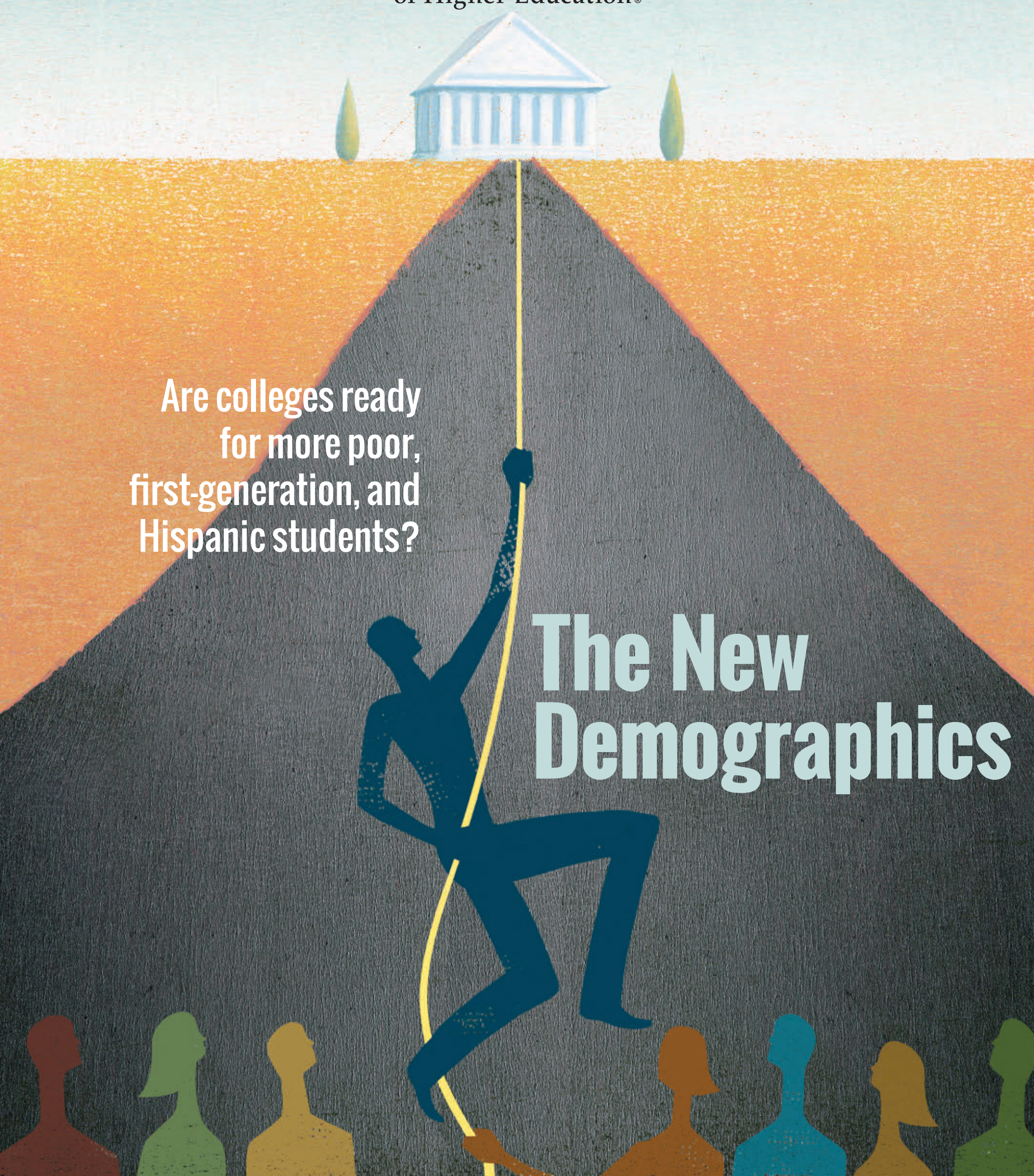


# THE CHRONICLE

of Higher Education®

Are colleges ready  
for more poor,  
first-generation, and  
Hispanic students?

