**LIS First-Generation Professionals: Workplace Barriers and Cultural Assets**

The Department of Information Science at University at Buffalo (UB) in collaboration with Ithaka S+R requests $499,251 for a three-year **applied research grant** to investigate the workplace experiences of library and information science (LIS) **BIPOC first-generation professionals (FGP)**. The lack of research and information on first-generation graduate students presents an equity and diversity issue that impacts the workplace. Career preparation and workplace navigation are not always emphasized in graduate programs; meanwhile the fast-paced nature of hiring and onboarding may not allow sufficient time to learn the ins, outs, and idiosyncrasies of a workplace. This project examines the experiences of this population to better understand workplace challenges and identify factors contributing to their success in the workplace, which in turn will promote inclusive and diverse environments. To do this, we propose a multi-method approach exploring two separate but related research questions to continue building our understanding of first-generation graduate students vis à vis their workplace experiences: *RQ1) What are the workplace challenges of LIS first-generation professionals? RQ2) What strategies and cultural assets are employed by these professionals to navigate and succeed in LIS workplaces?* Through its attention to an under-examined yet diverse population with intersecting identities, this research advances LB21 Goal 1 to recruit, develop, and retain a library and archives workforce from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. Specifically, Objective 1.1 will be addressed by not only increasing diversity among the library and information science workforce but attending to the needs of professionals new to the field.

The proposed project extends the PI's prior work on first-generation students (which includes presentations at ACRL, ALISE, and LIS Pedagogy Chat) by contributing a new theoretical lens and methodological approach to existing research. Through focus groups and written narratives, this project will allow this population to have a direct voice in what types of cultural and systemic change can be most effective to their success. Findings from this project will provide actionable insights to inform graduate programs and professional association initiatives to support FGP as they enter the workplace; inform managers and supervisors of the challenges faced by this population to bring about effective environmental and culture changes; provide asset-based narratives for current students and recent graduates as they enter LIS workspaces; and provide an avenue for FGP to voice their concerns, share their success strategies, and start an initiative to build community and improve workplace experiences. Insights from this research are expected to be shared on the project's website and Ithaka S+R's website, with library worker organizations such as the ALA-Applied Professional Association, with LIS faculty through the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), and through electronic newsletters and online forums tailored to LIS professionals. This project will also take an innovative approach to sharing participants' lived experiences in the form of an open access eBook. Wide dissemination of project findings and deliverables is possible through the existing broad network of both collaborators.

## Project Justification
### *First-generation professionals*
Definitions of first-generation students are as varied as the group itself (Davis et al., 2023). Current initiatives on first-generation students in the workplace characterize first-generation professionals as those from working class backgrounds (Department of Commerce, n.d.). However, this project recognizes that first-generation professionals can come from all socioeconomic backgrounds. For the purposes of this research, first-generation professional is defined as *a library professional who entered the profession after having earned their bachelor's or master's degree as a first-generation student*. That is, their parent(s) or guardian(s) does not possess a bachelor's or graduate (master's or doctorate) degree. Successfully navigating the workplace can be particularly challenging for professionals from traditionally marginalized backgrounds including first-generation professionals. Programs such as ALA's Spectrum Scholarship, importantly, work to improve and increase racial and ethnic diversity among library professionals. However, it (and other programs) does not explicitly focus on first-generation students whose intersecting identities (e.g., first-generation and LGBTQIA, immigrant, low-income, or from rural backgrounds) compound their professional experiences of being first, only, or different in the workplace (Melville, 2021). Data on the U.S. educational pipeline shows a gradual decline in educational attainment as students progress from high school to undergraduate to graduate and doctoral education, especially for Latino, Black, and Native American students. Because of the overlapping identity of being a first-generation student and Black, Indigenous, or person of color (BIPOC), it stands to reason that the numbers of first-generation students also decrease from undergraduate to graduate study (Ledesma, 2023; Pérez-Huber, 2015).

This project focuses on first-generation professionals because the first-generation identity and related challenges do not end at graduation. First-generation students experience imposter syndrome and guilt for their academic achievements (Cameron, 2021; Wallace, 2022), feelings they may carry into the workplace particularly if working in a job that places them in a new socioeconomic position. They also experience resentment and isolation from family and friends for pursuing a different path (Maietta, 2021). It is widely known that workplace success is in great part influenced by whom you know; however, *social capital* varies based on one's racial and socioeconomic status and background. Owing to their backgrounds and socioeconomic status, first-generation students are thought to have less well-cultivated social capital than is necessary to benefit their job search and career growth (Terry & Fobia, 2019). Further, career capital, which concerns the "overall set of non-financial resources a person is able to bring to [their] work," (Arthur et al., 2001, p. 101) manifests in ways that disproportionately impact individuals based on personal demographics.

