

# RaJhai L. Spencer



## EDUCATION

**University of Illinois at Chicago**, Chicago, IL  
M.A. Sociology

**Duke University**, Durham, NC  
B.A. African and African American Studies, Cultural Anthropology  
Minor: International Comparative Studies  
Study Abroad: Duke in Brazil

## CERTIFICATIONS

**Florida State University**, Center for Academic and Professional Development  
Professional Certification in College Student Wellbeing, Trauma and Resilience March 2023

**University of South Florida**, Muma College of Business  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace May 2021

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**Colgate University**, Dean of the College Division Hamilton, NY

Assistant Dean for Administrative Advising and Giovanni '94 and Maree Cutaia Director of First@Colgate October 2020 - present

- Execute responsibilities of the Assistant Dean for Administrative Advising as outlined below
- Provide strategic vision, budget development and program assessment for First@Colgate
- Manage annual operating budget of \$48,000 and gift accounts totaling over \$340,000
- Lead efforts to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for first-generation and underrepresented student populations
- Select, supervise and support the professional development of the Assistant Director of First@Colgate and student employees
- Collaborate with campus partners across all divisions of the University to provide learning and programmatic opportunities for first-generation students
- Serve as co-advisor to the Colgate chapter of the QuestBridge Scholars Network

Assistant Dean for Administrative Advising July 2020 - October 2020

- Served as an accessible and supportive resource for assigned roster of advisees
- Assisted students in understanding and navigating policies and procedures outlined in the Student Handbook and University Catalog

- Provided students with support for personal challenges by facilitating connections to campus and community resources
- Provided consistent, accurate and timely advice regarding University policies, academic regulations, deadlines, and processes
- Conferred with instructors and faculty advisers on areas of mutual concern including student academic standing, verification of prolonged absence from class and authorization of incomplete grades
- Participated in after-hours dean on call rotation
- Executed crisis response consistent with policy and protocol
- Participated in Behavioral Intervention Team and served on Committee on Standards and Academic Standing

**Florida State University, Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement** Tallahassee, FL

Senior Associate Director July 2019 - June 2020

- Served as a member of the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement's (CARE) leadership team
- Participated in strategic planning, staffing decisions, budget development and program assessment
- Served as site supervisor for two academic advisors
- Supervised four full-time staff members, two graduate assistants and 30+ part time student employees
- Provided fiscal, programmatic and operational administrative support to Student Support Services STEM
- Managed CARE academic course sections for the Summer Bridge Program and academic year including classroom assignments, adjunct instructor and teaching assistant appointments
- Offered individual advising and support to all students regarding academic, financial and transition issues with additional attention given to students with dependents
- Monitored students' academic progress and managed the implementation of Academic Improvement Plans
- Coordinated CARE Guide and Delegate Program including the recruitment, selection and ongoing training of student employees
- Supported all programs and services within the department including the CARE Lab, Student Support Services, the Summer Bridge Program, Upward Bound, the College Reach Out Program, the Transition Engagement and Academic Mentoring Program, and The College Success Program
- Served on CARE Admissions Committee

Associate Director, Academic Support and Student Success March 2016 - July 2019

- Served as a member of the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement's senior management team
- Participated in strategic planning, staffing decisions, budget development and program assessment
- Served as site supervisor for four college life coaches and two academic advisors
- Supervised three full-time staff members
- Provided fiscal, programmatic and operational administrative support to College Reach Out

Program and Student Support Services STEM

- Coordinated CARE academic course sections for the Summer Bridge Program and academic year including classroom assignments and teaching assistant appointments
- Provided individual counseling and support to students regarding academic, financial and transition issues
- Monitored students' academic progress and managed the implementation of Academic Improvement Plans
- Served on EAB Campus Leadership Team assisting with the planning and implementation of Education Advisory Board (EAB) Campus Connect system enhancements and providing user support for the department
- Coordinated CARE Guide and Delegate Program including the recruitment, selection and ongoing training of 30+ student employees
- Developed the Transition, Engagement and Academic Mentoring Program (TEAM) and provided oversight for the pilot-year including the recruitment, selection, training and evaluation of TEAM Leaders and a graduate assistant
- Provided support for other functional areas of the department including the CARE Lab, Student Support Services, the Summer Bridge Program, and Upward Bound

Assistant Coordinator, Student Transition and Engagement

June 2015 - March 2016

- Traveled to recruit students for the Summer Bridge and Unconquered Scholars Programs
- Facilitated application labs and provided continuous support to applicants, families, mentors and high school faculty and staff
- Established and coordinated student recruitment team to include selection, ongoing training and supervision of 20 CARE Guides and Delegates
- Aided in the selection, training and management of 25 CARE Ambassadors
- Assisted with the overall coordination of the Summer Bridge Program ensuring the smooth transition from high school to college for 400 first-generation college students
- Assisted with the implementation of General Assemblies and small group workshops
- Provided support and direction for the CARE Leadership Council
- Coordinated with the Career Center to provide in-house career advising, employer drop-in hours and presentations
- Assisted juniors and seniors with post-graduation planning and applications
- Advised students in the areas of college transition and course selection