## The New Demographics





Defining the Future of the  
Public Research University

**UC San Diego**

## Taking Flight

From its inception, the University of California, San Diego has attracted leading scholars with an entrepreneurial spirit and a penchant for risk-taking. Young scholars—students and faculty—enjoy the freedom to cross boundaries and to create new disciplines that fuel breakthrough research. Our visionaries are looking for the next discoveries that will benefit people around the world in all walks of life.



Lei Liang

### Composing New Music With Old Roots

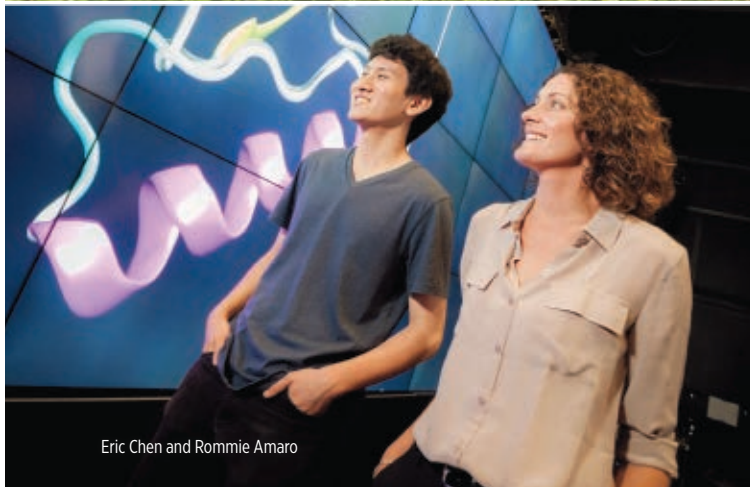
Qualcomm Institute composer in residence **Lei Liang**'s award-winning work creates new musical forms by blending Chinese tradition with technology. Hailed as "an important musical philosopher" by *Wire*, Liang is considered one of the most exciting voices in new music.



Jacopo Annese

### Mapping the Human Mind

Neuroscientist Jacopo Annese aims to create 2-D and 3-D structural maps of the human brain. These maps will provide important points of reference throughout the campus's ongoing research efforts under the Obama administration's BRAIN Initiative.



Eric Chen and Rommie Amaro

### Mentoring the Next Generation

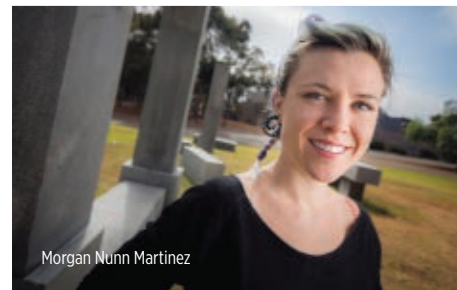
Rommie Amaro works on models of proteins that will lead to new drugs that battle infectious viruses and bacteria. She's also mentoring the next generation of scientists. She launched CompChemBioCAMP, a new research camp designed to retain women in sciences, and mentors Eric Chen, winner of the 2013 Google Science Fair Grand Prize for his influenza research.



Todd Coleman

### Transmitting Data via Tattoos

Todd Coleman's research focuses on wireless tattoo technology that will transmit vital medical data, bringing yesterday's science fiction into today's reality. His ultrathin devices can monitor brain waves, heart rates and other vital signs without tying a patient to a machine, an especially promising advance for neonatal care.



Morgan Nunn Martinez

### New Techniques to Crack an Ancient Mystery

Cosmochemist Morgan Nunn Martinez is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. By extracting and studying water in meteorites—including a 2.1-billion-year-old Martian rock—she hopes to refine theories of how water formed and was distributed throughout our solar system.

UC San Diego was named a  
best value university in 2014 by  
*Kiplinger's Personal Finance* and  
*The Princeton Review*.

UC San Diego

Learn more at [ucsd.edu](http://ucsd.edu).