### *Workplace challenges*

One's experience as a first-generation student continues to shape one's experiences in the workplace even at the faculty level as reflected in the edited volume *First-Generation Faculty of Color* (Buenavista et al., 2023). Challenges such as juggling work obligations and financial support of family while trying to survive the competitive environment of academia are likely mirrored for first-generation professionals in library and information settings. Moreover, the time to degree is often longer for first-generation students than continuing generation students (Gardner, 2013). For a field like library and information science in which a graduate degree is required to enter the professional workforce, delayed time to completion leads to delayed experiences at the professional level and delayed access to opportunities for skills and network building on the job. Further, just as first-generation students navigate the hidden curriculum of academia (Chatelain, 2018), there is also a hidden curriculum of careers and the workplace (Jehangir et al., 2022). The hidden curriculum is the tacit, unwritten, unofficial expectations and rules of engagement that are unknown to those new to a company and its culture or even the general environment, for instance a white-collar environment versus blue-collar setting. If one's work environment differs from their parents' or family's, they may not have the economic or social capital to draw on (Bourdieu, 1986).

Library workers who want to advance in the workplace may not possess the career capital element of *knowing-whom*, which reflects one's accumulated network and contacts that can be a resource in a job search (Arthur et al., 2001). In discussions with library workers from marginalized backgrounds, workers speak at length about the difficulty getting started in the field, the need for job search assistance and advice about networking, and the challenges of moving up the career ladder. Workers from marginalized backgrounds, such as first-generation students, may be pushed to the professional margins remaining, reluctantly, in non-managerial positions rather than desired advanced roles in the workplace. This is also a retention issue, as some may leave the profession altogether. The expectation to hit the ground running are even higher for those in positions that require advanced degrees like in LIS (Miles & Buie, 2022) because there is an assumption that the degree has taught one all one needs to know.

### *Contribution to existing research*

Existing literature points to a need for career services and programming tailored specifically to graduate students' career development stages and varied needs (Fong et al., 2016). In a survey of master's students in the social sciences, sciences, and humanities, workshops related to career support were most desired, particularly sessions on job search strategies and building professional networks. Inattention to the career development and workforce transition needs of first-generation students makes it that much more "difficult for them to identify and achieve their career goals in addition to enjoying long-term success in the workplace" (Maietta, 2021, p. 250). Current research by the PI will provide insight into how LIS programs are supporting students' career development and preparation as well as the services and support desired by students. Building from that work, through this project, we aim to gain an empirical understanding of the challenges faced and learn from the success of others in order to cultivate environments of inclusivity, belonging, and workplace achievement.

This project responds to Stallworth and Pollock (2023) who call attention to the need for more research on first-generation graduate students, especially those in the LIS field as well as a national call for more examination of the experiences of master's level first-generation students (Baldwin et al., 2021). This research also contributes to existing literature that has applied Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework (described below in Project Work Plan) to understand the experiences of first-generation students (Hands, 2020a, 2020b; Mull, 2022).

Additionally, this project complements existing research sponsored by IMLS that focuses on targeted communities within LIS, for example, the *Empowering Neurodivergent Librarians* project at the University of Washington (RE-252303-OLS-22) and the *Safe Spaces for Cultural Heritage* program through the Council on Library and Information Resources (RE-254877-OLS-23). As research on first-generation students tends to focus on those at the undergraduate or doctoral level, data on master's-level students is scant. LIS's own education professional association, ALISE, does not collect data on first-generation students. This project aims to move the discipline toward closer, systematic examination of this diverse and important population.

### Target Group and Beneficiaries

In a field where, in 2020, only 9.5% of librarians identified as Black, 9.9% as Latino, and 3.5% as Asian-American or Pacific Islander (Department of Professional Employees, 2021), more attention must be paid to supporting emerging professionals from marginalized backgrounds. Thus, the target group and one beneficiary of this research will be early career BIPOC first-generation LIS professionals from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and intersecting marginalized identities. Early career professionals are the target audience because their long-term success depends on early guidance, support, and attention to their unique needs. We believe that participation in the project will foster a community among participants that will extend beyond the grant period. The target group also will benefit from the activity of exploring and acknowledging the cultural assets they bring to their work.
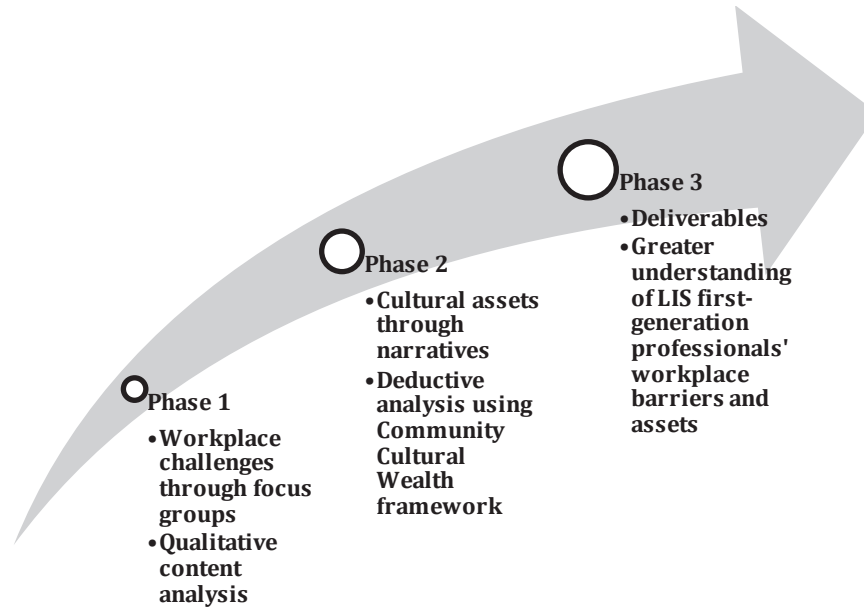
Additional beneficiaries include current first-generation graduate students who often need career and workplace advice and assistance that may not be offered in LIS graduate programs. LIS employers and managers will benefit from this research not only in learning the lived experiences of staff but also in the project's deliverables to include a toolkit with actionable guidance based on the research. LIS graduate programs will benefit from this research as its findings may be used to create or enhance existing programs for first-generation students specifically, and career and workplace preparation programming in general. Continuing generation library professionals will benefit from an expansion of their view of their first-generation colleagues. Lastly, library professionals must mirror the communities they serve. This project offers but one way toward a more representative and inclusive workforce, which is beneficial to all communities.