**Florida State University**, Advising First

Tallahassee, FL

College Life Coach

September 2014 - June 2015

- Managed a roster of 110 students by maintaining communication through email, text, phone calls and biweekly face-to face meetings
- Collaborated with second year students during biweekly meetings to create and implement individual plans for academic and personal success
- Documented student outreach, contact and meeting notes in Salesforce
- Worked with CARE staff to initiate elevated intervention methods when students were non-responsive to multiple outreach attempts or required outside services

**Gates County High School, Gates County Public Schools**

Gatesville, NC

Long-term Substitute Teacher (Career & Technical Education) September 2013 - June 2014

- Developed lesson plans corresponding with Career Management course competencies
- Provided daily instruction and academic guidance to students
- Kept records of attendance, behavior and academic progress
- Administered Career and Technical Education assessments
- Collaborated with Exceptional Children's Department and participated in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings
- Communicated with parents, school counselors, and administrators on student progress

**American University of Nigeria**

Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria

Academic Advisor August 2012 - May 2013

- Worked with the Director of Academic Advising and Student Retention to introduce first year students to Academic Advising Services during New Student Orientation
- Assisted with New Student Orientation and Preview presentations
- Provided academic advising through individual appointments and walk-in hours
- Maintained the office's social media presence and bulletin board
- Produced advising syllabus and advising training manual
- Assisted in training and supervision of office support staff
- Helped promote and execute events in support of the Division of Student Affairs

**Rosetta Stone**

Chicago, IL

American English Language Coach July 2011- May 2012

- Provided one-on-one and small group American English tutorial sessions for English language learners around the world using video enhanced software

**Governor's School of North Carolina, Governor's School East**

Raleigh, NC

Teaching Assistant/ Counselor (Activities TAC) Summer 2010

- Served as a full-time, live-in Residential Co-Counselor for a group of 44 female students
- Enforced program policies and discipline procedures
- Helped plan and execute activities for a community of approximately 400 students
- Used First Aid and CPR training to respond to student medical emergencies

**Gates County Public Schools, Gates County High School**

Gatesville, NC

Information Highway Facilitator March 2009 - June 2010

- Recruited distance learning students and served as Distance Learning Advisor
- Provided students with information pertinent to course registration, college application and financial aid processes
- Served as a liaison between Gates County High School and partner institutions
- Assisted with enrollment of students in partner institutions and class registration

- Researched course offerings to develop schedules that fit student needs and local budget
- Performed clerical duties and operated video conferencing equipment
- Monitored student work, proctored exams and reported grades
- Served on Staff Development School Improvement Plan Committee

Long-term Substitute Teacher August 2008 - February 2009

- Developed lesson plans and taught English I and Honors English I & III for seven weeks
- Substituted in various classrooms on a day-to-day basis
- Taught Algebra II and Advanced Placement Calculus for four weeks
- Conducted tutoring sessions for English, Algebra II and Calculus

**Duke Talent Identification Program, Duke University** Durham, NC

Residential Hall Leader/ Residential Counselor Summer 2008, Summer 2009

- Served as a full-time, live-in Residential Counselor for a group of 12-16 students
- As a Residential Hall Leader, I led and supervised a group of 7 residential counselors
- Assisted with housing assignments for over 200 students and on-site faculty and staff
- Helped facilitate the closing down of the residence hall
- Chaired and served on major activity planning committees
- Planned and facilitated daily activities for students within programming budgets
- Participated in on-call medical emergency rotation and responded to medical emergencies

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

**University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology Department** Chicago, IL

Research Assistant- Chicago Area Study Summer 2011

- Conducted, recorded, transcribed and coded qualitative interviews
- Composed weekly reports and analytic memos

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology Department** Chicago, IL

Teaching Assistant- SOC 201 Introduction to Sociological Statistics Spring 2012

- Taught weekly SPSS lab, graded homework and exams, held weekly office hours

Teaching Assistant- SOC 201 Introduction to Sociological Statistics Fall 2011

- Taught weekly SPSS lab, graded student assignments, held weekly office hours

Teaching Assistant- SOC 225 Racial and Ethnic Groups Spring 2011

- Graded student assignments, held weekly office hours

Teaching Assistant- SOC 490 Senior Research Experience Fall 2010

- Graded practice interview assignments, held weekly office hours

## PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

- Prohibited Conduct and Response Group 2021 - present
- Max A. Shacknai COVE Advisory Council 2021 - present
- DEI Advisory Group 2020 - present
- Behavioral Intervention Team 2020 - present
- Committee on Standards and Academic Standing 2020 - present
- NASPA 2020 - present
- Campus Community Connections Committee 2019 - 2020
- Division of Student Affairs Culture of Wellness Strategic Planning Team 2019
- EAB Campus Leadership Team 2016 - 2020
  - Strategic Message/Email Campaigns Working Group 2019 - 2020
- Division of Student Affairs Diversity and Inclusion Committee 2016 - 2018
- FSU Career Center Advisory Board 2016 - 2020
- Garnet and Gold Scholar Society Overall Program Advisor 2015 - 2020
- Council of Informed Advisors 2014 - 2020