# Diversity in Academe

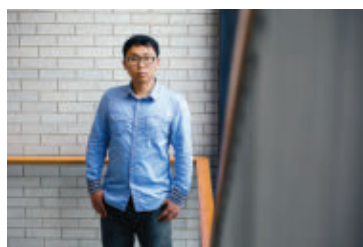
THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

May 30, 2014

## BRACING FOR CHANGE

### First-Generation at Georgetown

A broad support system helps students succeed among wealthier—and worldlier—classmates. **A4**



### Undocumented at Berkeley

A special program at the U. of California at Berkeley gives young immigrants a pathway. **A5**

### Navigating the Fafsa Wilderness

A U. at Buffalo professor's project to help students fill out the complicated aid forms has helped more to go to college. **A7**

### First-Year Focus

Guttman Community College keeps its students on track with a highly structured curriculum. **A8**

### Helping Hispanic Students Beat the Odds

The U. of Texas at El Paso tracks academic performance to help raise graduation rates. **A10**

## RELATED OPINIONS

### Success for Everyone

That would be a smart mantra for all colleges, argues Mark B. Schneider. **A14**



### What's Wrong With Hand-Holding?

So some students need extra support—let's give it to them, says Monique Kluczykowski. **A16**

### Why So Few American Indians Get Ph.D.'s

They earned fewer doctorates in 2012 than 20 years ago. **A12**

## OPINION

### Becoming White

Gordon C. Nagayama Hall officially changed his race as a symbolic protest against "an apparent quota system." **A18**



### Place, Not Race

In a book excerpt, Sheryll Cashin, an African-American law professor, tells her young sons why she opposes affirmative action. **A20**

### A Black Female Professor's Quest for Respect

Deidre L. Redmond considered "going mean" on her students, but found a better way. **A22**



### In the Classroom, Race Always Matters

David Leonard gets away with wearing ripped-up jeans while teaching, he says, "because I'm a white man." **A24**

### Be Fair, Not Nice

"Nice" is a cover for those who really want to preserve the status quo, says Charles W. Green. **A26**

### Good Hair

Ana Sofia De Brito, a Cape Verdean, struggles with her racial identity—and her appearance. **A28**

### Don't Call Me 'Underprivileged'

Natasha Rodriguez, a Hispanic student, is tired of that label. **A30**

Cover illustration by Jon Krause for The Chronicle

**A** MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT is coming—are colleges ready? With white birth rates falling and minority births up, an increasingly diverse pool of prospective college students is expected to include more low-income, first-generation, and minority students, especially Hispanics. This special issue looks at efforts under way at several colleges to serve underrepresented and underprepared stu-

## EDITOR'S NOTE

dents, who are more likely to need additional support to graduate. Meeting their needs may help some colleges preserve enrollment levels. But it's also the right thing to do, some say. One dean argues that the success of the neediest students should be the true

measure of a college's overall success (Page A14). And if that means these students will need occasional "hand-holding," then give it to them, says a professor who was herself a first-generation college student (A16).

Thanks to the writers, editors, and designers who worked on this issue. We hope you enjoy it.

—CAROLYN MOONEY  
SENIOR EDITOR, SPECIAL SECTIONS

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (ISSN 0009-5982) IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY EXCEPT ONE WEEK IN MAY, JUNE, JULY AND DECEMBER AND TWO WEEKS IN AUGUST, 45 ISSUES PER YEAR AT 1255 TWENTY-THIRD STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$87.00 PER YEAR. PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT WASHINGTON, D.C., AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. COPYRIGHT © 2014 BY THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, INC. THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION® IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, INC. REGISTERED FOR GST AT THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, INC. GST NO. R-129 572 8 30. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, P.O. BOX 16359, NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA 91615. THE CHRONICLE RESERVES THE RIGHT NOT TO ACCEPT AN ADVERTISER'S ORDER. ONLY PUBLICATION OF AN ADVERTISEMENT SHALL CONSTITUTE FINAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE ADVERTISER'S ORDER.





MATT MCLOONE FOR THE CHRONICLE

*Luisa Santos (center), a senior at Georgetown U., is among the students there who have received crucial help from the Georgetown Scholarship Program as they navigate college life among classmates from more-privileged backgrounds.*

### THE NEW DEMOGRAPHICS

Changing demographics mean that more low-income, first-generation, and minority students—especially Hispanics—are expected to go to college in the coming years. Many of those students may be unprepared for the academic or cultural challenges they will confront. On these pages, we look at what several colleges are doing to support such students and help them graduate.

