

**Representation in Teacher Education: Attracting Black Applicants to Pitt's Undergraduate  
Teacher Education Programs**

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# **Representation in Teacher Education: Attracting Black Applicants to Pitt’s Undergraduate Teacher Education Programs**

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This study explored Black student representation in the undergraduate teacher education program at the University of Pittsburgh. Nationally, Black teachers are underrepresented in public schools (Cross, 2017; Hussar et al., 2020), which impacts Black student outcomes (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Haddix, 2017). Teacher Education programs provide a large pipeline to the profession. Therefore, teacher education programs must attract Black students to help improve the representation of Black teachers. During the 2022-2023 academic year, Pitt School of Education implemented several changes, including recruiting for the new B.S. in Teacher Education program, new Black faculty started, and adding two new critical and culturally relevant prerequisite courses. This study aimed to find the applicant demographic trends of the undergraduate teacher education program and what attracts Black students to these programs.

The study utilizes application data and semi-structured individual interviews of eight participants to gain insight. The participants were Black students either interested, applied, or enrolled in undergraduate teacher education programs. Then, descriptive statistics of racial demographic data and thematic analysis of interviews were used to analyze the findings.

Major findings indicate that although the School of Education attracted more Black applicants to the teacher education programs, it did not increase Black student representation in the application pool. Additionally, the study found that Black students are primarily attracted to the same things as other demographics when pursuing a teacher education program. For

example, institutional characteristics, motivational factors, support system influence, and campus resources. However, what stood out amongst the participants was the emphasis on representation and the lack thereof as an attraction to the undergraduate teaching programs. The implications of the changes encourage the School of Education to implement more targeted recruitment efforts to increase Black student representation.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate the dissertation to all of the Black teachers and aspiring teachers. I see you, I value you, and your presence matters. I hope this dissertation sheds light on the importance of your work as teachers.

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## 1.0 Framing the Problem

### 1.1 Problem Area

Nationally, only 7% of public-school teachers are Black<sup>1</sup>, although Black students account for 15% of the student population (Cross, 2017; Hussar et al., 2020). Locally, in Pittsburgh Public Schools, 53% of the student population is Black, where the School of Education places approximately 50% of its student teachers. However, a local news outlet reported that only 4% of the teaching staff identifies as Black (Schneider, 2019). The low representation of Black teachers impacts the quality of education for students because research has established that Black students have better outcomes when they have access to Black teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Haddix, 2017). For instance, collectively, Black students earned higher grades and possessed lower suspension rates when they had a Black teacher (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Haddix, 2017). Furthermore, they are more likely to enroll in college (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Gershenson et al., 2016; Haddix, 2017). Finally, an unmeasurable but crucial factor to consider is the influence of having positive role models who are college graduates and look like them (Gershenson et al., 2016; Haddix, 2017; Madkins, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, I will utilize Black to describe people of African descent currently residing in the United States, including African-Americans, Caribbean-American, Afro-Latinx, and mixed raced, etc.

### **1.1.1 Historical Context of Black Teachers**

Whenever discussing Black teachers, it is essential to understand the sociohistorical context that led to the current outcomes. During the abolition period, abolitionist and Christian denomination groups founded schools to educate freed Black people (Harper et al., 2009; Perlstein, 2002; Angels et al., 2019). These schools became what we know today as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), with the earliest recognized HBCU being Cheney University in Pennsylvania (Harper et al., 2009). Historically Black Colleges and Universities were the majority of institutions the earliest schools to teach literacy to Black people in the United States and became the largest producers of Black teachers (Haddix, 2017; Madkins, 2011; Angels et al., 2019). Black people regarded teachings as an honorable career to teach academics, cultural wisdom, and community (Haddix, 2017). However, policymakers did not provide Black schools with the same resources as White schools (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). This issue, amongst others, led to the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, which ruled separate but equal as unconstitutional, which led to desegregation in schools.

*Brown v. Board of Education* allowed Black students to attend white schools but did not protect Black teachers. School districts began firing and not replacing Black teachers (Irvine, 1988; Madkins, 2011). Many 38,000 Black teachers lost their jobs ten years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (Irvine, 1988; Madkins, 2011; Sandles, 2020). Enrollment in teacher education programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities dropped to half of their previous enrollment, reducing the possible number of future Black educators (Haddix, 2017; Madkins, 2011). Essentially, the discriminatory practices of school districts forced thousands of Black teachers out of an education career, swaying Black students away from teacher preparation programs.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned institutions receiving federal funding from discriminating against race but did not dismantle the structures of oppression against Black teachers (Haddix, 2017; Madkins, 2011; Sandles, 2020). State legislators created policies that increased the qualifications needed to become teachers (Van Overschelde & López, 2018). The policymakers aimed to improve teacher quality to make the U.S. more competitive than other global markets. Yet, increasing the qualifications created additional barriers to accessing the teaching profession for Black (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). Those access barriers include state testing requirements and specific prerequisite coursework and GPA in addition to the barriers to accessing higher education. Over time, this created a national problem of inadequate representation of Black school teachers.

Over the last thirty years, several national and local initiatives began all over the country to increase representation in teacher education programs because of the studies that showed the students of color perform better both academically and socially with having teachers who look like them (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Haddix, 2017; Madkins, 2011). In 2010, the former U.S. Secretary of Education implemented a national initiative to increase the number of teachers in the next generation (Bireda & Chait, 2011; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Haddix, 2017). Despite the initiatives and increased scholarly research, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that the percentage of Black teachers decreased, while Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial teachers increased (Musu, 2019).

## 1.2 Problem of Practice

The University of Pittsburgh School of Education (SOE) is one of the seventeen schools at The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) on the Pittsburgh Campus in Western Pennsylvania. Pitt is a predominately white institution that struggles to enroll Black students. According to Pitt's Institutional Research data, approx. 5.6% of the student body identifies as Black in the entire University on both the undergraduate and graduate levels as of Fall 2021 (*University of Pittsburgh Fact Book 2022, 2022*). However, in the School of Education, Black students represent 11.3% of the student demographic in Fall 2021 (*University of Pittsburgh Fact Book 2022, 2022*). The School of Education's goals within the strategic plan aim to "boldly recruit students, faculty, and staff," guiding the Office of Admissions & Enrollment Services' purpose. Furthermore, the School's mission/vision statement emphasizes a commitment to equity and justice (*Equity and Justice, 2020*), influencing the desired student body demographics of the admissions staff recruiting students.

According to internal data, most Schools of Education programs increased the enrollment of Black, Latinx, and Asian students and faculty over the last three years. As of Fall 2021, the student enrollment by race and ethnicity is approximately 67.9% White, 11.3% Black, 7.1% international, 6.1% Hispanic/Latinx, 3.3% Asian, 2.7% multiracial, and 1.5% unknown (*Student Outcomes Diversity Dashboard, 2022*). However, most Black students are predominately enrolled in Urban Education and Higher Education degree programs on all levels offered. In addition, the student body is 74.6% female (*Student Outcomes Diversity Dashboard, 2022*).

Although the School of Education already participates in several "best practices," such as recruiting at Historically Black Colleges & Universities, removing graduate admissions tests, highlighting Black alumni, hiring Black faculty and staff, etc. These strategies increased Black



student enrollment in some graduate-level programs but barely in others. Black student representation in teacher certification programs remains low, and the teacher certification programs do not reflect the School's demographics. In 2019, zero Black students enrolled in the teacher certification program. After examining the admissions data in 2019 and 2021, less than 5% of applicants to teacher certification programs identify as Black. The low enrollment of Black students in teacher certification programs contributes to the low representation of Black teachers in Pennsylvania. Therefore, this problem of practice is urgent for the School of Education to align with its mission and vision.

As an enrollment management professional, I gained experience executing numerous strategies to attract and enroll Black students over the past decade. My initial interests stemmed from my positionality as a Black woman noticing the differences in access and opportunity for Black students. However, my interest expanded as I learned more about the systemic issues Black students face in higher education. As the former Associate Director within the Office of Admissions & Enrollment Services (AES) in the School of Education, one of my responsibilities was to recruit a diverse applicant pool for faculty to review and consider for programs. This past year I transitioned roles to Director of Recruitment & Admissions at another school in the same university. Now, I act in an external capacity to provide feedback and support the School of Education in this change effort.

### **1.3 Overview of the Change Initiative**

Throughout the 2022-2023 academic year, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education implemented several changes to its undergraduate teacher education programs. First,

the School of Education will start recruiting for a Bachelor of Science degree (B.S.) in Teacher Education program that begins in Fall 2023. Secondly, the School of Education began offering new culturally relevant courses. And last, three new Black faculty began their appointments in the Teaching, Leading, and Learning department, with all three teaching at least one undergraduate course.

The creation of the new degree program was a school-wide effort led by faculty and was several years in the making. According to the proposal approved by the Provost's Office, one of the new program aims is to increase overall enrollment and diversity in the teacher certification programs. In addition, the new program will reduce the time and requirements to earn a teaching certification, increasing affordability and academic access for students.

The new program is technically not new. The School of Education offered a Bachelor's degree in teaching education until the mid-2000s. However, the pilot interviews taught me that the School of Education leaders eliminated the original undergraduate teacher education due to legislation changes and the high saturation of bachelor's level teacher certification programs. In the early and late 2000s, Pennsylvania was over-saturated with teachers, making it difficult for graduates to find employment there. However, since 2011, teacher certification applicants have declined each year. Now, teacher certification applications for the state are down 66% compared to a decade ago, and there are teacher shortages throughout the commonwealth (Turner, 2022). The teacher shortages heighten the need for more educators. Simultaneously, enrollment in teacher certification programs declined over the years.

First, the faculty submitted a proposal, supported by school leadership, to the provost's office to approve the request. The proposal includes curriculum, program goals, and reasoning the new program is needed. Developing the proposal for a new program took faculty years developing

and revising the new program proposal to obtain approval from the provost's office. The provost looks at several factors before deciding. One of those factors is will the program compete with an already existing program at the University. Additional factors include faculty and staff capacity and how well the program aligns with institutional priorities and goals. Although the former provost denied the proposal, there were leadership changes. University leaders hired a new dean for the School of Education in 2017, and the University hired a new provost in 2018. However, in December 2021, the provost officially approved the new program to enroll students starting Fall 2023.

The new program is an upper-level division program, meaning undergraduate students could apply after earning 48 credits at Pitt or another institution. The program requires four total prerequisite education-specific courses that students can take during the program if a student's schedule permits. The prerequisites include two preexisting courses, Foundations of Special Education and Developmental Psychology. Also, the faculty developed two new prerequisite courses, Critical Histories of Education, and Cultures, Knowledge Traditions, and Social Systems of Schooling, to help students' cultural competencies before entering the program.

Then each content area has specific courses based on Pennsylvania Department of Education requirements. The School of Education requires the same education-specific prerequisite coursework for bachelor- and master-level students. However, there is more flexibility when incoming students take the courses for undergraduate students.

Furthermore, to have the capacity for the new programs and low enrollment, the faculty proposed terminating several master's degree programs leading to a teaching certification. In 2022, the teacher education program consisted of over twenty offerings on the graduate level, including combinations of degree offerings and P.A. department of education certifications. However, in

2023, those offerings are condensed down to eight graduate-level certification programs. The programs eliminated include combined Master of Education in Special Education and secondary education content area certification; the joint degree Master of Social Work with teacher certification (MSW/CAST); and the standalone graduate certificate programs for specific subjects. A complete list of teacher certification programs offered in 2022 and 2023 is in Appendix A.

Other logistics for the new program include staff across the School and University who can perform their duties. For example, the registrar's office creates specific codes for the program in the student information system. Next, the Information Technology office will update the new codes in various databases and systems the institution uses. Next, the admissions team can begin marketing and recruiting for the program after all the logistics are in place.

The 2022-2023 academic year is the first recruitment cycle for students to apply for the program. For the first recruitment cycle, Admissions & Enrollment Services team (AES) will update the undergraduate application for the School of Education to include the new program. Then throughout the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 terms, AES will actively recruit eligible students to apply by the March 1 deadline. AES will implement various recruitment strategies, including training centralized admissions about the new program, creating and disseminating marketing materials and communications, hosting teacher education information sessions and Open Houses, providing one-on-one pre-admissions advising, and attending transfer admissions events.

#### **1.4 Key Stakeholders**

I identified several stakeholders who will be either involved or impacted by the low representation of Black students in the teacher certification programs. The first key stakeholders

identified are Black prospective students in the teacher education program. The goal is that the new program will attract more prospective Black students. Secondly, I identified the admissions team because they are responsible for attracting, recruiting, and guiding prospective students until enrollment. Next, the teacher education faculty are essential stakeholders because they lead the admissions committee responsible for admitting, advising, and teaching students in the program.

Additionally, administrators, such as the Provost and Dean's leadership teams, who can approve and reject proposed changes and budgetary needs are essential to consider. Last, other stakeholders include folks with similar goals or interests to increase Black student college access to teacher preparation programs, such as alumni, the local school districts, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the Center for Urban Education.

### **1.5 Preliminary Study**

Before engaging in a study, I conducted a preliminary study to learn what contributed to the low representation of Black students in teacher certification programs in the School of Education. From this, I reviewed scholarly articles and reports, interviewed various stakeholders, and attended professional development sessions. The stakeholders included faculty, Black teacher preparation alum, Black prospective students, School of Education administrators, the admissions team, and Center for Urban Educations staff.

From the preliminary study, I identified several factors that could impact Black students applying to teacher certification programs. The factors for low representation identified in the School of Education include location, format, academic requirements, costs, competition, interest in the teaching profession, and awareness. Due to my positionality, I focused on changes that

would impact recruitment in the teacher education programs at my former place of practice, the Office of Admissions & Enrollment (AES). A significant change underway was starting a new undergraduate program in teacher education, potentially improving academic access for Black students interested in becoming a teacher at Pitt.

### **1.5.1 Program Format**

For the last two decades, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education only offered teacher certifications at the graduate level, which took students an additional year after earning their bachelor's degree to earn their teacher certification. With this format, students would enroll in 5 years of postsecondary school and earn a master's to be certified. The graduate-level program remains an option for students who want to earn a teaching certification post-Bachelor's degree. However, only offering teaching certification at the graduate-level increases barriers for students and introduces more competition from other Schools of Education, alternative certification programs, and residencies.

The undergraduate offerings could also make the University more attractive to Black high school students considering careers in teaching because now we are another option for folks who want to pursue teacher education at the undergraduate level. In addition, except for the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, PittSOE is the only teacher certification program in Pennsylvania that does not offer certification at the undergraduate level. Hence, the new program will also make Pitt School of Education more competitive in recruiting high school students interested in a teaching career at the University.

### **1.5.2 Academic Requirements**

Except in the accelerated program, the admissions committee holds all teacher certification applicants to graduate admissions standards. All graduate programs require a minimum 3.0 GPA, three letters of recommendation, and a bachelor's degree for admissions. In comparison, undergraduate degree programs require approximately 60 credits, a 2.5 minimum GPA, and no letters of recommendation for admission. However, the undergraduate teacher education programs will require a minimum 3.0 GPA to meet Pennsylvania Department of Education requirements for certification. The reduced credit requirements allow the opportunity to recruit students from community colleges for the teacher certification program. Community colleges are typically open access and have higher demographics of Black students than selective 4-year institutions (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013).