## Project Work Plan:

The proposed project will focus on two research questions:

- *RQ1) What are the workplace challenges of LIS first-generation professionals?*
- *RQ2) What strategies and cultural assets are employed by these professionals to navigate and succeed in LIS workplaces?*

While details of the work plan are described below, the project team is committed to iterative design and will incorporate lessons learned from earlier phases, input from the advisory council, and insights from participants to guide processes throughout. Due to the complexity of the IRB approval process, the PI will seek individual approval for phase 1 and phase 2 data collection. This will allow the project team to promptly begin phase 1 and use insights from that process to inform phase 2. A conceptual model of this project may be depicted as:

Phase 1
- Workplace challenges through focus groups
- Qualitative content analysis

Phase 2
- Cultural assets through narratives
- Deductive analysis using Community Cultural Wealth framework

Phase 3
- Deliverables
- Greater understanding of LIS first-generation professionals' workplace barriers and assets

### *Methodological Approach and Theoretical Framing*

Though this project is not limited to participation among Black library professionals, this project takes guidance from the Black feminist epistemological approach as well as narrative inquiry. The Black feminist epistemology prioritizes lived experience as meaning, a use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, an ethic of caring, and an ethic of personal accountability (Collins, 2022). This approach's appreciation for knowledge claims based on the wisdom of lived experience makes it especially suited for the proposed examination of participants' community and culturally derived assets or capital that contribute to their workplace success. The priorities of the Black feminist approach are important to carrying out this project with the thought and care that participants from marginalized backgrounds deserve.

The design of phases 1 and 2 align with this approach's attention to dialogue in the form of *focus groups* (phase 1) and collaborative *exploration of assets and narrative writing* (phase 2), which will focus on the lived experiences of participants. The project team will practice care in their facilitation of the data collection by practicing transparency and vulnerability, maintaining an open atmosphere for sharing, and allowing space for "personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy" among participants (Collins, 2022, p. 334). The project team will practice reflexivity by keeping memos or notes of their thoughts, ideas, biases, and questions as a commitment to personal accountability. These notes also may be used as another source of data. During both phases of data collection, the project team will employ debriefing with participants to ensure accurate understanding and representation of their experiences. This, in addition to memo writing, self-reflection, and presenting rich descriptions in published reports, will increase the validity of our analysis (Creswell, 2014). It should be noted that generalization is not the goal of narrative research like that proposed. Rather, in sharing the collective lived experiences of first-generation professionals, the hope is that fellow first-generation professionals and others will consider similar situations and individuals with greater understanding and assets-based language. By employing the Black feminist epistemological lens, this project will help pave the way for others to explore LIS problems and projects through non-normative methodological approaches.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework will provide the theoretical framing for this project. CCW challenges Bourdieu's forms of capital to offer a more asset-affirming concept, which posits six forms of cultural capital or assets (aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic) specific to populations from marginalized backgrounds. *Aspirational capital* refers to resilience and being able to maintain hope amid barriers; *familial capital* refers to the kinship ties that foster cultural knowledge and a commitment to community well-being; *social capital* is the network that supports how one moves through institutions; *navigational capital* acknowledges the skill and agency employed to work within institutions; *resistant capital* refers to the skills and knowledge drawn upon to challenge inequality and the status quo; and *linguistic capital*

concerns the social and intellectual skills that support various forms of communication. Framing assets within this concept "acknowledges the barriers and challenges faced by [first-generation students] while illuminating the cultural capital they bring" to an environment (Hands, 2020a, p. 613).

**Year 1: Understanding Current Conditions (August 2024-July 2025):**

We will begin by exploring the current workplace conditions for first-generation professionals through focus groups that incorporate insights from the literature and a survey being conducted in spring 2024 by the PI for a related study. If the proposed project is funded, analysis of survey results will lend insight into the career services available to and of interest to graduate LIS students. We also will convene the project's advisory council virtually to orient them to the project and each other and gather their insights on the focus group protocol and recruitment strategy.

Focus groups foster generative dialogue among participants eliciting rich, descriptive insights on their perspectives and lived experiences. As such, to address RQ1, two to three focus groups of up to 8 participants each will be conducted to collect data concerning the challenges, biases, policies, and/or practices that may impact the career experiences, inclusion, and career advancement for FGP. The focus groups are estimated to take up to 90 minutes. The intended participants for this project are BIPOC library workers who have earned an MLIS or MLS degree and at the time of their studies identified as a first-generation student (i.e., neither parent or guardian possesses a bachelor or graduate degree).