# Georgetown U. Builds a Student-Support System to Substitute for Privilege

By BETH MCMURTRIE

**W**HEN LUISA SANTOS needed to go home for a family emergency but couldn't afford the airfare, she knew where to turn: the Georgetown Scholarship Program. It provides financial, academic, and social support to high achieving, low-income students like her.

Raised by a single mother who cleaned houses for a living, Ms. Santos may not be the typical Georgetown University student. But she is one of a growing number of low-income and first-generation undergraduates on the campus. Today more than 640 students—about 10 percent of Georgetown's undergraduates—participate in

the decade-old program, bringing diversity to a campus with a relatively wealthy student body.

Begun as a financial-aid program to compete with elite colleges that were offering better deals to lower-income students, GSP, as it's known, has evolved into something much more comprehensive. Participants say it has provided a crucial support system as they navigate college life among classmates with more-privileged backgrounds. "A big part of the rhetoric," says Ms. Santos, now a senior, "is that you're not coming from something that's worse—you're coming from something that's different."



GSP students take pride in the program. Melissa Foy, its director, attributes that attitude to their active involvement in suggesting, designing, and running many of the events and services offered.

For example, Achieve Advisors, a group of seniors who help younger students polish their résumés, find internships and jobs, and prepare for interviews, was the brainchild of a scholarship recipient. “Everything you hear that’s good is driven by a student,” says Ms. Foy, who has been with the program since its inception, in 2004.

Involvement with GSP begins before students set foot on the campus and doesn’t end after they graduate. Scholarship recipients are selected by a committee of admissions and financial-aid officials (there is no direct application process). Welcomed over the summer by Georgetown alumni, students are greeted at the airport by volunteers once they arrive in Washington. Those who need academic support arrive early for additional preparation, and each first-year student is assigned a peer mentor.

Throughout the year, students can share pizza weekly in the GSP office or receive one-on-one counseling. Guest speakers, networking events, career advising, and a “budget bootcamp” are among the many programs offered. The boot camp, for example, teaches freshmen how to live within their means and find the best deals on flights, meals, and textbooks. Georgetown provides financial assistance and activities for students who are not able to go home over the breaks.

Ms. Foy estimates that about half of the program’s budget comes directly from the university and the rest from annual fund raising. The average scholarship recipient receives \$45,000 toward the annual cost of attendance, which runs to about \$62,000. The remainder is covered by some combination of other grants and scholarships, family contributions, loans, and work-study. The university tries to keep participants’ debt as low as possible—about \$5,500 by the time they graduate.

Ms. Santos says she immediately went to talk with Ms. Foy when a family emergency arose and she needed to return to Miami quickly. The director offered a sympathetic ear and money for a plane ticket. “It’s a sense of family,” says Ms. Santos of the program, “a place I can run to.”

The program now has four full-time staff members, three of whom are GSP graduates. Christine Pfeil, the associate director, says she uses her experiences to help students navigate tricky situations, like being invited to dinner by friends when you can’t afford to go out. (One tip: Say that you need to stay in and study.) Ms. Santos says she also had to learn to deal with the fact that friends may be shopping at J. Crew twice a month, while she visits only once a year.

Staff members also talk with students about the reality of having to work twice as hard your freshman year to close the gaps between you and better-prepared classmates, which could mean boning up on American history between classes or looking up Thomas Aquinas for the first time.

And they encourage students to be proud of the skills they’ve learned along the way, like budgeting. In a recent get-together, one scholarship student marveled that her roommate didn’t even know how to do her own laundry. Another was encouraged to put his stint at In-N-Out Burger on his résumé, which impressed an interviewer at Goldman Sachs.

“It’s a paradigm shift that requires institutional support,” says Ms. Pfeil. “They need peers and mentors to help them realize their strengths.”

Staff members and students alike say the program has helped raise awareness on the campus about the value of increasing socioeconomic diversity at Georgetown. “It’s not something we should hide,” says Nursultan Eldosov, who was born in Uzbekistan and came to the United States as a child. His father, once a college professor, works in a bowling alley, while his mother, also a former academic, cleans homes.