### **1.5.3 Costs**

Previously, PittSOE students entering the CASE program must pay for undergraduate and graduate tuition. In the CASE Program, students earned their teacher certification at the master's level. However, with the new B.S. in Teacher Education, students can only pay undergraduate tuition to earn their certification. As a result, students can become teachers without graduate school. Teaching certification costs them less because undergraduate tuition is lower than graduate tuition (Tuition and Fees, 2022). Additionally, undergraduate students have higher access to non-repayable student aid, such as federal grants and institutional scholarships and grants. For example, the University of Pittsburgh offers a Pell grant match to all Pell-eligible students that attend the University, but only undergraduate students are eligible for Pell Grant (Scholarships - Financial

Aid, 2022). Furthermore, undergraduate students can be eligible for University and School-level scholarships (Scholarships - Financial Aid, 2022). In contrast, no University-level scholarships support graduate students besides Pitt2Pitt for recent University graduates.

## **1.6 Overview of the Study**

The study aimed to understand what attracted Black applicants to undergraduate teacher education programs. As well as review the application demographic trends for the undergraduate teacher certification program. The study builds upon what I learned from the preliminary interviews with stakeholders and previous research. With both purposes in mind, the following questions guided the inquiry: 1) What are the racial and ethnic demographic characteristics of the 2022 CASE program cohort and 2023 cohorts for the CASE and B.S. in Teacher Education programs applicant pools for the undergraduate teacher certification programs? 2) What attracted Black students to Pitt's undergraduate teacher education programs?

The study used descriptive statistics to understand the makeup of the applicant pools for teacher education. A frequency table displays the percentage of racial and ethnic demographics represented in the applicant pools. Additionally, the study used qualitative interviews to understand what attracted Black applicants to the new B.S. in Teacher Education program.

### **1.6.1 Additional Strategies Coinciding To Support The Aim**

Furthermore, AES is leveraging technology more this year to increase capacity, for example, using Salesforce and Marketing Cloud to collect data from leads and prospects and create



strategic communications. During the Summer of 2022, AES collaborated with the Tech and Marketing teams to build up-to-date requests for information forms that directly load prospective student data into Salesforce to keep track of communication and collaborated with marketing to create strategic communication to those who express interests. Both technologies enable AES to engage many prospective students while focusing on those who need additional support.

While COVID-19 is still a concern this recruitment season, AES will attend and host more in-person events, such as graduate fairs, compared to the last recruitment cycle. Additionally, the Admissions & Enrollment Services team is increasing HBCU and HSI engagement from previous years by attending and networking at these institutions across the country both in-person and virtually. As a result, most HBCU and HSI engagement will benefit graduate-level recruitment rather than undergraduate.

Outside of the Office of Admissions & Enrollment Services, several changes will impact the problem of practice. In 2020, the McElhattan Foundation awarded the School of Education a two-year grant for the Practice of Freedom program (Zwick, 2021). CUE hosts the grant program, aiming to increase Black classroom teachers. This program will offer mentorship, programming, and high school engagement through a teaching career.

The Provost's Office created a dedicated office for early outreach and college access. Oafa hosts several initiatives to attract Black students to the University, such as paid overnight visits. Last, The Pennsylvania Department of Education will no longer require the Basic Skills test until 2025, reducing the number of standardized tests required to become a teacher. These changes will impact the aim of increasing Black applicants to Teacher certification programs.

## 1.7 Significance of the Study

The School of Education's mission and vision are rooted in equity and justice for students. While the School cannot change the past, the community members can make changes to improve the future enrollment of Black students. First, as previously mentioned, nationwide Black teachers are underrepresented in public education (Madkins, 2011; *Race and Ethnicity of Public School Teachers and Their Students*, 2020; Sandles, 2020). Second, scholars found that Black teachers increase the outcomes of Black k-12 students, such as better attendance and college enrollment rates (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Madkins, 2011; Sandles, 2020). Third, black teachers serve as role models to help students envision themselves as teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Madkins, 2011; Sandles, 2020). Last, Black students are underrepresented in higher education due to historical exclusion and economic inequities (Dancy et al., 2018; Griffin & Harper, 2011; Sandles, 2020). The study is significant because it will inform whether the changes contributed towards the overall aim of increasing Black student applications or if it perpetuates the status quo.

## **2.0 Review of Scholarly Knowledge**

The review of scholarly knowledge combines findings from peer-reviewed research, professional knowledge, and pilot interviews with stakeholders to explore the problem further. First, this chapter will discuss the College Choice Conceptual Model (Perna, 2006) and FIT-Choice Framework (Richardson & Watt, 2006). Afterward, the chapter will discuss the access and barriers to teacher education programs for Black students, such as economic barriers, academic opportunity, institutional culture, affirmative action, and the reputation of the teaching career. Finally, the chapter will review strategies to increase Black student access to teacher preparation programs and the profession.

### **2.1 Conceptual Frameworks**

I explored two frameworks relevant to learning more about the problem of practice. The first framework is the College Choice conceptual model (Perna, 2006) to learn more about what influences students to choose a college. Secondly, the FIT-Choice model (Watt et al., 2012) to learn what influences students to pursue a teaching career. Although the frameworks are not tailored toward Black students, both provide insight into what may attract a student to a School of Education for a teacher preparation program.

### **2.1.1 College Choice Conceptual Model**

The College Choice conceptual model is rooted in economic and sociological theories, such as human capital investment, social capital, and cultural capital theories (Perna, 2006). I chose this model because it is one of the most robust models that include race and ethnicity as part of the multiple factors influencing a student's decision to attend college. Additionally, it expanded on the three-phase model of college choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Perna, 2004, 2006) and included all aspects of the program/models for increasing African American Participation in Higher Education (Freeman, 1997; Perna, 2006). The model has four layers illustrated in the graphic below. Layer one is the habitus focusing on demographic characteristics, cultural capital, and social capital (Perna, 2006). In this model, cultural capital refers to the knowledge and value regarding college attainment (Perna, 2004, 2006). Social capital refers to information and assistance with the college process (Perna, 2004, 2006).

Next, layer two is the school and community context, concentrating on resource availability and types (Perna, 2004, 2006). Additionally, layer two considers the structural supports and barriers. Layer three is the higher education context, which includes recruitment efforts, school location, and school characteristics (Perna, 2004, 2006). Admissions professionals have the most influence in layer three because the admissions team develops recruitment and marketing strategies to attract students to their respective campuses. Last is layer four, which covers social, economic, and public policy contexts (Perna, 2006).

Another model I considered is the College-Going Decisions and Trajectories model, which focuses on information, time, and opportunity as “three bidirectional forces” for college decisions. This model includes non-first-time students, such as adult learners (Iloh, 2018). The model proposed great points, such as the critiques of using the word “choice” because college is not a

choice rooted in privilege (Iloh, 2018). However, it also disregards the reality that many do not have college access. Therefore, I chose to utilize Student College Choice conceptual model because it accounts for the complexities within the decision for college (English & Umbach, 2016; Perna, 2006), and the content overlaps except for the bidirectional force of time.

### **2.1.2 FIT-Choice Framework**

However, the Student College Choice model does not focus on why students choose specific majors or careers. Therefore, I also chose the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice Framework to understand further why students may select a career in teaching (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007). The FIT choice model is a theoretical model that combines career choice literature and teacher education literature (Richardson & Watt, 2006). Additionally, the model builds upon the expectancy-value theory to investigate why people choose a teaching career (Richardson & Watt, 2006). The FIT-Choice model stems from an initial study to explore the motivations for Australian students in teacher education programs to choose a career in teaching using the FIT-Choice Scale.

The FIT-Choice scale assessed motivations, such as “intrinsic values, personal utility values (job security, time for family, job transferability), social utility values (shape future of children/adolescents, enhance social equity, make social contribution, work with children/adolescents), self perceptions of individuals’ own teaching abilities, the extent to which teaching had been a “fallback” career choice, social influences, and prior positive teaching and learning experiences.” (Watt & Richardson, 2007, p. 37)

The FIT-Choice provides a relevant framework, and it's been used in recent studies in the United States and other countries(Watt et al., 2012). The findings in other countries were highly similar to the original findings from the students in Australia (Watt et al., 2012). However, future investigation is needed to learn more about why Black students are underrepresented in the profession.

## **2.2 Barriers & Opportunities of Access to Teacher Prep Programs**

Financial resources and academic preparedness are the most common barriers to access to higher education (Griffin & Harper, 2011; Griffin & Muñiz, 2011; Perna, 2004; Posselt et al., 2012). While these barriers can influence college students of all racial backgrounds, they disproportionately affect Black students due to systemic racism in the United States (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). This section will explore what causes these barriers and practices to eliminate them in teacher preparation programs.

### **2.2.1 Financial Resources**

Black students are more likely to come from families with fewer financial resources (Addo et al., 2016; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Jackson & Reynolds, 2013). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Black students have the highest percentage distribution for families in poverty and high-poverty level school districts (Addo et al., 2016; Hussar et al., 2020). It is important to note that this is not by happenstance but by racist housing policies and discriminatory lending practices that led to intergenerational inequality (Addo et al., 2016;

Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Black, Latinx, and moderate-income students are more responsible for paying for their college education (Addo et al., 2016; Elliott & Friedline, 2013; Jackson & Reynolds, 2013). Compared to other racial groups, Black students were less likely to pay for college with family contributions (Elliott & Friedline, 2013). As a result, black students in their young adult years accrue more debt than their white counterparts, creating racial disparities in student loan debt and retention (Addo et al., 2016; Elliott & Friedline, 2013; Jackson & Reynolds, 2013). Although studies have found student debt does not factor in graduate school choice, it does impact the ability to graduate.

When focusing on teacher preparation programs, the cost of teacher certification programs compared to teachers' starting salaries is also a concern for students and limits access. In addition to tuition, teacher education students must pay for background checks, licenses, fees, and other certification costs (Bireda & Chait, 2011; Carver-Thomas, 2018). Despite the cost and education required, entry-level teachers earn low salaries for college-educated professionals in the United States (Hussar et al., 2020). According to ACT research and policy, the highest reason college-bound high school seniors are not considering teacher education is the salary (Croft et al., 2018). Furthermore, teacher certification students typically must do unpaid student teaching and evening courses, making generating income while in the program challenging. These financial factors act as barriers to access to teaching preparation programs.

Many institutions offset the affordability concerns with need-based financial aid, academic scholarships, and campus visitation programs. For example, some best practices in graduate student recruitment include generous financial aid, visitation programs with little or no cost to the student, and consistent, personalized outreach (Griffin et al., 2012; Griffin & Muñiz, 2011; Slay

et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the only federal financial aid opportunities at the graduate level are loans.

### **2.2.2 Academic Opportunity**

The ramifications of intergenerational inequity impact the academic opportunities for Black students. For instance, Black students in grades K-12 disproportionately attend under-resourced school districts that scored lowly in standardized testing and had lower graduation rates (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Dancy et al., 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 79% of Black high school students graduated, below the national average of 85%. While in K-12 schooling, Black students also encounter higher reporting of disabilities, higher suspension rates, and higher security enforcement in their physical school buildings (Hussar et al., 2020). Based on the evidence, Black students learn in environments where they must overcome additional obstacles to succeed.

Most Black students enroll in open-access and less selective institutions despite increased access to predominately white institutions (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Jackson & Reynolds, 2013). In contrast, most white students enroll in the most selective colleges and universities (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Under-resourced schools and escalating admissions standards, structural barriers made African-American students more likely to enroll in open-access institutions, such as community colleges and proprietary schools (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; 2011; Iverson, 2007; Posselt et al., 2012). Also, scholars found that Black students were less likely to have a parent with terminal or professional degrees and engaged with faculty outside the classroom (Peteet & Lige, 2016). This discrepancy in enrollment reproduces inequity because the most selective institutions



have better retention rates, graduate rates, post-graduate employment outcomes, and lifetime earnings when compared to open-access and proprietary institutions.

Additionally, teacher certification programs must comply with state and federal level departments of education, which could require standardized testing, minimum GPA, and a college degree to become certified (Bireda & Chait, 2011; Griffin & Muñiz, 2011; Madkins, 2011). For example, the Pennsylvania Department of Education requires students to pass a standardized examination before starting the teacher internship and another examination to earn certification officially. Other academic requirements include extensive prerequisite coursework and a minimum GPA of 3.0 (*Certification*, 2020). Although the intention is to increase teacher quality by measuring potential through academic performance, these requirements create another barrier for students to enter the profession (Van Overschelde & López, 2018). While higher education institutions cannot directly change these requirements, teacher preparation programs can help prepare prospective students to meet the criteria through early outreach programs.

### **2.2.3 Institutional Culture & Affirmative Action**

The impact of anti-Black racism is prevalent in higher education through the admissions and hiring process, institutional culture, student debt, and attrition. Black students reported and called out inequities from the Civil Rights Movement to the Black Lives Matter movement's current times. Despite improvements, some outcomes remain the same: Black students feel unwelcome due to prejudicial treatment and racist environments (Bradley, 2010; Cole & Harper, 2017; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Black students experience microaggressions, tokenism, and other traumas at undergraduate and graduate levels (Griffin & Harper, 2011; Mwangi et al., 2018; Slay et al., 2019). The mistreatment of Black students leads to lower retention and graduation rates.

Hence, decreasing the pool of eligible Black prospective students for teacher preparation programs at the graduate level.

Higher education leaders implemented affirmative action programs to increase the enrollment of Black students (Griffin & Harper, 2011; Warikoo & de Novais, 2015; Yosso et al., 2004). The implementation of affirmative action derived from a culmination of local and national events, responses from various stakeholders, government mandates, and the values of institutional leaders. In 1968, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act allowed higher education institutions to utilize affirmative action to remediate discrimination in American society (Yosso et al., 2004). As a result, institutions began creating indirect and direct affirmative action policies and programs to improve campus diversity. For example, Cornell University, University of Michigan, and Swarthmore College opportunity programs in the 1960s recruited from predominately Black high schools in New York, Detroit, and Philadelphia, respectively (Stulberg & Chen, 2014). The opportunity programs factored in the applicant's race in admissions criteria and admitted students who could succeed despite their academic backgrounds. Other affirmative action programming included factoring race into admissions decisions for holistic review, scholarships for minoritized students, and retention programming.

During and directly following the Civil Rights Movement, predominately white institutions began diversifying. For example, the percentage distribution of Black undergraduate students doubled in 1975 (U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, 1991) after institutions began implementing affirmative action programs. The increasing numbers demonstrated the effectiveness of affirmative action policies and the capabilities of institutions to diversify despite the systemic oppression Black students face. On the contrary, affirmative action policies' events demonstrate how rooted anti-Black racism is in higher education with cases such

as *Bakke v. Regents of California*, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, *Gratz v. Bollinger*, and *Fisher v. the University of Texas at Austin*. In response to affirmative action policies, rejected White students sued higher education institutions because they believed they did not receive admissions to selective institutions due to racial quotas held by minoritized groups. As a result, the Supreme Court ruled that colleges can use race as a criterion for admissions but cannot use inflexible racial quotas. These cases set a precedent for future affirmative action cases and began limiting what higher education institutions could or could not do for Black students in the admissions process. Due to these lawsuits, some states have banned affirmative action policies, while others lean towards a race-neutral approach.