Leveraging existing relationships and access of the research team, outreach and recruitment for focus group participants will include solicitations on LIS listservs with attention to those relevant to the intersecting identities of first-generation students, such as ALA's Rainbow Round Table and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) as well as groups such as We Here, a private Facebook group for BIPOC library staff, students, and scholars and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) to reach academic library staff. Participants will be selected to generate rich responses from a range of first-generation professionals. The research team will keep the following criteria in mind (in addition to first-generation graduate student identity) when selecting focus group participants:

- Selected participants will represent a range of geographic regions across the U.S.;
- Selected participants will come from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and racial and ethnic groups;
- Selected participants will represent a diversity of types and sizes of libraries;
- Selected participants will hold a range of roles within library settings;
- No more than one employee from a single organization or library branch may participate to ensure confidentiality and maintain an open atmosphere for dialogue; and
- Selected participants will commit to safeguarding the confidentiality of other participants and to fostering a mutually supportive environment throughout their time as participants.

Interested participants will have the option to participate in focus groups virtually or in-person at LibLearnX 2025 in Arizona. In both instances, participants will be compensated for their time through digital gift cards. LibLearnX was selected as a location for in-person focus groups because it draws thousands of LIS professionals from across the U.S. Also, the conference regularly hosts a Placement Center and activities of the ALA New Member Round Table, which may present an opportunity to share project news.

The research team will conduct the focus groups, which will be audio and video recorded for later transcription. Transcripts and notes from the focus groups will be analyzed using qualitative data analysis software, such as Dedoose and NVivo and coding and content analytic approaches. Insights from the focus groups will address RQ1 and advance our understanding of the challenges faced by first-generation professionals. Preliminary findings from the focus groups will be shared at the 2025 conference of the Association for Library and Information Science Education, which reaches an audience of LIS educators and administrators who can use the findings to inform curricular and co-curricular decisions; on the project's website and Ithaka S+R's publicly available website to reach a broad range of stakeholders; and with directly affected communities such as the ALA Applied Professional Association (ALA-APA), which serves librarians and library workers. Further, because infographics are useful communication tools that increase attention to

research and are frequently shared on social media platforms (Zadro et al., 2022), an infographic summarizing key insights also will be created for dissemination.

**Summary of Phase 1**
- *August 2024 - October 2024.* Announce project. Confirm advisory council participation and convene virtual meeting. Onboard assigned graduate student assistant. Create focus group protocol with feedback from the advisory council. Identify and secure a venue for focus groups. Secure IRB approval for phase 1.
- *November 2024 - December 2024.* Revise focus group protocol. Issue call for focus group participants. Select focus group participants. Create project website.
- *January 2025 - February 2025.* Confirm focus group participants. Confirm venue. Conduct focus groups.
- *March 2025 - April 2025.* Clean and analyze focus group data. Prepare conference proposals (ALISE and First-Generation Student Success Conference).
- *May 2025 - July 2025.* Share preliminary findings on the project website and Ithaka S+R's website. Submit manuscript to *Library Worklife*, the e-newsletter of ALA-APA. Create infographic for social media and listserv dissemination.

**Year 2: Strategies for Success (August 2025 - July 2026):**
As the aim of this research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the career and workplace experiences of first-generation professionals, we will build on insights from phase 1 and RQ1 with an examination of success strategies and cultural assets (RQ2). That is, after we have identified the challenges and barriers in their workplace experiences (phase 1), we will investigate their strategies for success and any attributed cultural assets. To do this, focus group participants from phase 1 will be invited to participate in phase 2, which will involve constructing individual career narratives and exploring cultural assets using the Cultural Wealth Wheel (Gurley, 2019) based on Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. The Cultural Wealth Wheel is an activity designed to help individuals identify the resources that support achieving educational goals. In this project, the wheel will be adapted to focus on workplace goals and experiences. It is expected that the exercise of naming one's personal cultural assets will lead to narrative creation in more extended and formalized story format. Personal narrative is a common method of learning from the experiences of marginalized communities to shed light on the unique and varied challenges and pathways of success for these populations (Buenavista et al., 2023; Porter et al., 2023; Rodríguez, 2023).

The narratives will serve as illustrative case studies to understand participants' experiences more fully. The completed narratives will be analyzed inductively as well as deductively using Yosso's framework, which provides an asset-based lens through which to inform RQ2. In addition to disseminating an analysis of participants' narratives in peer-reviewed publications, with permission, the narratives will be compiled and published as an *online open access resource*. Narratives have transformative power for the writer and reader. Constructing career stories allows participants to "highlight particular experiences to produce a narrative truth by which they live" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43) and from which others can learn, feel solidarity, and create a community among participants and readers, especially those from marginalized backgrounds.

**Summary of Phase 2**
- *August 2025 - December 2025.* Convene advisory council. Complete phase 1 data analysis. Convene phase 1 participants to share and discuss findings and plan phase 2. Draft instruments for phase 2 writing sessions. Secure IRB approval for phase 2. Prepare conference proposal (ALA).
- *January 2026 - April 2026.* Host writing sessions for phase 2. Share project updates on websites. Prepare conference proposals (First-Generation Student Success and NISOD).
- *May 2026 - July 2026.* Analyze phase 2 data. Prepare manuscripts for publication. Convene advisory council.

