FOREWORD: LATINX VOICES IN FOCUS

Mahmoud Suleiman
Editorial Director

The vision and mission of the Center for Leadership, Equity and Research (CLEAR) continues to provide a formidable platform for education and empowerment, especially for those whose voices have yet to be heard and heeded. As the cycles of intolerance and racism continue to take root around us, the role of CLEAR has become increasingly critical for social activism, anti-racism, and advocacy for the oppressed. In addition to its full agenda, CLEAR engages in various activities and functions to support equity, inclusion, and social justice. Research is also on the top of the Center's agenda.

The *Journal for Leadership, Equity, and Research (JLER)* has become one of the major tools to enhance our efforts as we march towards diversity, equity and inclusion. The solid track record of providing an avenue for researchers, practitioners, educators, leaders, and activists to share their voices and perspective has been a rewarding journey. In addition, the partnerships that have been forged with other various entities and institutions have enriched our agenda and expanded our outreach.

This special edition of the *Journal for Leadership, Equity, and Research (JLER)* is truly a milestone. It grew out of keen collaborative efforts between the Center for Leadership, Equity and Research (CLEAR), Latinx Research Center at Santa Clara University, and Pennsylvania State (Penn State) University along with Penn State's Center for the Study of Higher Education and University of Maryland's College of Education—all of which have intersecting agenda that calls for promoting diversity, equity, and social justice through research and leadership. This edition is truly special in many ways given the rich contributions of the authors and their insights and thought-provoking perspectives. The focus on pressing issues facing Latinx populations in the educational system dominates the overarching themes and frameworks for the edition. This is very timely and critical given that Latinas/os/xs groups, like many others, have long been shrouded with mystery, stereotyping, and misperception as well as being subjected to injustice, prejudice, and oppression. Despite the challenges Latinas/os/xs children and youth face daily, there is always hope given their resilience to overcome the burdens of their identity in a racist society. Their plight will never be in vein as their voices will guide those seeking to be free from the tentacles of the racist juggernauts around them.

Building on various conducive epistemologies, the authors of this special edition engage readers in profound ways that defy didacticism. While setting the stage for the overarching themes in this volume, Conchas, Murillo, Oseguera, and Rodriguez provide a thoughtful introduction that outlines the philosophical underpinnings for understanding the Latina/o/x students in PreK-12 schools. As they highlight key aspects of each piece throughout the issue, they concluded with a pragmatic appeal for policy makers to draw upon on *Listening to Latina/o/x Voices* by taking

necessary action steps to empower these students and provide more responsive and equitable opportunities that are conducive to their experiences and expectations.

Readers will find a variety of articles that involve timely issues and topics that are pertinent to Latinx student populations and their communities. They also gain a greater understanding about this unique group and their experiences that should be cultivated in learning and teaching situations.   Like the previous and future editions of the JLER, the current collection of articles in this volume not only contributes to the existing body of literature in the field of equity, social justice and their related domains, but also enhances our engagement for the common vision and mission we are drafted to undertake regardless of our institutional affiliations.

Finally, on behalf of the JLER team, we are grateful to all partners for preparing this special issue as well as the contributors, reviewers, and everyone who assisted in the production of the edition.