Outside of litigation, institutional culture depicts anti-Black racism when education stakeholders view Black students as academically inferior since the majority of Black students did not have access before affirmative action programming (Cobham & Parker, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Poon & Segoshi, 2018; Yosso et al., 2004). This viewpoint exposes Black students to more microaggressions in the classroom. For instance, Harper (2015) interviewed Black male students at selective, predominately white colleges, and Universities and the participant shared a remark made to him by a fellow white student "I guess affirmative action lets Black students into the honors program too, huh?" (p.660). Other academic-related microaggressions include questioning Black students' work, implying that Black students had to cheat to produce favorable results (Griffin & Harper, 2011). This viewpoint is anti-Black because it perpetuates the ideals that Blacks are inferior and do not belong and the myth of meritocracy (Dancy et al., 2018; Angels et al., 2019). Black students describe how these microaggressions damage their self-esteem and reduce their sense of belonging on campus (Griffin & Harper, 2011). Essentially, affirmative action

policies and programs increased the number of Black students at predominately white institutions but did not protect Black students from the anti-Black opinions, views, and experiences on campus.

Institutional culture influences the recruitment and retention of Black students. Today, critics continue to challenge affirmative action legally, and nine states banned considering race in admissions decisions (Jaschik, 2020). As legislation changes and challenges affirmative action policies, colleges, and universities must modify their admissions practices to recruit a racially diverse class without giving a specific racial group an advantage in the admissions process. However, due to the history of anti-Black racism in higher education institutions and the United States, institutions would have lower percentages of Black students without race-conscious policies. Therefore, teacher preparation programs should commit to specific programming and outreach to recruit Black students and address any evident patterns of Anti-Black racism within the institutions' culture.

### **2.3 Current Initiatives**

The Black teacher pipeline is currently scarce in traditional teacher preparation programs, even with legislation increasing access (Haddix, 2017; Ludwig et al., 2010; Madkins, 2011). Higher education, specifically within enrollment management, is a "pipeline "or "feeder," frequently describes an entity where consistent and successful recruitment occurs. The entity can be a school, college, organization, or company that is abundant with prospective students interested in a college's programs. For instance, a local school district or college access organization may be a pipeline for programs at a nearby School of Education. In addition, determining or developing pipelines through partnerships is an effective way to recruit and facilitate access to marginalized

groups (Griffin & Muñiz, 2011; Griffin & Harper, 2011; Slay et al., 2019). These are fundamental in recruitment planning and targeted marketing. Therefore, the Black teacher pipeline would be an entity that contains prospective students for teacher preparation programs.

The main pipelines are undergraduate colleges and institutions. Colleges offering undergraduate teaching programs can recruit Black students from high schools, two-year institutions, and other departments within the same institution. HBCUs are the largest producers of Black teachers (Haddix, 2017; Madkins, 2011; Angels et al., 2019). State colleges and Regional Universities follow them. However, more selective institutions have fewer Black students, diminishing the potential pipeline for teacher preparation programs (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Hence, racial stratification in undergraduate admissions and disparities in first-year retention rates of Black students serve as long-term threats to Black student access to traditional teacher preparation programs.

School districts and non-profit organizations have developed ways to become teachers without attending traditional teacher preparation programs. For example, teacher-focused organizations partnered with school districts serving predominately low-income families to create teacher fellowship programs (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). These fellowship programs often include a teacher's salary and tuition reimbursement and cover state certification costs (Solomon, 2009). For example, the Boston Teacher's Fellowship hires teaching fellows. It pays for their annual teacher's salary, places them in Boston Public Schools, pays for professional development or career master's through a graduate-level teacher's preparation program, and provides mentoring opportunities with former fellows (Solomon, 2009). Another popular organization is Teach For America. In addition to offering many of the compensation and

benefits of fellowship programs, they also help students repay their undergraduate loans (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Furthermore, these organizations target students of color for recruitment and marketing. For example, Teach for America hosts specialized events and hires current student ambassadors to spread the word on campuses nationwide (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Typically, the organizations will partner with teacher preparation programs at major universities in urban areas, such as Boston College and the University of Pennsylvania, to provide professional development and coursework to receive graduate degrees (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Solomon, 2009). The residency program format allows its residents to earn a living wage while serving students. The initiatives of non-profit organizations create competition for traditional teacher education programs to offer similar benefits to attract prospective students.

The U.S. Department of Education offers additional financial incentives for teachers in districts with shortages (Cross, 2017; Hussar et al., 2020). Those incentives include student loan deferment of up to three years, TEACH grants, and different types of student loan forgiveness (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Cross, 2017; Hussar et al., 2020). These incentives have stipulations depending on the program. The stipulations include specific years of service or service in a high-need field or area. For instance, in 2021, the high-need field areas are Bilingual Education and English Language Acquisition, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Reading Specialist, Science, and Special Education (Cross, 2017). However, some states can have more high-need fields based on the shortages reported in their specific state.

Despite all the financial incentives, teacher preparation programs declined in enrollment over the past decade and continue struggling to recruit Black students (Hussar et al., 2020). The research depicts various reasons for the decline in teacher education. The industry's reputation of

low wages and higher accountability with standardized testing makes it a less attractive career for incoming students with options (Croft et al., 2018; Haddix, 2017; Madkins, 2011). While Black people are still highly underrepresented in most industries, they have greater access to more lucrative career fields than when the majority were teachers (Haddix, 2017). Furthermore, state legislation raised the qualifications to become a teacher, affecting access for Black students.

### **2.3.1 Local Context**

Much of the literature focuses on education policy and trends nationally or statewide. However, it is crucial to recognize the influence of the local context when considering which best practices work in the local area. Although teacher pay is a national issue for prospective students, national teacher organizations recognize Pennsylvania as a better state for teacher compensation (*Professional Staff Summary*, 2020). For instance, in Allegheny County, the starting teacher salary is above the national average for most school districts, even though teachers are still considered underpaid (*Professional Staff Summary*, 2020). Concerning teacher demographics, Pennsylvania has one of the lowest percentages of Black teachers and teachers of color. In addition, there is racial stratification in both the school district and neighborhoods (*Professional Staff Summary*, 2020). The Pittsburgh and Philadelphia School Districts schools educate the majority Black student population, and the other school districts are predominately white. These factors impact Black students' access to teacher preparation programs in Western PA.

No peer-reviewed literature researches initiatives or attempts to increase Black teachers in Western PA or the Greater Pittsburgh Area. Most of the historical data of the area comes from organizational reports and artifacts, such as a newspaper and documented perspectives of locals. Pennsylvania has two HBCUs, a Teach for America site, and several fellowship and non-profit

organizations that cater to Black teachers. However, the Philadelphia metropolitan area in the state's southeastern part contains most of those resources. In 2013, Pittsburgh Public School District contracted with Teach for America, but the newly elected board members rescinded the contract stopping the partnership (Belculfine, 2013). In June 2019, the Pittsburgh Public School Board approved guaranteed full-time positions for the district's Teacher Magnet Program (Behrman, 2019). In addition, PittSOE recently received a two million dollar grant to partner with two Allegheny County school districts aiming to rebuild the Black teacher pipeline (Zwick, 2021). The press release shared that the grant will focus on students in the district's teacher magnet program and another nearby school (Zwick, 2021). The local context shows initiatives to advance teacher diversity in the community, but creating a partnership might be complicated.

## **2.4 Conclusion of Review**

Teacher preparation programs across the United States face the challenge of increasing Black students' enrollment while decreasing interest in the teaching profession. The challenges of higher education, such as affirmative action, affordability, and academic preparedness of students, are barriers to access to teacher preparation programs. Additionally, students in teacher preparation programs incur program-specific costs and coursework to meet certification requirements. To make teacher education more accessible for minoritized groups, the Department of Education and non-profit organizations created various initiatives to diversify the teaching profession. Some initiatives include affirmative action policies, educational grants, partnerships, fellowships, and grow-your-own programs. However, while those efforts succeeded in increasing teachers of color, the number of Black teachers declined (Hussar et al., 2020; Musu, 2019). The decline in Black



teachers shows the need for race-specific efforts to combat the disproportionate representation of Black teachers in schools (Cobham & Parker, 2007). In addition, leaders must combat and comply with anti-Black racism in higher education institutions and education policies that directly impact their programs. Unfortunately, these contradictory goals often lead administrators to a space of perpetuating the status quo and enabling them to enact impactful change. However, funding, innovative programs, and collaborative partnerships make it possible to increase Black students' access to teacher preparation programs.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Education can learn from other schools and education non-profits to innovate programming and policies to increase Black student access to teacher education programs. Currently, the teacher preparation program demographics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education reflect the national trends in education. As a result, prospective college students are less interested in pursuing teaching careers, which explains decreasing enrollment. Furthermore, Black people, a quarter of the Pittsburgh population (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 2020*), are still underrepresented as students in teacher education programs. Therefore, to sustain the teacher education program and pursue its mission for educational equity, the school must attract prospective students to the teaching profession while also focusing on Black prospective students. With the research grants dedicated to improving diversity in teacher preparation programs and a Center for Urban Education, the Office of Admissions & Enrollment can contribute its recruitment skills to pursue the school's mission.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This chapter discusses how the study uses qualitative methods to understand what attracted Black students to undergraduate teacher education programs. Next, the study uses descriptive statistics to display trends between the racial demographics of the school's undergraduate teacher education programs. Last, the chapter concludes with a positionality statement and the study's limitations.

#### **3.1 Theory of Improvement**

Starting in Fall 2023, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education will offer a Bachelor of Science in Teacher Education. The new degree program allows students to complete their teaching certifications at the undergraduate level, which could potentially increase access to those certifications for Black students. Academic access would improve due to the reduced requirements and increase in options due to the new program format. Simultaneously, the school hired three new Black faculty members and offered two new culturally relevant education courses, which would improve the representation and cultural competencies of its students. Thus, getting closer to the aim of increasing Black student representation in teacher certification programs.

The problem of Black student representation in teacher education programs is a systemic issue regarding Black student recruitment to higher education and the teaching profession. Therefore, I conducted a preliminary study on the factors in this context to learn how this problem presents itself at the Pitt School of Education. For the preliminary study, I interviewed

stakeholders, reviewed existing research and professional reports, and reflected on observations and experiences to determine the systemic issues causing the problem. Then, I identified economic barriers, academic opportunity, institutional culture, legislation, program awareness, and the teaching profession's reputation as the main factors contributing to the low representation of Black students.

Many of these issues are out of my sphere of influence, meaning I do not have the power or support to make a meaningful influence (Bryk et al., 2015). However, my positionality as the former Associate Director in the School of Education allows me to study how significant changes attract Black students.

With the effort of faculty and leadership, the B.S. in Teacher Education program will offer six certifications at the undergraduate level. It will be the only teacher certification program in the School of Education that students can complete within four years. The new program is more accessible than existing graduate certifications because there are fewer admissions requirements, such as less prerequisite coursework, no letter of recommendation requirement, and a lower minimum GPA. Additionally, the format change allows students to pursue specific certifications at an undergraduate or graduate level, which was previously the only option.

Additionally, the existing undergraduate program, Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE), underwent changes. CASE allows students to start working towards their certifications during their third-year of college. Students interested in any teacher education certification program must take the two new prerequisite courses taught by new Black faculty focus on equity and justice concerning education. Last, adding three new Black faculty in the Teacher, Leading, and Learning department increases representation for all teacher education

programs. With increased access, representation, and critical coursework, there is an increased opportunity to attract more Black students to apply for the teacher education program.

### **3.2 Inquiry Questions**

The following inquiry questions guide the study:

1. What are the racial and ethnic demographic characteristics of the 2022 (CASE) and 2023 (CASE and B.S. in Teacher Education programs) applicant pools for the undergraduate teacher certification programs?
2. What attracted Black students to apply to Pitt's undergraduate teacher certification programs?

### **3.3 Inquiry Approach & Design**

The study employed qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis because quantitative and qualitative data help learn how the changes attracted Black applicants. Therefore, the study collected qualitative data to understand the experiences of Black applicants and what attracted them to undergraduate teacher education programs. Historically, few Black students apply to teacher certification programs, which may limit quantitative analysis due to sample size. Furthermore, the study cannot control external factors that could contribute to students pursuing the program. Nevertheless, the qualitative data provided insight into understanding the

participant experiences' breadth and further validated the quantitative analysis result focusing on a specific racial group (Henning et al., 2016; Mertens, 2014; Schuh et al., 2016). Therefore, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews to understand further why Black applicants chose undergraduate teaching programs—then analyzed the data through a thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes amongst the interviews.

Simultaneously, the study used quantitative data to use numeric data to display trends (Henning et al., 2016; Mertens, 2014; Schuh et al., 2016). In admissions, the application count is a key performance indicator to predict the number of students enrolling in the program. Therefore, demographic percentages can show the racial and ethnic demographic trends of the new and preexisting undergraduate programs. I chose descriptive statistics with measuring frequencies for analysis because of the low number of Black applicants, which would limit analysis with inferential statistics.

### **3.4 Sample**

For **question 1**, the sample was applicants to the teacher certification programs on the undergraduate level that applied before March 16, 2022, and March 16, 2023, for the 2022 and 2023 Cohorts, respectively. The teacher certification programs on the upper-level undergraduate level included the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Teacher Education and the Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE) accelerated program. The B.S. in Teacher Education sample were the applicants for Fall 2023. In contrast, the CASE sample was the applicants for the 2022 and 2023 cohorts.

Applicants to the B.S. in Teacher Education must select one of the following six certification options: English Education 7-12 grade, Mathematics Education 7-12 grade, Science Education 7-12 grade, Social Studies Education 7-12 grade, World and Heritage Language Education 7-12 grade (formerly known as Foreign Language), or the Special education PreK-12 grades. The CASE program applicants earn Elementary Education PreK-4 grade and Special Education PreK-12 certifications, a Bachelor of Science in Applied Developmental Psychology, and a Master of Education.

Question 2's sample consisted of current, incoming, and prospective students or applicants to the undergraduate teacher education programs. This includes applicants to the undergraduate programs, students enrolled in the prerequisite courses, CASE program, or Teacher Education minor. I collected qualitative data via individual interviews with eight Black students interested in or pursuing teacher certification.

All participants identified as African-American/Black as one of their racial identities and were available for the interviews between Mid-March and early April. For analysis, the study categorizes any student that identifies as Black as one of their racial identities. This includes multiracial and Latinx students that selected Black as one of their races. There were five participants identified as first-generation Americans because their parents migrated to America from either West Africa or the Caribbean. There was one multicultural participant who identified as Black and Asian. Additionally, a participant identified as Black and Hispanic due to their family's roots in the Dominican Republic.