**Year 3: Amplifying Project Impact (August 2026 - July 2027):**

As a culminating activity, the research team will host a wrap-up session with participants to conclude the project, celebrate the open access story collection, gather feedback on the overall project experience, identify possible next steps for continued support of FGP, and learn how their workplace needs and experiences have taken shape since year 1 of the project. An important outcome of this project will be the dissemination of a suite of deliverables that capture the experiences of FGP and convey how library settings can better help their professional development and success. We will publish *peer-reviewed articles* to share findings with relevant research communities. We will also hold a final, virtual advisor council meeting to discuss the findings and the development of our suite of deliverables. Project deliverables will include an *onboarding toolkit* for managers and supervisors based on findings from the project and with the preliminary goal of promoting inclusive practices for FGP and guiding exploration of community cultural assets and capital; an online open access collection of *workplace narratives* published through Pressbooks; and *articles and blog posts* summarizing findings and offering recommendations and guidelines for managers, programs, and search committees.

**Summary of Phase 3**
- *August 2026 - January 2026.* Share project updates on websites. Begin preparation of open access story collection. Prepare onboarding toolkit.
- *February 2027 - March 2027.* Convene participants for culminating activity to close time together and receive feedback.
- *April 2027 - July 2027.* Finalize open access story collection. Prepare manuscripts for publication and proposals for conference presentations. Promote onboarding toolkit and story collection through multiple channels.

***Tracking progress and success***

The project team will consult the schedule of completion at twice-monthly project meetings to ensure the project is moving according to schedule. Timely progress toward completion of all project activities will be one measure of success. This includes the creation and delivery of final outputs and reports to the funder. Importantly, the success of this project will be measured by participants' active and ongoing involvement with the project. Feedback from participants will be gathered at each phase and, in keeping with the project's methodological lens, the project team will engage in open dialogue with participants to address any concerns and areas of improvement. Other metrics of success include readership on the project and Ithaka websites; interest generated from the call of participants and meeting the target of at least 16 participants in phase 1 and retention of at least 10 participants in phase 2; social media shares and views of the infographic; views and readership of the open access story collection; interest, use, and feedback on the onboarding toolkit from managers and supervisors; and acceptance of manuscripts (1-3) and conference proposals (2-4). We will collect data on each of these metrics throughout the project and make improvements as needed.

**Project Personnel:**

***Dr. Africa Hands***, principal investigator (PI), is PI on another grant-funded project on career services in LIS programs, which informs the proposed research. She also has experience managing IMLS-funded research. She identifies as a FGP and studies first-generation students, information access of marginalized groups, and the professional education of LIS students. Dr. Hands has presented career planning workshops for LIS and other professional organizations. She completed the inaugural ALA Career Development Facilitator training. Dr. Hands also has collaborated on first-generation presentations with previous IMLS grant recipient Dr. Rebecca Stallworth and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of First-generation Student Success*. Throughout the project, the research team will be assisted by a graduate student assistant assigned by the PI's academic department.

***Melissa Blankstein*** (co-PI), researcher at Ithaka S+R, leads a team of researchers at Ithaka S+R in studying research, teaching, and learning support services, student and faculty needs, and organizational leadership in collaboration with educational and cultural organizations. Blankstein designs and carries out research at Ithaka

S+R on library stakeholder needs, support services and structures, and alternative approaches to defining student success, including multiple IMLS-funded initiatives on community college libraries and student success. Her most recent IMLS-funded initiative focuses on building capacity of librarians' college fluency to support the increasing non-curricular student information needs that are queried of librarians. Blankstein will collaborate on the study's design, data analysis and report writing, and project management.

We will undertake the proposed project through close engagement with an external advisory council of 3-5 members with relevant and varied expertise. Advisory members will assist in the iterative design of the project by providing input and support on the focus groups in phase 1 and writing workshops in phase 2. They also will advise on final dissemination products in phase 3 including recommendations to managers and supervisors. The following professionals have agreed to serve:

- **Kim Dority**, LIS Career Specialist, Kent State iSchool Instructor, and author of *Rethinking Information Work: A Career Guide for Librarians* and *LIS Career Sourcebook: Managing and Maximizing Every Step of Your Career*.
- **La'Tonya Rease Miles**, Ph.D., Director of University Partnerships at ReUp Education and co-author of *An Annotated Bibliography of First-Generation College Students: Research from 2008-2019*
- **Maurini Strub**, Assistant Dean of Strategy and Planning at the University of Rochester Library.
- **Mark McBride**, Associate Director at Ithaka S+R, will serve as an ad-hoc member of the advisory council. He will provide strategic advice and analysis on the project on an as needed basis.

Though the PI is a member of the target group, she will recruit an additional advisory council member from the target group to provide external input and a fresh perspective.