Mr. Eldosov says he has made friends across the campus and is proud of what he has achieved, including earning a prestigious Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship for students who want to enter the Foreign Service.

As for Ms. Santos, her interest in entrepreneurship, combined with mentoring from a Georgetown alumna, has inspired her to start her own business, catering made-to-order ice cream, after she graduates. “This,” she says of the scholarship program, “has given me a platform to be who I am.” ■

# Berkeley Gives Hope to the Undocumented

By LIBBY SANDER

**T**ERRENCE PARK arrived at the University of California at Berkeley as a transfer student in the fall of 2011 with a keen interest in the sciences. He was, he says, “desperate” for the chance to do research at an institution that is world-famous for it.

But there was one problem. Mr. Park, who came to the United States from South Korea at age 10 with his mother and two younger sisters, lacked immigration papers. That meant he couldn’t hold a paying research job on the campus.

Before long, he learned about a forthcoming program designed to help immigrant students just like him. He met Meng So, director of the new Undocumented Student Program and, at that time, its sole employee. Mr. So, a Berkeley alumnus, was well positioned to understand the perspectives of immigrant students: Now a U.S. citizen, he was born in a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border after his family fled Cambodia in the 1980s, in the aftermath of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. He was brought to the United States at age 3.

Mr. Park, eager for guidance on campus, began visiting the program director regularly.

At the heart of Berkeley’s program, which began in 2012 and is among the first of its kind in the nation, is academic counseling. But the program also has other components, meant to respond to the spectrum of these students’ needs: Legal support to help them understand shifting state and federal policies on immigration. Information and

*Continued on Following Page*



M. SCOTT BRAUER FOR THE CHRONICLE

*Terrence Park, now a master’s student in biostatistics, came to the United States illegally with his mother when he was 10. Berkeley’s program helped him find a paying research job off campus.*

*Continued From Preceding Page*

guidance on how to get scholarships and financial aid. A campus-referral network to connect students with mental-health and other services. Training workshops for faculty and staff members to learn more about immigrant students and become their allies.

More than anything, the center is a place for immigrant students to call home.

“They’ve been taught to be underground and be invisible,” Mr. So says. “That’s where we intervene. We firmly believe that once the university admits a student, it’s the responsibility of the university to fully support that student.”

The landscape for immigrant students has changed in the relatively short time since Berkeley’s program began. The failure in late 2010 of the federal Dream Act—which would have granted permanent residency to immigrants who are in the country illegally but were brought here as young children—has prompted many states to enact their own legislation. The California Dream Act was passed in 2011, allowing students who are in the United States illegally to apply for state financial aid at public institutions.

(State lawmakers had adopted a law in 2001 permitting such students, if they meet certain requirements, to receive in-state tuition rates.) Federal financial aid is still off-limits, though.

And in 2012, the federal government rolled out a new “deferred action” policy, allowing some immigrants who came to the United States as children to obtain federal work permits and temporarily avoid deportation.

Meanwhile, the “Dreamers,” as this generation of immigrants is known, have

formed an increasingly energetic grass-roots movement. In many states they are advocating for in-state tuition rates and changes in federal immigration policies, and urging one another to identify themselves publicly as undocumented and “come out of the shadows.”

Berkeley’s program is adapting to those shifts. Where it once helped students identify private scholarships, for instance, now it strives to find internships and jobs for those who two years ago wouldn’t have been eligible for them. Jessica Lopez, a 2012 graduate who helped create the program as an undergraduate, says there is a danger in forgetting that not everyone qualifies for deferred action or in-state rates. “But they still dream of graduating from the No. 1 public university in the world,” she says.

**B**ACK IN 2010, when Berkeley officials first realized that a special program might be necessary for the campus’s immigrant students, there were two key problems, says Gibor Basri, vice chancellor for equity and inclusion. One was financial, the other cultural.