## **3.5 Data Collection**

### **3.5.1 Quantitative Data Collection**

The study will use preexisting applicant data collected by the Office of Admissions & Enrollment Services (A.E.S.) for the quantitative data. The admissions applications act similarly to a survey asking applicants about their desired program, racial and ethnic background, and other pertinent information necessary for institutional records and the review process. The application opened in mid-September 2022, and the advertised deadline is March 1, 2023. However, in both years, students applied and will still be reviewed after the deadline pending class space and placement availability.

The undergraduate students' application process depends on whether the applicant is internal, i.e., already a Pitt student, or an external transfer. The internal undergraduate applicants apply through a web form on the School of Education's website. The external undergraduate applicants apply through the centralized admissions office (OFA) application and complete the School of Education web form. The advertised deadline for Fall applicants is March 1, 2023. Once the application is submitted, A.E.S. or central admissions staff import the data from all applications into PeopleSoft, the student information system. The two data points that were important for the study are program selection and racial and ethnic background. For example, on the undergraduate level, in 2022, applicants could only select one program that led to teacher certification. However, in 2023, students will have two teacher certification programs to choose from due to the new program.

The options students can select for racial and ethnic background on the application align with the integrated postsecondary education system, IPEDS (The Integrated Postsecondary

Education Data System, 2022). First, applicants selected whether they identify as Hispanic/Latino. Then the applicants selected one of the following races: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African-American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. Students can choose to answer the question and can select multiple races. Peoplesoft will assign them an ethnic group code based on the applicant's answer. For example, anyone who selects Hispanic/Latinx will have the Hispanic ethnic group code despite their racial selection. If applicants do not identify as Hispanic, their group code will align with the selected race. The "multiracial" group code exists for applicants who select multiple races, and the "unknown" group code is for those who choose not to disclose their race.

I extracted the student demographic information through an admissions report that pulls data from the student information system. Then export the data to excel for analysis using the pivot table feature. First, I created a cross-tab report that provided the application count per program by ethnic group code. For example, it is common to have applicants who identify as Black and Hispanic or Multi. With this categorization, students identifying as biracial or Afro-Latinx, would not count in the Black group. Therefore, besides the ethnic group code, I used a tracking mechanism called "flags," which can filter applicants based on a selected race or ethnicity regardless of whether the applicant chose another. I also created a cross-tab report that displays all students who identify as Black for analysis to include multi-racial and multi-ethnic students with Black identities.



### **3.5.2 Qualitative Data Collection**

Student affairs practitioners will typically use a focus group to collect qualitative data from students (Henning et al., 2016; Schuh et al., 2016). However, the study used virtual interviews to be accessible to more Black applicants at various times. In addition, interviews provide rich and detailed data to help learn more about an experience with a phenomenon (Henning et al., 2016; Mertens, 2014; Schuh et al., 2016). Therefore, the interviews helped the study find what attracted Black applicants to the undergraduate certification programs.

Initially, the study focused on Black students applying to the new B.S. in Teacher Education program to gain insight into how the changes attracted their application. However, due to the limited number of Black applicants who responded to outreach efforts, the study expanded to include Black students who applied or enrolled in the CASE program, Teacher Education minor, or a prerequisite course for the undergraduate teacher education programs. Therefore, I used application data to identify Black applicants for the Summer and Fall 2023 cohorts of B.S. and in Teacher Education and CASE. The application data contained their contact information and recruited them for the interviews.

I also used School of Education enrollment records to identify Black students enrolled in the prerequisite courses, the CASE program, and the Teacher Education minor. Last, a participant shared that they had a friend in their prerequisite course interested in an undergraduate teacher education program but had not yet applied. She shared the friend's contact information with me for outreach. The primary recruitment method was email outreach detailing the studying and providing a Microsoft Bookings link to schedule the interview at the best time. The participant recruitment email template is available in Appendix B. I customized the email template to reflect

their relationship with the school—for instance, an applicant or enrolled student in a specific program. There were 20 potential participants, including the friend, and 10 scheduled an interview. One participant canceled and did not respond to outreach to reschedule, and another did not attend. Eight participants provided interviews. Seven participants are female and one is male. I intentionally omitted sex from Table 3.1 to keep the male’s responses confidential.

I gave all the participants unisex names for pseudonyms to protect their identities. Table 3.1 illustrates information on each participant, such as their program of interest or enrollment, whether they are an internal or external transfer, and current student stage with the School of Education. B.S. represents the Bachelor of Science in Teacher Education program. CASE represents the Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE) Teacher Preparation Program. An internal transfer is participants who started at the University of Pittsburgh as first-year students, but not in the School of Education. For instance, the participant may have started in the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences. An external transfer is participants who started at another institution and then transferred to the University.

Student Stages is where the participant is in the enrollment cycle at the time of their interview. For example, a prospective student is interested but has not yet applied. An applicant recently applied but has not received an admission decision, nor accepted an offer of admission. The incoming stage refers to someone who applied, was admitted, and intends to start in the upcoming term. Actively enrolled students in the School of Education are listed as current. Since the B.S. in Teacher Education program’s first term of entry is upcoming, all current students are in the CASE program.

**Table 3.1 Participant Profile**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Transfer Status</b>	<b>Student Stage</b>	<b>College Year</b>
Avery	B.S.	Internal	Applicant	Second-Year
Aubrey	B.S.	External	Applicant	Second-Year
Drew	CASE	Internal	Prospective	First-Year
Angel	CASE	External	Current	Fourth-Year
Jordan	CASE	Internal	Current	Fourth-Year
Dakota	CASE	Internal	Incoming	Second-Year
Jessie	CASE	Internal	Incoming	Second-Year
Tracy	CASE	Internal	Current	Third-Year

The initial outreach was before applicants may receive their admissions decision or while internal transfers were enrolled in School of Education courses. However, since the admissions committee reviews the applicants on a rolling basis, participants could receive an admissions decision during the interview recruitment process. Therefore, I emphasized that participating in the interview would not influence their admissions decision, course outcome, or future enrollment. I conducted the interviews via Zoom until early April and utilized the recording and transcription features. Next, I cleaned the Zoom transcriptions removing filler words and editing errors. Last, I uploaded the cleaned transcriptions to NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, to code and categorize the data.

I used the interview protocol refinement (I.P.R.) framework to develop the interview protocol. The I.P.R. framework consists of four phases to create and revise an interview protocol. The first phase encourages mapping the interview questions to the research questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2015). The interview will consist of nine questions developed in a semi-structured manner that allows for probing follow-up questions. The second phase ensures the questions are

conversational and carefully worded (Castillo-Montoya, 2015). The third phase includes further revision based on feedback. Before the interview, I reviewed interview questions with my faculty advisor to ensure the questions made sense to the intended audience. The fourth phase tests the interview protocol if feasible (Castillo-Montoya, 2015). Unfortunately, I could not pilot the questions on a small sample before conducting the interviews on the sample. However, the semi-structured format allowed me to reframe questions if a participant did not understand the initial question. Furthermore, the interview protocol incorporated probes and follow-up questions to understand better or clarify the participants' responses.

I designed the first part of the interview protocol to introduce the interviewer, explain the purpose of the interview, and gain consent to record. I was the interviewer for each interview. Before recording, I shared my appreciation for the participant joining the study and a brief overview of my academic and professional background. Furthermore, I allowed participants time to ask questions about the study before recording. The purpose of the first two questions is to build rapport with the participant and gain trust. In the interview protocol, I asked each participant to tell me about themselves and how they spend their time outside class. I also shared where I was from and any other relatable background to develop rapport with participants further.

I divided the protocol into three sections to explore what attracted students to Pitt's undergraduate teacher education programs. Since the primary outcome of the teacher education program is a teacher certification, the protocol consisted of questions to understand the participants' experience selecting a career in education and then selecting Pitt as their place to learn. The first section explored their interest in a teaching career. The protocol includes questions such as "Can you describe your experience choosing to enter the teaching profession?" and "Who would you describe as a supporter of your decision to pursue this career?" The second section

explored what specifically interested the participants in the overall University and then the School of Education. For example, “Can you tell me about your experience selecting Pitt for college?” and “Can you describe your experience considering the CASE or B.S. in Teacher Education program?” I tailored the questions based on the participant’s indicated program of interest and stage. Last, the protocol asks participants to reflect on how their experiences can improve the future. Therefore, I asked, “What do you hope to gain from pursuing the CASE or B.S. in Teacher Education program?” and “How can the School of Education attract more Black students to pursue their certification?” Appendix C contains the complete list of questions.

### **3.6 Analysis**

The study used descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data for question 1. I chose descriptive statistics to organize and summarize data (Henning et al., 2016; Schuh et al., 2016). I will display descriptive data as a cross-tabulation (cross tabs) to show the frequency of racial demographics amongst the various cohorts. Then I explored trends between the 2022 and 2023 CASE cohorts. Additionally, I observed trends amongst the racial demographics of students between the 2023 cohorts of CASE and B.S. in Teacher Education.

For qualitative data, I used thematic coding when analyzing the interview responses. Saldaña (2014) shared that “to theme in QDA [qualitative data analysis] is to construct summative phenomenological meanings from data through extended passages of text.” I chose this QDA strategy because thematic coding uses an extended phrase or sentence to capture the participants’ lived experiences (Saldaña, 2014).

First, I read through the transcription of the first interview to get an initial sense of the data. Second, I reread that first interview transcription and noted interesting emerging concepts. Third, I reread the transcription to give the notes different codes. Afterward, I reviewed the second interview transcription repeating the previous steps then compared the codes to see how they relate. Initially, I had over a hundred codes. Next, I condensed the codes by grouping relevant codes with each other, resulting in twelve categories. Then I re-reviewed the codes to see if they aligned with the created categories. From there, I distinguished themes and subthemes from the categories by outlining the categories and grouping them into four overarching areas. Fifth, I coded the remaining interview transcriptions by "marking examples of themes and subthemes" (Schuh et al., 2016, p. 123). Lastly, I further explored and analyzed the themes to make assertions about the data connecting them to the inquiry question.

### **3.7 Positionality Statement**

Positionality is where I stand in relation to others and how it impacts my views (Mertens, 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). I bring my personal and professional backgrounds into this work. I am a Black woman, a first-generation college student, and a former pell-grant recipient. My passion for recruiting Black and first-generation students aligned with my admissions roles and this study. My background helps me connect with Black students, who are integral to this study and help mitigate cultural bias.

Currently, I serve as the Director of Recruitment & Admissions at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School for Public and International Affairs (GSPIA). However, when I started working on this practice problem, I was the Associate Director of Admissions & Enrollment

Service. My previous Associate Director role inspired my inquiry into diversifying the teacher certification program. In addition, my relationships with the staff and faculty in the School of Education provided me access to applicant data after leaving the position for my current role. In my initial role at the University of Pittsburgh, I gained experience in the centralized office of admissions and financial aid (OFA). Furthermore, I led multiple undergraduate diversity recruitment initiatives for the institution and developed relationships across campus.

### **3.8 Limitations**

There are several limitations in studying what attracts Black students to undergraduate teacher education programs, such as oversimplifying race, differential selection, data access, and issues in qualitative analysis. Blackness is not monolithic, and the attraction to the program may vary based on the student's intersection with gender, sexuality, religion, socioeconomic status, etc. (Mertens, 2014). For instance, historically, men have been underrepresented in teacher certification programs. Therefore, since Black women are most participants, the themes heavily highlight their experiences and only include one Black male's experience.

Additionally, the study uses the IPED definition of various racial backgrounds, which oversimplifies races. Mertens (2014) argues that "comparison of racial or ethnic groups without consideration of relevant contextual characteristics would oversimplify interpretations of subgroup analyses" p. 223. Therefore,

The following limitation is a differential selection if the groups have other characteristics besides the explanatory variable (Henning et al., 2016; Mertens, 2014). In this case, the intervention is not the only change occurring that could influence an increase in Black applicants

to teacher certification programs. For example, during the Fall of 2020 and 2021, the pandemic forced A.E.S. to limit in-person recruitment activities. As a result, the University was not open to the public; most staff worked from home, with only one person coming to campus daily. However, A.E.S. increased in-person recruitment events for Fall 2022, which could influence trends between the 2022 and 2023 cohorts.

Additionally, due to time constraints, the 2023 cohort data will be incomplete because students can still apply after the deadline until the partner school districts can no longer take placements. Historically, this occurs around the end of June. If more Black students apply later, this will change the analysis results. Hence, the study will look at a snapshot of data from 2022 instead of the total applicant count.

The last limitation that I'll discuss is generalizability. Each institution and study body has a different context that may impact the results if its leaders outside the School of Education tried to replicate this study. Furthermore, internal and external events may change from year to year, impacting the responses of each cohort. Therefore, key parts of this study should be repeated annually to learn what attracts Black students in different cohorts.



## **4.0 Results & Findings**

This chapter details the quantitative and qualitative data findings using descriptive and thematic analyses. The descriptive analysis displays the racial demographic data for all the undergraduate teacher education programs by ethnic group codes and the African American/Black flag. The thematic analysis of the qualitative interview data discusses four overarching areas. The first area, Pitt features and benefits, focuses on what attracted Black students to Pitt. Then the following three areas focus on what attracted students to the undergraduate teacher education programs. The areas are preparation for a career that aligns with motivating factors and interests, inspiration and encouragement from support system, and information and guidance from Pitt resources. Then each area details the themes that emerged in each area.

## 4.1 Applicant Pool Racial & Ethnic Demographics

### 4.1.1 Program-Specific Demographic Trends

**Table 4.1 Racial And Ethnic Demographic Characteristics Using Ethnic Group Codes**

Ethnic Group Codes	2022 CASE		2023 CASE		2023 B.S. in Teacher Ed	
	%	n	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Asian	4.3%	1	1.9%	1	3.6%	2
Black or African American	8.7%	2	7.7%	4	5.4%	3
Latinx/Hispanic	4.3%	1	1.9%	1	7.1%	4
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Multiracial	4.3%	1	3.8%	2	8.9%	5
White	78.3%	18	82.7%	43	73.2%	41
Not a Citizen	0.0%	0	1.9%	1	1.8%	1
Cohort Total	100%	23	100%	52	100%	56

Table 4.1 displays the racial and ethnic demographic characteristics of the 2022 CASE, 2023 CASE, and B.S. in Teacher Education applicant pools using ethnic group codes. Several noticeable trends and differences exist amongst the applicant pools and racial demographics for the 2023 and 2022 CASE cohorts. First, the 2023 CASE applicant pool (n=52) has more than double the number of applicants than the 2022 CASE (n=23), with 29 more applicants. The largest growth is with white applicants, which more than doubled between 2022 CASE (n=18) and 2023 CASE (n=43) with 25 more applicants.

Despite the increase in overall applications for 2023 CASE, representation decreased in most ethnic groups besides white compared to 2022 CASE applicants. There were no

Native American, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islanders identified in any of the applicant pools. The largest percentage point decrease is with Asian and Hispanic applicants. In 2022 and 2023, there was only one Asian and one Hispanic applicant. Although the number of applicants remained the same, Asian and Hispanic applicants were less represented because the applicant pool grew.

Furthermore, Black and Multiracial representation decreased despite the number of applications increasing. The 2022 CASE applicant pool was 8.7% Black (n=2) and 4.3% Multiracial (n=1), which is more than the 2023 CASE applicant pool, which was 7.7% Black (n=4) and 3.8% Multiracial (n=2). Overall, the 2023 CASE applicant pool is somewhat less diverse than the 2022 CASE.

