help to provide insights to enlightenment for curriculum changes needed to support post-secondary success for underserved and minority populations.

Defense of Dissertation Committee  
Chairperson Thomasina F. Hassler, Ph.D.  
Committee Phyllis Balcerzak, Ph.D.  
Committee Carl Hoagland, Ed.D.