

Washington State University

College of Education

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Will defend the dissertation on

Date: August 21, 2023

Time: 2:30 P.M.

Zoom available upon request to gradstudies@wsu.edu

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY: HOW ONE RURAL DISTRICT INCREASED POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT

Chair: Shannon Calderone

The federal government has made increasing post-secondary attainment a priority, and though much research has been done on the topic, many of these studies have focused on urban schools and students. This qualitative case study, utilizing social capital and organizational brokerage frameworks, will explore how one rural school district in northeastern Washington state that serves predominantly low-income students of color increased its post-secondary enrollment rates by over 25 percent over a ten-year period. This study sought to respond to the following research questions: (1) What institutional practices encourage the brokerage of college information to increase college-going rates in a rural district serving primarily low-income, first-generation, students of color? (2) How does the rural context impact social capital and the organizational brokerage of college information? (3) How do educational leaders enact leadership to increase social capital? Analysis of observations, interviews, and artifacts revealed there were four mechanisms driving this change: leadership, context, community, and external partnering. This study has implications for educational leaders, districts, policy and future scholarship.