Additionally, there are differences between the 2023 CASE and B.S. in Teacher education applicant pools. For example, the B.S. in Teacher Education program (n=56) had four more applicants than the 2023 CASE (n=52). In addition, there was more representation of Asian Hispanic/Latinx and Multiracial applicants in the B.S. in Teacher Education program than in the 2023 CASE program. The B.S. in Teacher Education applicant pool was 3.6% Asian (n=2), 7.1% Hispanic/Latinx (n=4), and 8.9% Multiracial (n=5). In contrast, the 2023 CASE program was 1.9% Asian (n=1), 1.9% Hispanic/Latinx (n=1), and 3.8% Multiracial (n=2).

On the contrary, the B.S. in Teacher Education program has fewer Black and White applicants than the 2023 CASE. The B.S. in Teacher Education is 5.4% Black (n=3) and 73.2% White (n=41). The 2023 CASE applicant pool is 7.7% Black (n=4) and 82.7% White (n=43). Overall, the B.S. in Teacher Education applicant pool is more racially diverse than the 2023 CASE.

**Table 4.2 Black Racial Identity Demographics**

<b>African American/Black Flag</b>	<b>2022 CASE</b>		<b>2023 CASE</b>		<b>2023 B.S. in Teacher Ed</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(n)</b>
Yes	13.0%	3	7.7%	4	10.7%	6
No	87.0%	20	92.3%	48	89.3%	50
Cohort Total	100%	23	100%	52	100%	56

Table 4.2 accounts for all students who included Black as one of their identities, even if they were identified differently in Table 4.1. Despite more applicants identifying as Black (n=4) in the 2023 CASE than in the 2022 CASE (n=3), the overall percentage of Black applicants decreased. Black applicants were 5.4% of the 2023 CASE program compared to 13% of the 2022 CASE program. Additionally, the B.S. in Teacher Education (n=6) applicant pool has more Black students than the 2023 CASE (n=4). As well as the Black student representation is higher with 10.7% in the B.S. in Teacher Education than 7.7% in the 2023 CASE applicant pool.

#### 4.1.2 2022 and 2023 Overall Racial and Ethnic Demographic Trends

Table 4.3 2022 And 2023 Ethnic Demographics For Undergraduate Teacher Education Programs

Ethnic Group Codes	2022 UG Total		2023 UG Total	
	%	n	(%)	(n)
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Asian	4.3%	1	2.8%	3
Black or African American	8.7%	2	6.5%	7
Latinx/Hispanic	4.3%	1	4.6%	5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Multiracial	4.3%	1	6.5%	7
White	78.3%	18	77.8%	84
Non-citizen	0.0%	0	1.9%	2
Cohort Total	100%	23	100%	108

Several trends exist in the 2022 and 2023 undergraduate teacher education programs' racial and ethnic demographics. First, the 2023 applicant pool (n=108) is more than four times the size of 2022 (n=23). Most growth amongst white applicants in 2023 (n=84) and 2022 (n=18), although white applicants are slightly less represented, with 77.8% of the 2023 and 78.3% of the 2022 applicant pool. Representation increased with Multiracial applicants between 2022 and 2023. Multiracial applicants comprised 6.5% of 2023 (n=7) and more than 4.3% of applicants in 2022 (n=1). Additionally, Hispanic applicant representation slightly increased, with 4.6% applicants in 2023 (n=5) from 4.3% in 2022 (n=1).

On the contrary, Asian and Black student representation decreased, although the number of applications increased. Asian applicants comprised 2.8% of the 2023 applicant pool (n=3) but

4.3% of the 2022 applicant pool (n=1). Similarly, Black applicants are 6.5% of the 2023 applicant pool (n=7) but 8.7% of the 2023 pool (n=2). Thus, the application growth did not result in increased representation of all racial and ethnic groups.

**Table 4.4 Black Racial Identity Demographics For 2022 And 2023 Undergraduate Teacher Education Programs**

<b>African-American/Black Flag</b>	<b>2022 UG Total</b>		<b>2023 UG Total</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(n)</b>
Yes	13.0%	3	9.3%	10
No	87.0%	20	90.7%	98
Cohort Total	100%	23	100%	108

Likewise, Table 4.4 shows that the number of undergraduate teacher education Black applicants tripled from 2022 (n=10) to 2023 (n=3). However, Black students were less represented because they were 13% of applicants in 2022 and 9.3% in 2023. Overall, the growth in the number of Black applicants did not increase the representation of Black applicants.

## **4.2 What Attracted Black Students**

The study also found what attracted Black students to Pitt and the undergraduate teacher education program. The first part of this area discusses the themes of what attracted Black students to Pitt. The following subsections focus on what attracted students to the undergraduate teacher education program, such as preparation for a career that aligns with motivating factors and

interests. The following section explored themes from inspiration and encouragement from the support system. Finally, the last section discusses information and guidance from Pitt resources.

#### **4.2.1 Pitt Features & Benefits – Cost, Location, & Vibes**

It is important to explore what attracted Black students to Pitt because Pitt is the largest pipeline to the undergraduate teacher education program. The study found the following themes on why the participants were attracted to Pitt. In no particular order, the themes are (1) costs, (2) location, (3) campus vibes, and diversity. These themes are for the university and are not specific to the undergraduate teacher education program.

##### **4.2.1.1 Cost**

Every participant described how the cost was a significant factor when choosing a college. During the application process, the participants admitted they applied to Pitt because they obtained application fee waivers even if Pitt wasn't initially on their radar. After acceptance, Pitt had lower bottom line costs than the other institutions they were considering, which was why they chose Pitt. However, there are variations on how Pitt has a lower cost. For example, some participants received a scholarship that heavily discounted the money it costs to attend the University. Another example is that some participants compared Pitt to private institutions, and Pitt's cost was ultimately lower.

When narrowing down which institutions to apply to, Drew, Jordan, and Dakota all attributed fee waivers to their decision to apply to college when they were high school seniors. Drew recalled that they and their friend applied to all the schools that provided them with fee

waivers when they were high school seniors. Once a Pitt student, they can apply to any major in the School of Education for free.

Furthermore, the participants described how the financial opportunity through scholarships made it possible to attend the University. For example, Tracy is an out-of-state student who earned the prestigious and highly competitive Chancellor's Scholarship. With the Chancellor's Scholarship, Tracy can attend Pitt for free as it covers tuition, room & board, and fees and provides funding for academic pursuits. Similarly, Aubrey, an out-of-state student, received an athletic scholarship. Aubrey emphasized that costs were the number one factor when selecting a college, and they would not be able to attend without scholarships. For both participants, scholarships made Pitt accessible.

A few participants described how financial aid influenced their decision to attend Pitt, despite Pitt not being their first choice. Avery disclosed that they would not attend Pitt because they received their admissions decision later than other institutions. However, they chose Pitt because the institution gave them the most financial aid. Drew expressed interest in attending a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), but the cost was an issue. The HBCUs that Drew hoped to attend were all private with higher tuition rates than Pitt. Therefore, although Drew is an out-of-state student, Pitt was more affordable, making them decline admission to their top college. Avery and Drew's experiences show financial aid swayed their college decisions to choose Pitt.

On the contrary, Angel did not share that a scholarship or financial aid was why they attended Pitt. Instead, in-state and external transfer student Angel revealed that costs are why they put furthering their education on the back burner. They shared that the overwhelming cost of college and lack of scholarship options put them off pursuing their Bachelor's degree after earning



their associate's degree from the local community college. Ultimately, they wound up at Pitt after beginning an education bachelor's program at a private institution that costs more. However, they disclosed that Pitt's cost was lower than the private institution that gave him a scholarship. Moreover, the cost was still lower due to Pitt's status as a public institution and Angel's eligibility for a lower in-state tuition rate.

Jessie was the only participant to mention how CASE's accelerated format could reduce costs. They expressed that one of the benefits of the CASE program is that "the CASE program offers a year off of a master's degree, which would save me a lot of money." Jessie knows they want a master's degree after earning the Bachelor's degree. Therefore, they considered the accelerated program a benefit because they would only need to worry about one year of graduate tuition compared to other programs that require two years.

To summarize, although costs are not the only factor in deciding where to attend college, it is a top priority for students that can heavily influence which school the participants attend. Fee waivers attracted some participants to apply even if Pitt was not initially their top choice. Scholarships made Pitt more affordable than competitors. Without scholarships, sometimes costs helped sway participants to Pitt over other institutions that would cost more.

#### **4.2.1.2 Location**

In addition to money, physical location and vibes were other factors that attracted the participants to Pitt. Most participants expressed wanting distance from or closeness to their family when looking at institutions. Some expressed that they did not want to be in a school in the middle of nowhere or not as diverse surroundings. Furthermore, a few participants described their feelings and the vibes when they visited, which helped them select Pitt as the right place for them.

Many out-of-state participants attributed Pitt being far, but not too far, as a significant factor when deciding on institutions. For instance, Dakota admitted location was the biggest thing for them because they wanted to be far enough that their family had to plan the visit but still benefit from in-state tuition. Similarly, Jordan, an out-of-state student, shared that their uncle deterred them from their local top-choice school because their uncle said he would visit daily. Jordan shared, “My mom gave us like a five-hour radius around our house, like a driving radius, and she's like you could go anywhere up to 5 hours.” Therefore, Pitt’s geographic location fits their desired distance requirement.

On the contrary, Jessie, an in-state student, described liking Pitt as being local to family and campus, not in a rural area. Jessie is a caretaker for their father and considers Pitt’s proximity to the family as a benefit. Later, they shared that “I didn't want anything too rural because I wanted to be able to get fast food and go to grocery stores and stuff.” Thus, wanting a school closer to care for their father and in a non-rural setting.

#### **4.2.1.3 Campus Vibes and Diversity**

The campus visit experience attracted a few participants to attend Pitt. Jordan described how they felt when she visited campus with their younger sister. They recalled, “I think it was definitely, like this is gonna sound stupid, but the vibes of the school, like my comfort level, and how I felt being on campus.” They described a negative touring experience at another school but then discussed her experience at Pitt. Jordan said

when I came and toured, Pitt was very welcoming and honest, like they were telling me the pros and cons of being here. So I was like, I can see myself vibing with the atmosphere of the people around here.

Jordan's reflection highlights the benefit of the campus community being welcoming and honest about their experiences.

Similarly, Dakota reflected on her experience touring the campus and shared that they "felt like I was right at home," which attributed to their decision to attend Pitt. Although vibes and feelings can be intangible, Jordan and Dakota's experiences showed the importance of pleasant interactions on campus when visiting institutions. As well as their experiences highlight the importance of having honest people available to share their positive and negative experiences on campus.

Tracy, who started Pitt as a freshman, detailed their experience with a regional admissions representative in their area. Tracy said,

He was one of the Pitt representatives responsible for, like, the Rochester Northern region, and I remember he was a black male, and he made me feel like there's going to be people who look like me on campus, and then I wasn't going to be the only one, and I remember him at the High School. I would also see him at the career fair in the malls and around so that made me feel comfortable.

Tracy's experience highlights the importance of Black representation in admissions team members as well as the value of Pitt having admissions staff living in the place where they recruit.

Aubrey attributed the diversity of their future teammates and students in their program to Pitt. They said,

I struggled at [previous institution] because of the lack of diversity within the team. The school itself is very diverse, different populations. Student populations, people who are parents, people who are working a lot, a lot of different people on that campus, but the issue was the diversity on the [athletics team]. So that was definitely a big factor in me

choosing Pitt. Not only the diversity of the school, but the diversity of the [athletics team]. And you know, I wanted to say this definitely solidified my decision of you reaching out to me. like a Black doctoral student like wanting to interview me and my interest in education. So I definitely know that I picked the right school because this is evidence that there's diversity in the school, you know. And I have my evidence of diversity in a program so honestly I'm really excited to be there.

Aubrey's experience demonstrates the desire to see diversity in multiple aspects of student life. First, the student body, but also in the program and activities they are interested in pursuing while on campus. Additionally, although the purpose of my outreach was only for the study, it helped solidify the participant's decision because my positionality as a current student with a similar racial background reached out to them.

In summary, the participants considered Pitt's location and feelings on campus as essential factors when considering college. For some participants, Pitt's distance of being far but not too far was ideal. On the contrary, Pitt's closeness to their family helped the student balance other responsibilities with school. Additionally, participants felt at home, that the campus was welcoming and diverse, which helped them feel comfortable attending.

#### **4.2.2 Preparation For A Career That Aligns With Interests And Needs**

When looking at colleges, the participants in the study expressed the importance of having a career that aligns with their values and interest and finding a program that would academically prepare them for it. In addition, each participant discussed their motivating factors and interests, and the themes that arose were happiness, making a difference, having an impact, and working

with children. As for program needs, the themes emerged: enjoyable courses, the social justice curriculum, and the ability to transfer credits.

#### **4.2.2.1 Motivated by Being Happy and Making a Difference**

Before applying to Pitt, whether as a high school senior or transfer student, most participants knew they wanted to or were contemplating becoming a teacher. The start of their desire to become a teacher varies. For instance, Aubrey, Dakota, and Avery shared that they always wanted to be teachers. Similarly, Jordan and Angel knew they wanted to be in the profession before applying. Whereas Drew, Maya, and Tracy discussed contemplating the profession before applying but wanting a college with an education program as an option. The participants were drawn to teaching for various reasons, such as a desire to have a career that will make them happy, have an impact, make a difference, and other motivating factors. A career that aligns with their motivating factors was more important to them than concerns about teachers' pay. For example, Aubrey shared,

[I was] thinking about personal motivating factors like, you know, wanting to come home happy, wanting to come home feeling fulfilled, wanting to come home. They give you a [opportunity to make a] difference in someone's life; that definitely was that thing that made me say, okay, like it's not that much pay, but I'm gonna keep pushing.

Aubrey's response shows how personal motivating factors, such as happiness, fulfillment, and making a difference, helped them overcome a negative attribute of a teaching career. Similarly, Avery stated,

Often when people end up choosing a career that they're like, okay, this is gonna give me like a guarantee like this is the career that brings in the money, and it was weighing my options. Because sometimes teachers, there's always the issue that teachers don't get paid

what they want. So I could either get paid a whole lot and be unhappy or be happy and have a livable life, and I like to prioritize doing what makes me happy. Take care of myself, my mental and all that. So I was like, yeah, this career. I like it. It's gonna make me happy. So I want to do that.

Both examples reveal that participants know teacher pay is a concern in the profession. However, they valued having a career that makes them happy over having a higher salary.

Drew, who has immigrant parents from Ghana, experienced discouragement from their parents about their career choice. Drew reflected that their parents were not fond of them choosing a teaching career and preferred they pursue a career in law or medicine. However, Drew overcame their parent's discouragement by valuing happiness in their career and continues to learn more about a teaching career.

#### **4.2.2.2 Opportunity to Work with Children**

Another common theme amongst participants was the desire to work with children before and during their time at Pitt. The experiences and interests of working children encouraged the participants to consider a teacher education program. Jessie shared,

I knew that I wanted to work with children. I would either be a child psychologist would be some type of educator or a social worker or something, but I knew that I wanted to work with children. And that was what encouraged me to do with the School of Education.