November 12, 2023

Dear Search Committee Members,

I was excited to learn about the University of Connecticut's search for the next Executive Director for Access & Postsecondary Success. I am passionate about advancing educational equity, access and student success. With the combination of a master's degree and nearly a decade of higher education experience working with students traditionally underrepresented in higher education, first-generation students and students from low-income backgrounds, I believe I am a unique fit for this position and am eager to provide my letter of application.

I currently serve as Assistant Dean for Administrative Advising & Giovanni '94 and Maree Cutaita Director of First@Colgate at Colgate University. The nature of my position is two fold. As a member of a team of seven administrative deans, I provide accurate and timely advice regarding University policies, procedures and deadlines and serve as an accessible and supportive resource for approximately 300 assigned advisees. In doing so, I work closely with faculty, the Registrar's Office, faculty advisors, the Center for Learning Teaching and Research and the Office of Student Disability Services to support students' success in and out of the classroom. I also serve on the Behavioural Intervention Team, Committee on Standards and Academic Standing and Dean on Call rotation.

As Director, I provide strategic vision, fiscal management and assessment of the First@Colgate program which is designed to support Colgate's more than 400 first-generation students and their families. I supervise one full-time staff member and five student program assistants. My team aims to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for first-generation, low-income and other underrepresented students across the University, empower them to take full advantage of all that the University offers and engage in transformative curricular and co-curricular experiences. From a robust pre-orientation program through graduation we offer a wide variety of opportunities for students to engage and enhance their personal, academic and professional development. Through this work, I have collaborated closely with the ALANA Cultural Center, Men of Color Success Network, Women of Color Network, Office of LGBTQ+ Initiatives, Office of Undergraduate Studies Scholars Program, and a host of cultural student organizations among other campus departments and entities. These collaborations have included study nights, guest speakers, workshops, information sessions and overnight trips that provide opportunities to explore various cities and connect with alumni. I have worked closely with colleagues in Advancement to assist with donor relations and stewardship and in addition to developing a plan for an annual operating budget of \$48,000, I also manage gift accounts totaling over \$340,000. The latter is used to supplement programming, allow additional opportunities for collaboration and sponsorship of high impact and transformative experiences, and provide emergency and health related travel support for students.

In the six years preceding my time at Colgate University, I worked to support the retention and academic engagement of traditionally underrepresented students through various roles of increasing responsibility within the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE) at Florida State

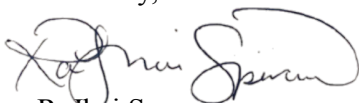
University, a large public research institution. As Senior Associate Director, I worked closely with the CARE staff, University administration, faculty and staff to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the academic support programs within CARE. I provided fiscal, operational and administrative oversight for state and federal grant programs including the College Reach Out Program and Student Support Services STEM and assisted with the proposal and implementation of a pre-collegiate program grant administered through the College Board.

I represented the department on University and divisional committees and within the community. I supervised a diverse team consisting of four full-time academic support staff, two graduate assistants and over 30 part-time student employees. In addition to guiding the implementation of long standing programs and services such as the Summer Bridge Program, my work in CARE afforded me the opportunity to develop new initiatives to advance educational equity and student success. These initiatives included the CARE Guide and Delegate Program to assist with recruitment of first-generation and underrepresented students to the University and the Transition, Engagement, and Academic Mentoring Program (TEAM) which engaged and helped retain first-year and transfer students.

My current position and previous experiences at Florida State University have required strong interpersonal communication skills, understanding of academic and University policies and deadlines, a high degree of familiarity with student data systems, attention to detail and the ability to analyze data and trends to inform decision making. Throughout my work in higher education, I have regularly collaborated with faculty, community stakeholders, alumni, donors, parents and campus partners including University Communications, Admissions, Financial Aid, and student affairs staff. These collaborations have resulted in individual support for students as well as initiatives to increase student engagement and tackle larger barriers to access, persistence and student success.

I believe I am a solid candidate for this position. I am detail oriented, flexible and work well independently and in teams. Through my education and work experience, I have developed analytical, organizational, and communication skills that will aid me in fulfilling the responsibilities of the Executive Director for Access & Postsecondary Success. I am eager to serve in this role and continue to advance the critical work of the Center for Access and Postsecondary Success. I believe this position offers the opportunity for me to be challenged and grow professionally. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my candidacy. I am available via telephone, [REDACTED], and email, [REDACTED]. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you in relation to this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,



RaJhai Spencer