**Diversity Plan:**

Diversity is at the heart of this project from the methodological approach proposed to the focus on BIPOC first-generation professionals. As the aim is to support the recruitment, training, and retention of a diverse workforce, outreach efforts for study participants will include recruitment throughout organizations dedicated to supporting diverse library professionals. Audiences for recruitment include the We Here Facebook community, the ALA National Association of Librarians of Color (NALco), the ethnic caucuses of the ALA, the Library Research Round Table, the Rainbow Round Table, New Members Round Table, Public Library Association, Association for Rural & Small Libraries, and ALA's Allied Professionals Association among others as first-generation status touches many constituencies. As noted above, the selection criteria for participants ensures a diversity of perspectives both in terms of data collected via focus groups, and insights gained from narratives in phase 2 of the project. While the number of first-generation LIS graduate students is currently unknown, this project has the potential to impact over 3,700 students who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (Bajjaly & Drulia, 2023) and who have multiple intersecting or marginalized identities.

Members of the advisory council will bring diverse perspectives and identities to inform this project. Advisory council members bring experience in libraries and management as well as strengths in research, planning, and assessment. They also share an interest in first-generation students and career and workforce development and are committed to creating more diverse and equitable work environments.

Through its suite of deliverables, findings from this project will reach a variety of audiences and signal efforts to support the workplace experiences of first-generation professionals. Tools such as the onboarding toolkit for managers and supervisors will help to make workplaces more inclusive, which will in turn increase retention of FGP and eliminate barriers identified in this research. The open access collection of narratives will be the result of a collaborative effort among participants and the project team. The stories shared may inspire others to examine their own community cultural wealth and the capital they bring to the workplace. Lastly, this project has implications for our increasingly diverse communities. Intentional efforts to support students from traditionally marginalized populations in their preparation and pursuit of full-time professional LIS positions may result in a workforce that is more representative of the communities served.

**Project Results:**

This project will result in research-driven actionable insights on cultivating environmental and cultural changes to support FGP in entering and advancing within their LIS workplace. The knowledge generated from this project will expand the LIS community's understanding about the experiences of FGP, and the strengths they bring to the workplace, leading to an equitable framework to support their needs. Findings from this study will be valuable to LIS program administrators interested in developing co-curricular opportunities to support graduate student workplace development and to faculty interested in incorporating career development topics in their courses. This project will benefit current students through its advocacy for diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces, and data also will inform LIS employers interested in implementing onboarding experiences to meet the needs of first-generation professionals.

Findings will be shared and communicated throughout the project period via posts on the publicly available project website hosted by UB as well as Ithaka S+R's website, in relevant social media communities, and through the noted deliverables. The project deliverables will be stored on the project website and otherwise accessible and usable by other institutions and organizations through Creative Commons licenses. Insights from this research will be of special interest to ALA's New Members Round Table and Core Forum and the Critical Pedagogy Symposium, all of which draw diverse library professionals. We also intend to share findings at other library and professional development conferences throughout the project including ALA Annual, LibLearnX, and the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD).

Following this project, we expect that participants will have a greater sense of agency over their own workplace needs. This may lead to the creation of a community of first-generation graduate students to collectively engage with each other. In the event that participants want to create an online community to support first-generation library professionals, the PI is willing to serve in an advisory capacity to sustain the benefits of this project. Beyond the project participants, we expect that these results and corresponding deliverables will equip LIS employers to provide enhanced support for FGP towards successful development, advancement, and longevity in their careers. At present, the Association for Library and Information Science Education in its yearly *Statistical Report* does not include data on first-generation LIS students. We hope that our research and that of others will lead to the systematic collection of data pertaining to this important student population.

Outputs associated with these results and their intended audiences will include:

| Output | Audience | Venue(s) |
|---|---|---|
| Blog posts with regular research updates | Participants, LIS professionals and students, managers and supervisors, general audience | Project website and Ithaka's website |
| Infographic on year 1 findings | Participants, LIS professionals and students, managers and supervisors, general audience | Social media, project website, and Ithaka's website; Creative Commons license |
| Online open resource story collection | Participants, LIS professionals and students, first-generation professionals | Pressbooks; Creative Commons license |
| Onboarding toolkit | Managers and supervisors | Downloadable from project website and Ithaka's website; Creative Commons license |
| Peer-reviewed and other publications | LIS faculty and administrators, first-generation scholars, managers and supervisors, LIS | *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, *Journal of First-generation Student* |

| Output | Audience | Venue(s) |
|--------|----------|----------|
|  | professionals and students | *Success*, *Library Worklife*, *Journal of Library Administration* |
| Conference presentations | LIS faculty and administrators, first-generation scholars, managers and supervisors, LIS professionals and students | ALA Annual Conference, National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, First-Generation Student Success Conference |

**Budget Summary:**

　　The requested funds of $499,251 over a three-year period will support salary and wages for UB-PI ($65,245); fringe benefits for UB-PI ($29,516); travel ($14,000); supplies, materials, and equipment ($3,500 for focus group equipment and other supplies); other costs ($18,600 for stipends for participant incentives and the advisory council and $1,300 for qualitative data analysis software); $2,000 for room rentals; $7,000 for open access publishing costs; UB indirect costs ($101,358); subawards and contracts ($256,732 for contractors and Ithaka S+R personnel, travel, and indirect costs).