Jessie exploring careers that worked with children led to their interest in the School of Education. Participants sought jobs at summer camps and daycares before college. Additionally, they took on babysitting or tutoring roles. Some internal transfers already at Pitt took advantage of opportunities like Jumpstart and Pitt Enrich to work with children in predominately Black neighborhoods. Jumpstart is an AmeriCorps program where college students visit preschools

weekly and read to the children. Pitt Enrich is a program where Pitt students tutor elementary-aged students at the Community Engagement Center (CEC). These experiences demonstrate an interest in working with children and that these programs and jobs have people interested in or exploring teaching careers.

#### **4.2.2.3 Curricula match interests and needs**

Additionally, the participants also considered the academic opportunities with their respective programs. For instance, classes they enjoyed or look forward to, the social justice focus in the curriculum, and how their credits from other institutions transfer. Drew is still considering whether they will pursue a career as a teacher, but shared,

I've taken a mix of classes to try every different major. And the ones that I've really enjoyed have been the ones that were education-based. And they're like things I actually want to talk about and like topics, I understand, and like classes, I feel comfortable speaking in.

Drew's response shows that their education-related classes helped narrow down which major they wanted to pursue at Pitt. The response also reveals what particular features of the class make the course enjoyable.

Before Jessie started the program, they contemplated between two majors, and the CASE program allowed them to do both. Jessie is an internal transfer who started in the School of Engineering. They shared,

The CASE program was definitely a motivation [to apply], because this is going to be a little bit of a long-winded story. In my fall semester. I had went to the School of Education Open House. and I had learned about all of the programs that are offered, and the case program stuck out to me because it offered a degree in both fields that I was considering pursuing, which was Psychology and Education.

Jessie's response highlights the uniqueness of the CASE program offering the Bachelor of Science in Applied Developmental Psychology and Master of Education in Special Education as an attraction to the program. It also spotlights the Open House as an avenue to learn more about the School of Education's offerings.

Some participants were attracted to the program because they were looking to gain experience as a teacher through field observations embedded in the program. Aubrey shared,

One thing I think about in the education program that I want to gain is that early classroom experience. Where you're still in college, but you have the opportunity to go into classrooms and work with kids and do field observations and be involved in classrooms without, you know, being the teacher.

Furthermore, participants discussed their attraction to the program's curriculum, preparing them to become more equitable and inclusive teachers. Participants who are current students described the focus on social justice as a benefit of enrolling in the CASE Program. Jordan reflected on their first year and shared that they loved learning about how to put social justice in the curriculum. Another participant reflected on when they initially learned about the School of Education. Tracy expressed,

I did a little bit of research, and I think the words that jumped out for me were social justice. In my own education experiences. And even in, just browsing on the Internet at other schools that, was something very unique to the School of Ed, which I later learned too was largely in part by Dean Kinloch's advocacy for it. but for me that really stood out, and cause me to think of intentional ways to be culturally relevant and culturally informed in my process as the teacher. and to not just , deliver the curriculum, but , think about the manner in which is being delivered.



Tracy's experience illustrates that a social justice focus attracted them to the School of Education and how the website can be used to market the school's culturally relevant and informed curriculum to attract students.

Last, a priority when looking at curricula needs is transferring credits. Internal transfers do not have to worry about this because they already attend the University. However, external transfers detailed how the transfer of credit opportunities was a part of their decision-making. Angel stated,

I had been sitting on my associates degree for a couple of year before; I processed that I would want to do more. And with the credits I had with the interests I had, and you know how those two things combined with one another, the education field would be a good fit for me.

Similarly, Aubrey described that making sure their credits transferred from their previous institution was the third thing they considered when selecting a school.

Ultimately, the participants feel like a teaching career will make them happy, allow them to make a difference, and work with children. The participants chose the undergraduate teacher education programs because of the exciting courses, social justice curriculum, and potential to transfer credits.

#### **4.2.3 Support System Inspiration, Encouragement, and Representation**

Another theme is how the advice and encouragement from supportive individuals influenced their decision to pursue Pitt's undergraduate teacher education program. The relationships with supportive individuals varied, but the common ones were family, friends, and

impactful teachers. Their support inspired them to become teachers by action or desire for more representation. Also, their support helped the participants overcome any discouragement throughout their journey by encouraging them whenever they had self-doubt.

#### **4.2.3.1 Inspiration & Encouragement**

Parents and teachers inspired the participants to want to become teachers and pursue the teacher education program. Each participant mentioned family members or teachers as a source of encouragement and mentorship. The family members included their parents, sisters, cousins, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. However, parents consistently were a salient influence for the participants. For instance, Aubrey shared that “my mom was my biggest inspiration to pursue a career in teaching,” Aubrey’s mom is a teacher’s aide in a special education classroom. Aubrey described how they witnessed their mom come home happy and how rewarding working in a special education classroom was. Furthermore, their dad, a Pitt alum, teaches an undergraduate nursing class but maintained that mainly their mother their her inspiration. Aubrey shared

my mom has supported me by letting me be involved in her teaching as much as she can, taking me to work, encouraging me, and giving me advice on projects that I have. And then my dad has also supported me in the aspect that he understands that teaching is definitely a morally rewarding career, not necessarily financially, but he knows in his time in the teaching field for college students that you know he knows that you're making a difference.

Aubrey’s mom provided experiences for them to be involved with their classroom, and their dad reminded them that the field is rewarding despite the pay. Furthermore, during discussions on teachers' pay, the parents reminded them of their motivating factors.

While Jordan's parents are ultimately supportive, they shared having to alleviate their parents' anxieties over safety due to the violence in the classroom. Jordan shared, definitely my parents and just my family. And because there was never a time where I questioned becoming a teacher. But there were some like events. Specifically, the Uvalde shooting in Texas, My mom, literally, we were having breakfast, and we were talking about the news, and she started sobbing. She's like I'm scared for you to go into this field. And I said, don't worry like I'm scared too. But this I know. This is what I meant to be doing. No like. We know this is what you're meant to be doing, but we're gonna we're just being precautionary. But we want to help like see you through your dreams

As you can see, Jordan's parents serve as both inspiration and motivation to pursue the profession. They know teachers' challenges and safety concerns, yet still push their child to become a teacher because they see it as their path.

Like parents, each participant detailed how their teachers inspired them to pursue a career in education. The grades and subjects taught by teacher examples are different. For instance, some participants highlighted their elementary, middle, and high school teachers. For example, Avery shared,

I also have some really impactful teachers as well. So that's when I was like, I want to be teacher, because, my teachers that I did have. I really like what you're doing. I would love to do this and help the future to come. So that's why I want to be a teacher.

Avery's experience showcases their desire to be how their teacher was to another student. Additionally, this ties back to motivating factors because they want to help future students. Similarly, Jessie described how their positive experience encouraged them to pursue a teaching

career. They explained how their teachers were supportive, caring, good at their jobs, and essential. The teachers' example is what encouraged students to pursue the profession.

The participants also shared how their former teachers have been mentors. For instance, Jordan had a unique experience of being able to take a Pre-School teaching class as an elective in high school. She mentioned the impact of her teacher's mentorship. Jordan shared,

She [her teacher] mentored me in a way that made me think that I was actually able to do this as a profession because she wanted me to come back [continue with the second part of the course].

Similarly, Tracy described a School of Education faculty member, [Faculty Member] is a big supporter of me. I don't know if, , they just really encourages me to think in critical ways, kind of like out-of-the-box ways, and I guess they always shares their experiences teaching in the workforce a couple of decades back. But I think is just their belief in me as bringing, I guess, a unique outlook to the field that really inspires me. That, I don't know; I have a place in the teaching world that I can succeed in it.

Hence, impactful teachers at all levels of schooling were a common reason participants entered the teaching profession.

#### **4.2.3.2 Support through Discouragement**

On the contrary, a few participants' parents or teachers discouraged them from pursuing a career in education. In these instances, other people encouraged them. The other people vary from another parent, friend, or a different teacher. For instance, Dakota disclosed their dad did not believe they could financially support themselves by pursuing a teaching career and told them horror stories from their friends. However, their mom helped them overcome their dad's negative perspective. Dakota recalled,

[I] was texting my mom. I was telling her everything, and she was talking to me and reminding me of all the reasons I had shown her why I wanted to be an educator. And then she had a conversation with him. I wasn't there for that conversation, and he apologized for it. My mom is explaining it to me like he hasn't been there for the like experiences that she has. She seen me interact with education that she has, so, like he doesn't understand my passion for it quite as much as she does. That helps me realize that, like taking his comments about it with a grain of salt, so that kind of helped with that.

In this scenario, Dakota's mother supported them in a few ways. First, their mom alleviated concerns about the discouragement caused by their dad. Then, their mom defended their decision to pursue a teaching career against someone who was also influential in Dakota's life. Later on, Dakota revealed how their mother helped them find the CASE program when they were touring campus. The examples indicated that their mom also was instrumental in the college visit and decision process.

Another participant, Tracy, also described their experience with their parent discouraging them from pursuing the profession. Tracy shared that in the Nigerian culture, careers outside of being a lawyer, doctor, or engineer are not valued or perceived as highly. Their parents are both physicians, and their brother is in medical school. Tracy disclosed how that discouraged them because they disappointed their parents, who sacrificed for their family to come to the country. However, Tracy's friends are the people who encouraged her to continue with pursuing the CASE Program. Tracy shared

one of my friends actually told me to reframe it as if, coming to America and my parents giving my brother and I the opportunity to , choose a career for ourselves, is inherently

their own dream. So the fact that i'm able to choose a path that I want. Maybe they can't recognize it now, but in the future, they will be proud.

Tracy's friend's advice to reframe their parents' concerns encouraged them to continue pursuing their path. Additionally, the reframing gave Tracy the confidence to do something different than their family's desires.

Avery described an incident where a college professor discouraged them and made them doubt their abilities to become a teacher. They revealed that the instructor told them,

“If you want to be a teacher. you have to work on your writing because you write the way you talk, and you can't be a successful teacher if you write like that”. And I was like, okay, and I took my paper, and then it wasn't. Even the fact that I was the only person he had a comment, for it was the fact that he said it in front of the whole class, and I already sit by myself. I already was very discouraged to go to that class every day.

Avery also mentioned that they were the only Black person in the class and how they felt that comment was “like an onion” with many layers. They described how that incident made them doubt becoming a teacher. However, they overcame that self-doubt through support from their former high school teacher. The teacher affirmed their abilities and reinforced that the instructor was wrong for delivering that feedback.

Overall, parents and teachers inspired the participants to pursue a career in education, which led them to look for teacher certification programs. The inspiration came from participants wanting to have a similar impact on another child's life and increase representation. Additionally, the support system encouraged them to pursue this career, which helped the participants overcome any challenges or doubts about teaching.

#### 4.2.3.3 Representation

Participants also discussed how representation and lack of representation of Black teachers inspire them to pursue the profession. When responding to who inspired them to pursue teaching, Jessie shared,

[My] Teacher, Miss [teacher's name]. She was Black. She was my only Black teacher throughout that time, and she was super eccentric, and she cared about us, especially the Black students in her class because there were so few of us.

Jessie's response illustrated the importance of having a teacher who looked like them and how that was an inspiration to pursue teaching.

Angel and Jordan discussed how having few Black teachers inspired them to become teachers. Angel shared, "the world certainly needs more Black teachers . . . so being added to that talent pool - that's a goal of mine." Similarly, Jordan shared,

I didn't grow up with teachers that looked like me. Really, I only had one black teacher. She was my seventh-grade teacher, and I think I only had 2 Hispanic teachers. And that was when I still lived in New York. It was preschool, I think, and kindergarten, maybe because I moved out here and started second grade here. So I don't really remember much from New York. But I want kids to see themselves in this position because I think it's so empowering to see someone that looks like you doing something that you very well might enjoy.

Angel and Jordan's responses highlight that the participants recognized that there were few Black teachers throughout their schooling. Furthermore, Jordan emphasized how empowering it is to see representation in the field participants are interested in pursuing. However, although they

did not have much representation, they used the lack of representation as inspiration to pursue the field.

Another participant, Avery, described how inspiring to have Black faculty at Pitt. They described two Black faculty, one from the School of Education and another from the Africana Studies department in the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences. Avery reflected,

They're [the Black faculty] also like the first teachers I had who were not white women. So there was also that. Because I feel like, especially in school, I can be going through all my years of school and not having any teachers who like look like me. I feel like that also, because representation is really important and it's also hard being in your class and you're like the only person of color as well, so it's very inspiring to see them instructing the class because it's like they look like me and I don't know that's held really close to my heart.

Avery's experience highlights that the importance of Black teachers is not limited to Kindergarten through Twelfth grade but also on the collegiate level. The faculty inspired the participants as the instructor and helped increase representation in a predominately white space. In other words, the student would no longer be the only person of color in the room.

Drew mentioned the same School of Education faculty member who teaches the Critical Histories of Education prerequisite course. When asked how could the School of Education attract more Black students, part of Drew's response was,

I think [faculty name] is definitely one of the greatest teachers I've ever had. I know they're in the department of the School of Ed. I forget exactly what they do, but they are part of changing like the curriculum for the Teacher education program and they are trying to make it like a lot more like critical, and a lot more like attention-focused and stuff like that.



So I feel like getting more like people like them who are very driven and focused, and care about what should be like actually said. It's really important.

Drew's response further highlights the importance of Black faculty and a critical curriculum. In essence, this faculty member could teach and lead critical conversations. Also, the response reiterates to other participants how caring teachers can attract students to the program.

#### **4.2.4 Information and Guidance from Pitt Resources**

Whether as an internal or external transfer, all participants found a resource at Pitt that attracted them to teacher education. The Pitt resources often introduced and guided the participants on entering the program. For instance, the people have different relationships with Pitt and are faculty, staff, or current students. The faculty mentioned are instructors they met when taking a college course or one who advises students in the undergraduate teacher preparation program. The staff varies from admissions to academic advisors. And the students are typically classmates who are either pursuing or currently enrolled in the CASE program. Similarly to family and teachers, the helpful Pitt people encourage them to pursue the program. Additionally, all participants mentioned the website as a resource to learn more about the program and the School of Education.

##### **4.2.4.1 Learning about the Program**

The participants, who are internal transfers, also attributed finding out about the CASE Program through current students in their classes. Participants could not or cannot apply directly to the School of Education as first-year students and must begin at a freshman-entry school at Pitt.

Many participants shared that they did not hear much about the School of Education until they interacted with a classmate or student in the program. For example, Tracy recalled,

Now that I think about it honestly, if it wasn't for the girl in my class, I think the CASE program for me. I don't know if I would have learned about it. I know in admissions, the tours I did of Pitt; like the first one I don't know why I toured the School of Business. but I think even in the general overview, I don't remember hearing much about the School of Education. You have to intentionally look for it.

Tracy's experience highlights that the School of Education was not as visible and has to be sought out. However, a classmate introduced her to the CASE program, which helped Tracy look for it.

