

The Master's program in Sociology and Education at Teachers College would allow me to conduct research with leaders in the field, collaborate with peers who have similar ambitions and continue to help New York City youth achieve postsecondary success with a better understanding of social inequality, organization and change in education. I have worked in two education nonprofits, Citizen Schools and iMentor, that use whole school models to partner with public schools to assist with postsecondary readiness. I have enhanced my teaching and counseling skills through my professional experience but I need a deeper understanding of the structural obstacles and meaningful reform strategies in order to effectively support adolescents.

My interest in education and social inequality stemmed from research and community placements within Hartford public schools as a Trinity College student. In my Educational Studies courses, I connected theory to practice and recognized my own privilege as a Posse scholar removed from my comfort zone with academic, emotional and career support. I sought opportunities to engage my peers in meaningful dialogue about educational theory and inclusion as a Teaching Assistant in the introductory Educational Studies course *Analyzing Schools* and as a Teaching Assistant/Mentor for a first year seminar, *Understanding and Reversing Prejudice and Discrimination*. I connected with the predominantly Spanish-speaking Hartford community as a student researcher in Professor Jack Dougherty's SmartChoices school choice research project and through a placement in an adult English as a Second Language class in Professor Andrea Dyrness' *Latinos in Education* course. After a semester in Denmark where I learned about their inclusive education practices, I collected qualitative data through Trinity College student interviews in my Educational Studies senior project "Alone in a Crowded Room? First Year Students' Views on the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in High School Classrooms." While my Educational Studies research focused on the school environment, my

Psychology thesis focused on student learning. “Ability Beliefs, Metacognitive Learning Strategies, and Achievement among Undergraduates in Writing and Quantitative Courses” included a statistical analysis of the correlation between student beliefs, actions and outcomes; this study further motivated me to work in youth development nonprofits.

I chose to become a Teaching Fellow at Citizen Schools New York to contribute to an innovative learning environment that gives students in city schools access to opportunities more commonly associated with their suburban peers. Although I excelled and earned national recognition with the Citizen Schools Village Builder award, each student did not have enough academic and emotional support to also excel due to the lack of resources. This experience led me to my current position as a Senior Program Coordinator at iMentor because it solidified my belief in how positive relationships can impact student success. The program has enhanced my partner high school’s college-going culture but as my cohort awaits their college acceptance letters, those who are undocumented or have lower exam scores for reasons besides study habits worry about their options after high school. This overlap in student experiences, identities and school resources encouraged me to seek professional development spaces where I could reflect on my own identity and locus of control to think of solutions. After participating in a working group for educators of color organized by the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE), I became an organizer of a continuous project, *AFFIRMATIONS: Honoring Self & Community Care for & with Educators of Color*. *AFFIRMATIONS* emerged from our collective desire to create more spaces for educators to share stories and exchange best practices. This opportunity, combined with my undergraduate coursework and professional experience, has driven me to apply to your program.

A Master’s in Sociology and Education from Teachers College would provide me with

the framework to reflect on the past five years and guide my future in the postsecondary readiness and success field after my iMentor cohort graduates this June. I am interested in Professor Amy Stuart Wells' research on school choice, race and desegregation because it would build upon my prior experience in the Hartford public school community. I am also interested in Professor Luis Huerta's research on school choice, environments and reform because of my direct service experience in whole school model education nonprofits. The Teachers College open house inspired me with the accomplishments of changemakers. The current students and graduates I have contacted have all shared experiences that further confirm my interest in your program. I am prepared and excited to return to the classroom as a student to use sociological theories and research findings to address the inequality in New York City public education.