# LIS First-Generation Professionals: Workplace Barriers and Cultural Assets – Schedule of Completion

## Year 1 – 2024-2025 (Phase 1: Understanding Current Conditions)

| Tasks | Aug-24 | Sep-24 | Oct-24 | Nov-24 | Dec-24 | Jan-25 | Feb-25 | Mar-25 | Apr-25 | May-25 | Jun-25 | Jul-25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Announce project | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Onboard assigned graduate student assistant | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Confirm advisory participation and convene virtual meeting | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify and secure a venue for focus groups | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | | | | | |
| Secure IRB approval phase 1 | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | | | | | |
| Create project website | | | | ▉ | | | | | | | | |
| Develop focus group protocol and recruit and select participants | | | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | | | |
| Confirm focus group participants and venue | | | | | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | |
| Conduct focus groups | | | | | | ▉ | ▉ | | | | | |
| Clean and analyze focus group data | | | | | | | | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ | | |
| Prepare conference proposals | | | | | | | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ | | | |
| Share preliminary findings on websites | | | | | | | | | | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ |
| Submit manuscript to Library Worklife, e-newsletter of ALA-APA | | | | | | | | | | | ▉ | ▉ |
| Create infographic | | | | | | | | | | ▉ | ▉ | ▉ |

# LIS First-Generation Professionals: Workplace Barriers and Cultural Assets – Schedule of Completion

## Year 2 – 2025-2026 (Phase 2: Strategies for Success)

| Tasks | Aug-25 | Sep-25 | Oct-25 | Nov-25 | Dec-25 | Jan-26 | Feb-26 | Mar-26 | Apr-26 | May-26 | Jun-26 | Jul-26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Convene advisory council | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Secure IRB approval phase 2 | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | |
| Convene phase 1 participants | | | | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | |
| Develop narrative writing session instruments | | | | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | |
| Host narrative writing sessions | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | |
| Prepare conference proposals | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | |
| Analyze narrative writing sessions | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ |
| Prepare manuscripts for publications | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ |
| Convene advisory council | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ |

**LIS First-Generation Professionals: Workplace Barriers and Cultural Assets – Schedule of Completion**

**Year 3 – 2026-2027 (Phase 3: Amplifying Project Impact)**

| Tasks | Aug-26 | Sep-26 | Oct-26 | Nov-26 | Dec-26 | Jan-27 | Feb-27 | Mar-27 | Apr-27 | May-27 | Jun-27 | Jul-27 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prepare onboarding toolkit | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | |
| Develop open access story collection | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | |
| Convene participants for feedback and closing activity | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | |
| Finalize open access story collection | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ |
| Finalize and promote toolkit and story collection | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ |
| Convene advisory council | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ |

# Digital Products Plan

The project team's plan for digital products is informed by their awareness of the critical importance of aligning outputs with the needs of communities by whom the information will be used. The format and accessibility of each of the digital products will strengthen the replicability, reuse, and transferability of research findings beyond the project. As such, a summary of the digital products is provided in the following table:

| Product | Audience | Venue(s) |
|---|---|---|
| Blog posts with regular research updates | Participants, library and information science (LIS) professionals and students, managers and supervisors, general audience | Project website and Ithaka S+R's website |
| Infographic | Participants, LIS professionals and students, managers and supervisors, general audience | Social media, project website, and Ithaka S+R's website |
| Online open access story collection | Participants, LIS professionals and students, first-generation professionals | Pressbooks |
| Onboarding toolkit | Managers and supervisors | Downloadable from project website and Ithaka S+R's website |
| Peer-reviewed and other publications | LIS faculty and administrators, first-generation scholars, managers and supervisors, LIS professionals and students | *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, *Journal of First-generation Student Success*, *Library Worklife*, *Journal of Library Administration* |
| Conference presentations | LIS faculty and administrators, first-generation scholars, managers and supervisors, LIS professionals and students | American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference, National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, First-Generation Student Success Conference |
| Focus group protocol | LIS researchers | Project website |

## I. Type

Multiple types of digital products will be created throughout the project to reach the target population, beneficiaries, and the general public. Content created will include a project website (HTML), blog posts (HTML), presentation slide decks (PPT and PDF), focus group protocols (PDF), focus group transcripts (Doc), and materials to guide

participant narratives (PDF). The project team will write manuscripts for at least two peer-reviewed articles or papers at academic and professional journals or conferences.

The project team will create learning resources based on the findings of the project, which will include: (1) an infographic to share findings and insights from phase 1 focus groups (PDF); (2) an open access collection of narratives (Pressbooks, PDF); and (3) an onboarding toolkit for managers and supervisors (PDF). Each of these resources will be shared with participants of the project and disseminated more widely through the publicly available project website and Ithaka S+R's website.

## II. Availability

The digital products will be available from multiple sources. All publicly shared digital products will be free to access, read, download, and analyze, and will be available on the project website. Publications and recorded conference presentations will be made available by the project team as free, open access materials hosted on the project website. The project budget includes open access journal publishing costs, enabling all publications to be free to access, read, and download through the publishers' websites and the project website. Blog posts will be written to share news and updates about the project. These will be cross posted on the project website and Ithaka S+R's website. Digital products will carry Creative Commons licenses (CC-BY-NC) as appropriate.

## III. Access

Materials created will be released under a Creative Commons 4.0 CC-BY-NC license. We do not expect the digital products to have privacy or cultural sensitivity concerns. No data that would allow participants to be individually identified will be shared in any of the digital products. We will obtain participant consent to publish their narratives and where needed. Any sensitive information will be reported in the aggregate to preserve participant anonymity. Protocols will be approved by the University at Buffalo (UB) IRB.