Drew, a prospective student who has not yet applied to the School of Education, discussed learning from her classmates' experiences. Drew said,

I feel like i'm learning from my classmates like they're like things that with like what the Dietrich School covers, and what the School of Education covers won't roll over to certain times. so I'll say they [are] all stressing out over things. So I know if I go and apply next year like this is something I can expect.

Drew's response indicates that they are paying attention to their classmates' experiences and using it to learn how to navigate entering the program.

Jordan and Tracy are current students and described being recruited by faculty and staff in the School of Education. Jordan shared how they did not know about the specific programs in the School of Education and met with a School of Education admissions staff member with her friend. They described,

we both like, met with one of the admissions people at the time. I don't remember her name. and she gave us like little Pitt School of ED water bottles, and I was like, oh, this is cute! It was just that meeting that got me through the admissions process, because if I didn't know about it. I wouldn't have done it.

Likewise, Dakota described how they weren't aware of the program until they met with a School of Education faculty.

So right before lockdown. and she [faculty member], like, introduced me to the program, and was like, I think you'd be a great fit blah blah blah! And I was like oh, that sounds so cool.

Jordan and Dakota's experiences highlighted how a positive and informative meeting with a School of Education faculty and staff could recruit students to the program. Also noteworthy is that although Jordan could not remember the staff members' names, they remembered what they did and how they helped.

Although most of Pitt's resources for students tend to be people, participants mentioned the website as another source of information and inspiration to explore more. Angel described finding out about the CASE program through a Google search. Angel recalled,

The CASE program. I guess it was. I don't know if it was forming or reforming or whatever it might have been. But I found some information about it. I think about 3 years ago. Now give or take on Pitt's website, and it looked like well, a really good program, of course. So that sort of resparked the interest.

Similarly, Drew, Maya, Tracy, and Dakota named the website as a resource to learn more about the program and the application process. Although the participants may have learned about

the program through other sources, they used the website repeatedly to learn about the program and the application process.

Frequently, the participants admitted that the School of Education felt hidden due to its location. Jordan said, “the School of Ed is just kind of it's up there in Posvar [Hall] where nobody really thinks about it.” When I asked the participants what the School of Education could do to attract more students, some suggested increasing its presence in Black spaces on campus. For instance, Avery suggested

one way to probably get to more of a diverse audience is just amplifying like upping that [advertising]. So like more posters sending out more like blast emails to all the students, or even, for example, like places where the black students usually are like, for example, the sixth floor of the Union. That's where BAS is, and some like the fraternities and sororities, and from like black fraternity and sororities. And that's just like basically where a lot of the black population at Pitt usually are. I feel like, probably by like hosting like Webinars, and putting like the QR code, like on a poster there. So like when the students go there every day, they'll see you'd be like, what is this like? Scan it. and probably like leads to like a zoom, or something that will basically tell them more information. It's just basically ways to get your information out there more because I feel like sometimes it's pretty hidden. and, like you won't really find it unless you go searching for it. But I feel like sometimes things just have to be thrown in front of you.

They additionally mentioned that there is a Black groupme with current students and alums that frequently posts about opportunities and events for Black students. Similarly, Dakota suggested the same area to spread the word about the teacher education program. Avery's and

Dakota's responses provided insight into where Black students frequently gather on campus and virtually as a way for students to learn more about the School of Education.

Jessie described feeling isolated as the only Black student at the School of Education Open House and the education field. They disclosed,

Being honest about the numbers really helps, because when I sat in the Open House I was the only Black student in there. and that can be a little stressful and isolating at times. So like, just being honest about this teacher disparity and the fact that, like you, will feel alone. But you're not. You can really encourage people to decide to apply.

Aubrey and Maya's experience illustrate the different perspectives of diversity at Pitt but showcases how having a diverse representation of students and being transparent about the lack of can attract Black students to the teacher education programs.

#### **4.2.4.2 Guidance to pursue the programs**

The CASE program participants frequently mentioned a specific School of Education faculty member who supported and recruited them to the program. A few participants sought them out after a classmate or an admissions professional connected them. Then through positive interactions, the participants felt that the CASE program would be a good fit. Angel disclosed that Pitt initially rejected him, and he started to attend another school's education program. However, the faculty member reached out about a year after the rejection. Angel stated,

The [faculty member] emailed me because they was curious as to why I didn't get into the program initially. And they wanted to find an option to bring me in if it was something that I was still interested in pursuing.

Angel was still interested and applied again because of the faculty member's encouragement. Now, they are a current student in the program. They discussed that the faculty member continued supporting and connecting him with groups they wouldn't have found on his own, even as a current student. A few participants also mentioned another School of Education faculty member who encouraged them to pursue the program.

As another example, Jessie, an internal transfer, who started at Pitt in the School of Engineering, transferred into the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences and is now an incoming student in the School of Education. Jessie highlighted the helpfulness of their academic advisor. They shared that their advisor helped them navigate options after they decided they no longer wanted to be an engineer. Similarly, Drew discussed how their TRIO advisor assisted them as they considered a teaching career. TRIO is a federal program at Pitt designed to help first-generation and low-income students. Drew shared,

I would say so for my advisor. I'm in TRIO. So I have, like a more personalized advisor. So like already, like everybody in the trio program, they are like a lot more supportive of just like everything, like the college experience. But my advisor they kind of highlighted to me like really like, in terms of like trying to pick a major if it's something I'm not like truly enjoying the way I enjoy like teaching and being with children, then it's not going to be like beneficial in the long run. So it's like the most supportive person would be my advice or for pursuing teaching.

Both participants highlight the importance of advising staff in supporting students as they select a major.

Aubrey, who has a unique experience as a transfer athlete, described the helpfulness of the athletics department coaches and staff. Aubrey said,

my coaches have been definitely advising me on what I need to get done. What parts of the admissions process. Also a huge part of the team helping me figure out my living situation and kind of telling me like what the campus looks like, and I think they will also be a great help to me when I take my official visit in a few weeks about going to visit the College of Education,

Aubrey's experience also shows how athletic staff guides athletes on the admissions process. Campus athletes have a different experience because they are typically recruited for their sport and have additional rules to follow in the admissions process than a traditional student.

Overall, not simply one specific group of staff on campus guided the participants' journey to the School of Education. The examples included athletics staff, school-specific advising, student support services, School of Education admissions, and undergraduate admission. In addition, staff served as an additional resource regarding applying and enrolling in the School of Education.

## 5.0 Discussion & Conclusion

This study aimed to understand what attracts Black applicants to the University of Pittsburgh's (Pitt) undergraduate teacher education programs. In addition, this study explores what attracts Black students to Pitt and the teaching profession. This research is essential because Black teachers are underrepresented in public education, and teacher education programs serve as a pipeline to the teaching profession. There are existing research details on why Black teachers are underrepresented. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks exist for why students select a specific college or career. However, studies generally do not explore what attracted Black students to pursue a teacher education program.

Additionally, Pitt School of Education underwent several changes between the 2022 and 2023 cohorts. The changes included adding a new undergraduate degree program, the B.S. in Teacher Education, adding three new Black faculty members, and starting two culturally relevant and critical new prerequisite courses. The study also aims to understand how these changes attract Black students to the program.

The study used application data and semi-structured interviews of 8 Black students pursuing undergraduate teacher education programs. The primary questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the racial and ethnic demographic characteristics of the 2022 (CASE) and 2023 (CASE and B.S. in Teacher Education programs) applicant pools for the undergraduate teacher certification programs?
2. What attracted Black students to apply to Pitt's undergraduate teacher certification programs?



The results of this study displayed the applicant demographic changes amongst undergraduate teacher certification programs and highlighted what attracts students to a teacher education program for a specific institution.

This section will discuss the findings and implications and provide recommendations on opportunities to attract Black students in the future. First, the section will summarize the major findings of the demographic characteristics of applicants to the undergraduate teacher education program and what attracted Black students to the program. Next, the section will discuss the findings related to previous literature and recommend future research areas. Last, the section will discuss the implication of the findings to the change initiatives and recommend changes to implement in the future.

### **5.1 Summary of Major Findings**

When looking at the undergraduate teacher education programs by year, the applications quadrupled from 2022 to 2023, and white applicants contributed the most to this growth. White applicants are more represented in the applicant pool, and the number of white applicants grew almost five times. This finding is important because it shows that the changes from 2022 to 2023 successfully attracted more applicants to undergraduate teacher education programs. However, the programs attracted the same demographic that it historically attracted.

Although the number of Black students in the undergraduate program tripled, the growth is not proportional to the overall applicant pool. This trend is true for applicants across CASE 2023 and B.S. in Teacher Education who only identified as Black and those with multiple racial identities, including Black. Thus, Black applicants are less represented in 2023 compared to the

previous year. The finding aligns with previous literature that intentional programming and recruitment efforts are needed to attract Black students (Griffin & Harper, 2011; Warikoo & de Novais, 2015; Yosso et al., 2004). Hence, adding the B.S. in Teacher Education program alone cannot increase Black student representation in undergraduate teacher education programs.

### **5.1.1 Attracting Black Applicants to Pitt Teacher Education**

This section will focus on the significant qualitative findings of what attracted Black applicants to Pitt and the undergraduate teacher education program. Also, the section will discuss how the findings align with previous literature detailing what students look for in a college and teaching career. The overarching areas were (1) attraction to Pitt, (2) career motivations and program desires, (3) support system influence and representation (4) program recruitment and advising.

Surprisingly, even though Pitt is one of the country's most expensive public institutions, lower attendance costs were the primary reason the participants attended Pitt over another institution. This finding is advantageous for the teacher education program because current Pitt students are the largest pipeline to the programs. Therefore, Pitt must continue further funding Black students at the University level to attract them to the teacher education program. In addition, the participants selecting Pitt because of lower costs of attendance aligns with other literature regarding barriers for Black students in higher education. For instance, Black students are more likely to come from families with fewer financial resources and be responsible for paying for their college education (Addo et al., 2016; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Jackson & Reynolds, 2013).

Although Pitt is a predominately-white institution, the participants felt welcomed during campus recruitment visits and saw representation in faculty, staff, and student body, even if

limited. This finding is important for Pitt to continuously diversify our student body and foster an inclusive and welcoming campus environment to attract Black students. Campus vibes and diversity tie into prior research on institutional culture being a barrier for Black students. For example, prejudicial treatment and racist environments can make Black students feel unwelcomed (Bradley, 2010; Cole & Harper, 2017; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Despite having to start in another school at Pitt, the participants sought a program to prepare them to be teachers when applying because they knew they wanted to be teachers. This finding is meaningful because it shows interest in undergraduate teaching programs occurring before entering college. It also emphasizes the importance of centralized undergraduate admissions (OFA) promoting undergraduate teacher education programs to potential first-year students and external transfers. In addition, none of the participants described teaching as a fallback career, which aligns with previous research (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007) on students selecting a teaching career.

The teacher education program attracted the participants because they wanted a career that would make them happy, where they could make a difference and impact future generations. Furthermore, they desired to work with children. The finding is important because it shows that Black students have similar motivations to become teachers as students worldwide. The findings for career motivation and desire support the previous literature about motivations for pursuing a career in teaching (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007)

Furthermore, the participants felt that the program would prepare them to become inclusive teachers and address social issues in education. The School of Education's commitment to social justice and critical curriculum is attractive to prospective Black applicants and the benefit it provides to its students. The finding connects with the motivating factor of the FIT-Choice

assessment to enhance social equity (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

Family perception of a teaching career and the participant's prior schooling experiences positively or negatively impacted their undergraduate teaching program pursuit. This finding is significant because the School of Education needs to attract Black students and their support system to recruit them for the program. Additionally, it is essential to prepare teachers of all backgrounds to create positive schooling experiences for Black students. Overcoming discouragement through the support of others or their own intrinsic values also helped their pursuit of an undergraduate teaching program. While barriers to a teacher education program is well known to School of Education leadership, faculty, and staff, this finding is important because it details how students overcome concerns. The FIT-Choice Framework found that socialization influences, including prior learning experiences, social influences, and social dissuasion, are factors for students to pursue teaching (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

Representation and, unexpectedly, the lack thereof are motivators to pursue a teaching career. This theme highlights the importance of the School of Education having Black faculty, staff, students, and alum to attract Black students further. Simultaneously, the transparency of needing representation can attract Black students who want to make a difference. The importance of representation aligns with other literature on the impact of Black teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Gershenson et al., 2016; Haddix, 2017) and Black people on campus (Griffin et al., 2012; Griffin & Muñiz, 2011; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Slay et al., 2019). The lack of representation is not explicitly mentioned in the literature as a motivating factor to pursue a teaching career but

could be categorized as a socialization influence or a social utility value in the FIT-Choice Framework (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

The School of Education's lower visibility to internal transfer participants pursuing the undergraduate teacher education program. Therefore, participants found out more about through their relationships with current students in their classes. Additionally, Pitt faculty and staff, plus the website, serve to inform and guide them about the undergraduate teacher education programs. These findings are significant because they emphasize how and where students access information about undergraduate teaching programs. College recruitment, advising, marketing, and student experiences are the college decision-making process (Perna, 2004, 2006) and serve as socialization influences (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

## **5.2 Implications and Recommendations**

### **5.2.1 Implication for the Change Initiatives**

The demographic trends highlight the importance of intentionally recruiting Black students. Therefore, the School of Education needs targeted recruitment and programmatic efforts to intentionally attract Black students and increase representation within CASE and B.S. in Teacher Education programs. Initiatives such as current student ambassadors, specialized events, compensation and benefits through fellowship programs, financial aid, and mentoring can be beneficial (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Griffin & Muñiz, 2011; Solomon, 2009).

The introduction of the new program provided additional exposure and teacher certification options to the School of Education's undergraduate teacher education programs. The exposure

most likely contributed to the increase in applications from the previous year for the CASE program. In addition, the increased certification options on the undergraduate level most likely increased the applications overall. However, it did not increase Black student representation in the applicant pool. Therefore, attracting more Black students does not equate to increased representation and furthers the need for targeted efforts.

Some of the changes the School of Education made were valuable to attract Black students even though they did not increase Black student representation. For instance, the participants discussed enjoying the Cultural History of Education course. Also, they shared that the focus on social justice and culturally relevant curriculum because it stood out to them. Therefore, the school should continue offering and promoting undergraduate courses designed for social justice.

Also, the participants emphasized the positive impact that Black faculty members had on their experiences and the importance of the representation of Black faculty. They specifically mentioned a Black faculty member who taught a prerequisite course as their biggest supporter and the best teacher they ever had. Hence, Black faculty should continue teaching prerequisite courses. Furthermore, the School of Education should have initiatives to retain Black faculty.

### **5.2.2 Initiatives and Efforts to Continue**

Based on the totality of the findings, there are many things that Pitt and the School of Education are doing well outside of the change initiatives. Pitt should continue to provide a welcoming campus visit experience and scholarships to Black students because the participants attributed selecting the university to its welcoming atmosphere and lower cost of attendance. Additionally, The School of Education should continue on initiatives to develop a pipeline,

improve Black student schooling experiences, and provide individual admissions meetings—for example, Genius Joy and Love, Practices of Freedom, and individualized admissions appointments. The efforts should continue because participants knew that they wanted to become teachers before entering Pitt, their former teachers and experiences in school inspired them to become teachers, and the participants utilized School of Education faculty and staff meetings to learn more about the program.

