



# ACLS Leading Edge Fellowship

<b>Position Title:</b>	Research & Policy Associate
<b>Organization:</b>	College Access: Research & Action (CARA)
<b>Location:</b>	Hybrid (currently 2 days/week) in office, New York, NY
<b>Stipend:</b>	\$70,000 in the first year, \$72,000 in the second year
<b>Benefits:</b>	Access to employer health insurance, professional development funds, and relocation funds
<b>Start Date:</b>	September 2024

## ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

[College Access: Research & Action](#) (CARA)'s mission is to ensure that first-generation college students, low-income students, and students of color have the knowledge and support necessary to enroll in and persist through post-secondary education. While these students need opportunities to learn about college and career pathways, most public high schools and institutions of higher education are not structured to provide this assistance. CARA's peer-to-peer programs, whole school coaching, and research and policy initiatives work to address these inequities. We work with high schools, community-based organizations, and higher education institutions to shift postsecondary guidance from being an 'enrichment for some' to an 'entitlement for all.'

## POSITION DESCRIPTION

CARA conducts applied research on issues of postsecondary access and success in order to 1) study and share best practices; and 2) advocate for city, state, and federal policies that create more equitable pathways to and through college for underserved students. We draw on qualitative, quantitative, and participatory research approaches to elevate issues of educational justice in the communities where we work and publish our findings in a range of arenas. Our goal is to bring the voices of those most affected by educational policies—young people and educators—into conversations that shape policy at all these levels.

The Research & Policy Associate will join CARA's Research, Evaluation & Policy team in New York City to conduct original qualitative research, write policy reports, and refine CARA's policy communication strategies. As part of this team, the Research & Policy Associate will work on 3-4 original research projects over the course of two years. This will involve project design, data collection (including interviews, focus groups, and youth participatory action research (YPAR)), and data analysis. All of these projects will be completed as part of a small team, supervised by the Director of Policy Research, providing opportunities for both guided instruction in new research methods and opportunities for independent work. For examples of past research projects, see [Organizing for Access: Building School Capacity to Support Students' Postsecondary Pathways](#) & [Obstacles & Opportunities: Supporting College & Career Access for Immigrant Students](#). Potential future projects include studying how peer-to-peer advising can support first-generation student success and an analysis of school- and district-level conditions necessary for equitable postsecondary advising.

In addition to conducting research, the Research & Policy Associate will focus on writing and strategic policy communication. This will involve writing long-form policy reports based on the research above, [shorter articles for educator publications](#), [op-eds](#), and CARA's direct communications (i.e. newsletters

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and policy one-pagers). These shorter pieces will provide an opportunity to work with CARA's peer leaders and program staff to translate research into accessible, policy- and practice-focused publications.

Over the past few years CARA has gone from a small NYC-focused organization known for the quality of its connections to educators and students, to an organization with a growing national presence and stronger ties to funders and policymakers. One of the goals of the Research & Policy Associate will be to help CARA refine its policy communications strategy to maintain its focus on elevating underserved students' voices while also broadening its relevance to educators, funders, and policymakers across the country. There will also be opportunities to present at local and national policy conferences, as well as to participate in publishing and strategically amplifying report findings. This role will prepare the associate for research and policy positions in education and human services-related nonprofits, government organizations, and think tanks. The fellowship tenure is 24 consecutive months, with an expected time commitment of approximately 37.5 hours per week.

### **Responsibilities and tasks:**

- Work on 3-4 original research projects as part of a small team, covering project design, data collection (including interviews, focus groups, and youth participatory action research (YPAR)), and data analysis. By the end of the fellowship term, the Research & Policy Associate can expect to work on at least two of these projects from conception to published report.
- Write at least two additional short-form pieces, such as articles for educator magazines, op-eds, blogs, or policy one-pagers.
- Periodically contribute to CARA's communications (i.e. newsletters and social media).
- Collaborate with the Director of Policy Research to create a policy communications playbook for CARA. Based on the associate's background and interest, this may involve studying the policy and communications strategies of similar organizations, creating power maps of key issues, and/or building relationships with education media.
- Collaborate to present CARA research at local and national policy conferences (ideally 1-2 over the fellowship term).

### **Qualifications:**

- PhD in any field of the humanities or interpretive social sciences. Read more about eligible fields [here](#).
- Outstanding analytical and writing skills, including experience executing research and writing projects from initial concept stage to final drafting.
- Familiarity working with qualitative data, from data collection to analysis, such as interviews, observations, survey responses, and literature reviews.
- Lived, professional, or research experience connected to educational and postsecondary access experiences of low-income, first-generation, and BIPOC students.

### **APPLICATIONS**

- Information on the Leading Edge Fellowship Program: <https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships>
- All applications must be submitted through the ACLS Online Fellowship Application System ([ofa.acls.org](https://ofa.acls.org)).
- Application deadline: 9:00 PM EDT, March 13, 2024.

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