## IV. Sustainability

The project team will format all digital products using standards that will be most accessible to the public, including LIS students, instructors, and professionals. File formats will include PDF and plain text. The PI and co-PI will upload digital products to the project website and Ithaka S+R's website and are committed to maintaining the project website beyond the conclusion of the project. Research products will be preserved on Dryad, a generalist repository available to UB faculty members. Products will be migrated to new storage systems as needed to ensure security and accessibility.

**Data Management Plan**

A summary of the data that will be collected is provided below:

| Amount and Type | Purpose and Method | Dates |
|---|---|---|
| ~ 5 hours of audio and video recordings in MP3/4 format | ●To address RQ1<br>●Focus groups | Phase 1 Jan-Feb 2025 |
| ~ 40 pages of transcripts in .doc or .txt format | ●To address RQ1<br>●Focus groups | Phase 1 Jan-May 2025 |
| ~ 20 pages of participant feedback in .doc, .txt, .xls, or .csv format | ●To evaluate Phase 1 data collection<br>●Online survey | Phase 1 Jan-May 2025 |
| ~ 10 pages of writing session notes | ●To gain insights on the writing sessions process ●Word-processed notes; handwritten notes | Phase 2 Jan-Apr 2026 |
| ~24 pages of the Cultural Wealth in PDF or .tiff format | ●To address RQ2<br>●Paper or electronic copies of the Cultural Wealth Wheels created by participants during writing session | Phase 2 Jan-Apr 2026 |
| ~ 150 pages of participant narratives | ●To address RQ2 ●Handwritten or word-processed documents shared electronically by participants | Phase 2 Jan-Apr 2026 |
| ~20 pages of participant feedback in .doc, .txt, .xls, or .csv format | ●To evaluate phase 2 data collection<br>●Online survey | Phase 3 Feb-Mar 2027 |
| ~5 pages for the data analysis codebook in .doc, .txt, .xls, or .csv format | ●To facilitate data analysis<br>●Word-processed document or spreadsheet | Phases 1 and 2 |

**Type, Amount, Purpose, Data Collection Methods, & Dates**
In Phase 1, the project team will conduct and record focus groups with first-generation early career professionals who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (BIPOC). The recordings will be formatted as audio and video files (MP3/4). We expect to conduct two focus groups with up to eight participants in each. The project team will transcribe the recordings and format the transcriptions as word-processed documents. The purpose of the Phase 1 data collection and analysis is to address RQ1 (see Narrative).

In phase 2, the project team will engage participants in writing narratives. The activity will use PDF copies of the Cultural Wealth Wheel, which the participants will return as either PDF or image files. Participants will write their narratives in the format of their choosing including handwritten accounts or word-processed documents. Any handwritten narratives will be transcribed into a word-processed document. The project team also may write notes and

observations of the writing activity using a word-processing program or handwritten notes, which will be transcribed into a word-processed format. The team will collect feedback on all phases using a Qualtrics survey form with results exported into Excel or Word format.

**Sensitive Information**

The PI will store all data on an encrypted computer. Some personally identifiable information (PII) needs to be collected in each phase to build rapport with participants and work towards the objective of supporting equitable participation and representation of participants. PII, for example, will be collected in consent forms, focus groups (Phase 1), writing activity (Phase 2), and honorarium receipts. Participants will have the option to use their real names or a pseudonym on transcripts and in any reports and articles resulting from this work. Verbatim transcripts will not be released publicly because of the personal nature of the information collected and the small number of participants. Participation quotes will be anonymized. The PI will be responsible for obscuring personal details such as institution, location, or unique roles and titles of participants, to maintain confidentiality. The PI will retain the interview recordings and transcripts for five years, as per local Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies. After five years, the PI will ensure these data are securely deleted.

**Technical Requirements or Dependencies**

The file formats of all data were selected in accordance with standards that will be most accessible to the public including *.csv* for spreadsheets, *.tiff* for images, and *.txt* and *.pdf* for word-processed documents. Deliverables will be freely available online through the project website and Ithaka S+R website and released under a Creative Commons 4.0 CC-BY-NC license to maximize accessibility.

**Documentation**

Consent agreements and honorarium receipts will be collected as PDFs and stored separately from the research data on the PI's encrypted device. Codebooks will be created during data analysis in Phases 1 and 2. The codebooks will be formatted as word-processed documents or spreadsheets.

**Management, Dissemination, & Preservation Plan**

The principal investigator and co-investigator will oversee the overall data management process. This Data Management Plan is informed by standards for research data to be findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (Wilkinson et al., 2016). The plan balances the interest in making data open with the need to respect the privacy of participants. Because the project team will collect PII, the raw data (e.g., audio, video, and focus group transcripts) from this project is not expected to be shared. In the event any data is shared, it will be in aggregate and anonymization practices will be implemented. All data will be stored in a secure cloud-based storage system managed by UB. The data will be migrated to new storage systems as needed to ensure security and accessibility. The project team (PI and co-PI) will review implementation of the plan at least twice per year during each phase through discussion at regularly scheduled meetings. Any changes to the plan will be communicated to IMLS in a timely manner.