### **5.2.3 Recommendations for Improvement**

Simultaneously, there are areas where the School of Education can improve upon. The recommendations will focus on efforts that School of Education faculty or staff would have control over implementing. First, this section will discuss the following recommendations for targeted student recruitment. Last, the section will discuss general recommendations based on the findings that could attract Black students but may not improve representation.

#### **5.2.3.1 Targeted Recruitment Efforts**

I recommend utilizing current Black students as ambassadors or peer mentors to promote the program throughout campus. The participants shared ways to increase the exposure of undergraduate teaching programs to Black students. For example, hosting events and marketing in Black spaces, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Union and the Black Student groupme, a phone application with group chat and calendar functions. However, the School of Education admissions team will need access to these spaces to do this. Therefore, a Black student ambassador is an important addition because the demographic findings show the need for targeted recruitment

efforts for Black students. Furthermore, the participants were introduced to the program by other Pitt students.

The School of Education already has a volunteer Student Ambassador program, but no Black students participate. The position should be incentivized to encourage and compensate Black teacher education students for contributing their time and efforts. For example, the incentive could be a part-time student worker position or a fellowship opportunity. The Black student ambassador will be responsible for posting upcoming admissions events and deadlines to their network, Black student GroupMe, and social media. Additionally, the student would attend admissions events to ensure that Black student representation is present for incoming students. Last, one of the participants shared their appreciation of having a current Black student reach out to them shortly after they applied. Hence, another recommended duty would be to outreach to Black applicants and incoming students.

I also recommend program faculty directors and the admissions staff outreach to the Black students enrolled in education prerequisite courses. The outreach aims to let Black students know that faculty and staff are available to support them as they consider careers in education. The outreach could be as simple as an email discussing the ability to schedule an individual meeting or upcoming events and deadlines. The targeted outreach is important because the study found that once participants learned about the program, they scheduled a meeting with program faculty directors and staff. First, however, the student had to seek those resources.

Next, I recommend creating and promoting funding opportunities for Black external transfer students interested in teacher education. The funding opportunities could be a scholarship, grant, or tied into an initiative that is accessible and promoted to any Black external transfer student. For example, an external transfer participant shared that they put off returning to school



because of the daunting costs and lack of scholarships. There are scholarships for incoming first-year students at Pitt and students participating in special initiatives like Genius Joy and Love. However, outside of athletics, there are no advertised scholarship opportunities for external transfer students, which can discourage them from applying if cost is a concern.

### **5.2.3.2 General Recruitment Efforts**

Prerequisite course instructors should share admissions event information and resources to learn about undergraduate teaching programs. For example, the instructor could have a resources page on Canvas or write reminders in the corner of the whiteboard in the classroom. However, since this recommendation is not specific to Black students, it could disproportionately attract white students, who make up most students enrolled in the classes. Yet, this is still important because the findings indicate that the participants learned about the undergraduate teaching programs from their classmates in education courses.

Another recommendation is for the admissions team or faculty to partner with campus organizations where current students work with children, such as Jumpstart and PittEnrich. For example, the admissions team could host an information session wherever it is convenient for the organization members or table at an event. Likewise, faculty could offer expertise to provide training or connections for the organizations. However, since these are predominately white organizations, it may attract Black students to the organization but not increase representation. Nevertheless, it is still advantageous because several participants shared that they participated in Jumpstart and PittEnrich because those organizations allowed them to work with children in predominately Black neighborhoods.

Last, participants shared that the School of Education felt hidden and not highlighted in the undergraduate admissions process like the first-year entry-level Pitt schools. Therefore, a long-

term recommendation would be to become a first-year entry-level school. First-year entry schools have increased exposure because high school students can apply directly to them. Additionally, the Deans of first-year entry schools set the admissions criteria for who OAFAs accept to Pitt for their specific school. Although this would be challenging due to the historical context and bureaucracy of creating program changes at Pitt, there may be an opportunity with the new chancellor and provost. Furthermore, this could lead to the same results as creating the new B.S. in Teacher Education program with increased applications to the school. However, the School of Education must pair any changes with targeted efforts to increase the representation of Black students.

#### **5.2.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

Since each recruitment cycle has a different applicant pool, monitoring demographic trends yearly and learning what attracted Black students is essential. Also, it is worth exploring the enrollment demographic trends in the new undergraduate prerequisite courses compared to the previously existing ones to see if the critical courses attracted more Black students.

Additionally, previous research did not explain a few interesting findings and should be explored. In demographic trends, the representation of multiracial and Hispanic applicants increased from 2022 to 2023. However, the representation of Black applicants decreased even when factoring in the multiracial and Hispanic applicants who also identified as Black. Therefore, it is worth exploring the differences in what attracts Black students who only identify as Black compared to students who have Black as one of their identities. While this study focuses on Black students, another interesting finding is the low representation of Asian applicants, although Asian

students are not underrepresented at Pitt (*Student Outcomes Diversity Dashboard, 2022*). Hence, the School of Education should research how to attract Asian applicants too.

Last, another finding is that more than half of the participants shared that they had at least one immigrant parent. Also, African and Caribbean immigrant parents dissuaded the participants from pursuing a teaching career. Therefore, it is also worth learning how having immigrant parents influences career decisions in education compared to having American-born parents.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, teacher preparation programs are the largest pipeline to create teachers. Therefore, they are responsible for attracting Black students and increasing representation in their programs. This study set out to find the demographic trends of the undergraduate teacher education program and what attracts Black students to these programs. The demographic trends indicate that although the School of Education attracted more Black applicants to the teacher education programs, it did not increase representation in the application. Therefore, we will not increase Black student representation without intention.

The qualitative findings show that Black students in undergraduate teacher education programs are mostly attracted to the same things as other demographics when pursuing a teacher education program. The overarching areas are (1) attraction to Pitt, (2) career motivations and program desires, (3) support system influence and representation (4) program recruitment and advising. However, what stood out amongst the participants is the emphasis on representation and the lack thereof as an attraction to the undergraduate teaching programs.

The goal is to use these findings to attract more Black students to the program and prepare more Black teachers. Based on the findings, Pitt and the School of Education already have initiatives that should continue, like funding, welcoming campus visit experience, social justice curriculum, Genius Joy and Love, and having Black faculty teach prerequisite courses. Additionally, the School of Education should implement the following efforts: (1) creating a Black student ambassador program for targeted outreach and marketing (2) targeted outreach from admissions staff and program faculty, (3) funding for Black external transfer students pursuing a teaching program. Last, general recruitment efforts should also be implemented, like promoting the programs in undergraduate classes, partnering with organizations that work with children, and becoming a first-year entry school. However, the efforts must also be paired with targeted recruitment to increase Black student representation.

## Appendix A School of Education Teacher Education program offerings

**Appendix Table A.1 Teacher Education Program Offerings**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>PDE Instructional 1 Certification(s)</b>	<b>Offered in 2022</b>	<b>Offered in 2023</b>
Bachelor of Science in Teacher Education	Bachelor of Science	Grades 7-12 Secondary Education in English, Mathematics, Science, or Social Studies Grades PreK-12 Special Education or World and Heritage Languages	No	Yes
CASE Teacher Preparation: Applied Developmental Psychology and Med	Bachelor of Science and Master of Education	Grades Pre-Kindergarten – 4 and Special Education PreK-12	Yes	Yes
Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) English Education	Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)	English 7-12	Yes	Yes
Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Mathematics Education	Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)	Mathematics 7-12	Yes	Yes
Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Science Education	Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)	Science – Biology 7-12 Science – Chemistry 7-12 Science – Earth and Space 7-12 Science – General Science 7-12 Science – Physics 7-12	Yes	Yes
Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) World and Heritage Language Education	Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)	Grades Pk-12 in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, or Latin.	Yes	Yes
Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Social Studies Education	Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)	Social Studies 7-12	Yes	Yes
Master of Education in PreK-12 Special Education	Master of Education (MEd)	Special Education PK-12	Yes	Yes
Master of Special Education with Academic Instruction Certificate (MOSAIC) in English Education	Master of Education (MEd)	English 7-12 & Special Education PK-12	Yes	No
Master of Special Education with Academic Instruction Certificate (MOSAIC) in Math Education	Master of Education (MEd)	Mathematics 7-12 & Special Education PK-12	Yes	No

<b>Program</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>PDE Instructional 1 Certification(s)</b>	<b>Offered in 2022</b>	<b>Offered in 2023</b>
Master of Special Education with Academic Instruction Certificate (MOSAIC) in Science Education	Master of Education (MEd)	Science – Biology 7-12 & Special Education PK-12 Science – Chemistry 7-12 & Special Education PK-12 Science – Earth and Space 7-12 & Special Education PK-12 Science – General Science 7-12 & Special Education PK-12 Science – Physics 7-12 & Special Education PK-12	Yes	No
Master of Special Education with Academic Instruction Certificate (MOSAIC) in Social Studies Education	Master of Education (MEd)	Social Studies 7-12 & Special Education PK-12	Yes	No
Master of Special Education with Academic Instruction Certificate (MOSAIC) in World and Heritage Language Education	Master of Education (MEd)	Grades Pk-12 in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, or Latin & Special Education PK-12	Yes	No
Primary Plus: PreK-4 Teacher Certification	Graduate-level Certificate	Grades Pre-Kindergarten – 4	Yes	Yes
Teaching Certificate in English 7-12	Graduate-level Certificate	English 7-12	Yes	No
Teaching Certificate in Mathematics Education	Graduate-level Certificate	Mathematics 7-12	Yes	No
Teaching Certificate in World and Heritage Language Instructional I	Graduate-level Certificate	Grades Pk-12 in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, or Latin.	Yes	No
Teaching Certificate Science 7-12	Graduate-level Certificate	Science – Biology 7-12 Science – Chemistry 7-12 Science – Earth and Space 7-12 Science – General Science 7-12 Science – Physics 7-12	Yes	No
Teaching Certificate Social Studies 7-12	Graduate-level Certificate	Social Studies 7-12	Yes	No
Master of Social Work with Certificate of Advanced Study in Teaching Secondary Education Program (MSW/CAST)	Joint Degree: Master of Social Work (MSW) and Graduate-	Grades 7-12 Secondary Education in English, Mathematics, Science, or Social Studies or	Yes	No

<b>Program</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>PDE Instructional 1 Certification(s)</b>	<b>Offered in 2022</b>	<b>Offered in 2023</b>
	level certification	Grades PreK-12 Foreign/World Languages		

## Appendix B Participant Recruitment Email

Subject: Interview Request for Dissertation in Practice

Hello, \_\_(participant first name)\_,

My name is Danae Williams, and I'm a 3rd Year doctoral student in the School of Education. For my Dissertation in Practice titled "Representation in Teacher Education: Attracting Black applicants to the undergraduate teacher education programs."

I am contacting you because you applied for the B.S. in Teacher Education or CASE Program and identified as Black. I want to interview you to learn more about what attracted you to the program and how the School of Education can improve in attracting Black students to its teacher certification programs. This interview is not a part of the admissions process and will not impact your decision. The interview would be about 30 to 45 minutes via zoom and will occur between February 27 and March 19.

If interested in participating, please sign up for an available timeslot using this [link](#). If none of the available times work for you, please let me know, and I'm happy to find a time that works best.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Best Regards,

Danae



## Appendix C Interview Protocol

### Introduction:

Hi [FIRST NAME]! How are you doing? [wait for response]

Thank you for responding to my interview request and joining me today. I'm excited to virtually meet you. Before we get started, I want to tell you more about myself and about my project.

I'm a 3rd Year doctoral student in the School of Education the process of collecting data for my dissertation of practice. Professionally, I'm the Director of Recruitment & Admissions for Pitt's Graduate School for Public & International Affairs. I've worked for Pitt in various admissions roles the past 8 years in both undergraduate admissions and the School of Education. I'm also a 2 time Pitt Alum. Throughout my career, I've always been passionate about the recruitment and retention of Black students.

Therefore, for my Dissertation in Practice, I'm examining what attracted Black students to apply for the new teacher education program. I hope to use what I learn to improve representation of Black students in the teacher certification program at Pitt.

I invited you because you applied [or expressed interest in] for the first Bachelor of Science in Teacher Education cohort [or CASE] and identified as Black. I am interested in hearing about your journey to pursuing a career in education and what attracted you to the B.S. in Teacher education. I want you to feel comfortable sharing your journey and any type of feedback that could

enhance how the School of Ed could improve recruitment of Black students. As a reminder, the admissions committee will not use this interview for admissions into the Teacher Education program.

### **Conversation about Study Design and Purposes**

I am recording this session on zoom to review and consider the thoughtful things you shared. This recording will remain confidential, and I will change your name for any document I submit.

- How does all of this sound to you?
- What questions do you have for me or your involvement in the study?

### **Permission to Record**

Are you ok for me to start recording?

[Listen and respond to questions before beginning protocol]

### **Questions for Interview**

To get started, I'd like to learn more about your background.

- Please tell me about yourself. Where are you from?
  - Follow up - if I'm familiar with the area: What part/area/neighborhood?
- How do you spend your time outside of class?

Next, I'd like to learn more about your history and how your interest in teaching developed.

- Can you tell me about that?

- Probes: Tell me about the experience you've had that interested you with working with children.

Now I'd like to learn specifically about how you chose a career.

- Can you describe your experience choosing to enter the teaching profession?
  - what resources did you use to learn more about teaching?
  - Who were your inspirations to pursue teaching?
- Who would you describe as a supporter of your decision to pursue this career? How have they supported you?
- On your application, you selected \_(insert certification)\_\_\_\_. Can you describe your experience deciding which subject to teach?
- Can you recall any experiences that discouraged from pursuing teaching?
  - Follow up (if applicable), can you describe your feelings towards that?
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Follow up (if applicable), how did you overcome that discouragement/negative attributes?

Now, I'd like to learn more about your decision to pursue Pitt for your teacher certification.

- Can you tell me about your experience selecting Pitt for college?
  - Follow up: What do you think were the most important attributes for you during your college search process?
- From your perspective, what made Pitt stand out amongst the other colleges you were considering?
- The University of Pittsburgh has ten undergraduate schools and over 100 different majors.

What do you think attracted you to apply to the School of Education?

- How would you describe learning about the application process and admissions requirements?
  - Follow up: what resources did you use?
- There are various ways to earn your teacher certification. Can you describe your experience considering the B.S. in Teacher Education major?
  - Follow Up - Tell me about any other teacher certification programs or routes you considered?

My final questions is to reflect on how we can use your experiences to improve in the future.

- In the beginning, we discussed your decision to pursue a teaching career. What do you hope to gain from for pursuing the B.S. in Teacher Education?
  - Follow up - From your perspective, how do you think Pitt School of Education will help you gain that?
- Nationwide, Black teachers are underrepresented. From your perspective, how can the School of Education attract more Black students to pursue their teacher certification?
  - Probe: What about undergraduate Black students at Pitt, specifically?
  - Probe: What about undergraduate Black students in general?
- Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you want to share about your experience pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Teacher Education?

Thank you so much for sharing your time. I enjoyed learning about your experiences and perspectives. [Stop Recording]

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