The students had no real way of getting financial support from the university until the California Dream Act passed, he says. “And on the campus, students were afraid to identify themselves. They couldn’t do certain things other students could do, and the staff didn’t understand or didn’t know about the issues around undocumented students, so they weren’t particularly helpful, either.”

Mr. Basri created a panel responsible for articulating the needs of

students who are in the country illegally, and coming up with recommendations to help meet their needs. Among other findings, the group concluded that Berkeley lacked a central clearinghouse of information for immigrant students. Nor did it have a point person who could advise them. The campus climate, meanwhile, was “at times uninformed, ambivalent, or hostile,” toward the students, the panel’s 2011 report said.

In several pages of recommendations, the group suggested, for starters, that the university create a position—eventually filled by Mr. So—to support immigrant students from the time they are admitted until they graduate. And the group directed the university to use its visibility to advocate for legislative changes at the state and federal levels that would improve college access for immigrant students.

Three years later, the program is in full swing and is helping the university to better understand these students. When the panel first met, for instance, its members reported that they had little sense of how many students enrolled at Berkeley were in the country illegally. Today, they know there are about 300 such students, from more than 30 countries, including Mexico, South Korea, the Philippines, and El Salvador.

Mr. So introduced Mr. Park—who enrolled at Berkeley as a junior because he had accumulated credits from attending community college and another university—to a group of alumni who had set up research opportunities specifically for students who are in the country illegally. Mr. Park began working as a research assistant at Asian Health Services, a community-health center in nearby Oakland, exploring such topics as smoking cessation and behavioral health. He also began to think about graduate school.

**B**ERKELEY’S APPROACH has drawn national attention. Over the past year or two, dozens of colleges in states across the country—among them Illinois, Michigan, Texas, Washington—have contacted Mr. So wanting to know how they can replicate the program on their own campuses. Closer to home, California State University at Fullerton opened its “Dreamers Resource Center” last month.

But there are continuing challenges. Faculty and staff members aren’t always aware of broader changes like the federal deferred-action policy, and how those developments determine what opportunities are available to students, Mr. So says. “Our students would get stuck in that learning curve that the institution was working its way through,” he says.

Although recent state and federal policy changes are helping to meet many students’ basic financial needs, other challenges have emerged: How does Berkeley tend to students’ mental-health needs? Help “Dreamers” who return to finish their degrees now that financial aid is available? Support graduate students?

When Mr. Park began applying to graduate school, it was Mr. So who helped him decide whether to reveal his immigration status in his applications to graduate school. In the end, he stated it plainly.

“It’s part of my life,” Mr. Park says. “Because of those difficulties, that’s where I am right now.”

The Undocumented Student Program helped him with one more thing, he says. When the deferred-action program took effect, Mr. Park applied, with the help of the university’s International Human Rights Law Clinic, and received an identification card from the federal government. He had always assumed that if he went to graduate school on the East Coast, he’d have to drive there all the way from Berkeley. With no papers, he would never be able to board an airplane.

Instead, for the first time, with his ID card, he flew. He’s now studying for a master’s degree in biostatistics at Harvard University. ■

“We firmly believe that once the university admits a student, it’s the responsibility of the university to fully support that student.”





*Kristian Contreras, a graduate student in education at the U. at Buffalo, guides local high-school seniors through their college financial-aid applications.*

MIKE BRADLEY FOR THE CHRONICLE

# Clearing a Path to College Through the Fafsa Wilderness

By BEN GOSE

**M**ANY LOW-INCOME FAMILIES find federal student-aid documents complicated and intimidating, and never make it through the first step on the path to college. But what if they got free help in filling out the forms, wondered Nathan J. Daun-Barnett, at the University at Buffalo. Would that make a difference?

It appears so. In many large urban school districts, only a little more than a third of graduating seniors successfully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or Fafsa. But Mr. Daun-Barnett is working to turn those numbers around in the Buffalo, N.Y., public-school system, where more than three-quarters of students qualify for lunch subsidies. The Fafsa project sends undergraduate and graduate students from the university to 15 public schools and five charter schools to work directly with graduating seniors and their parents to complete the aid form.

In 2013, the project—started by Mr. Daun-Barnett in 2011—led to a 61-percent increase in the number of students from 14 public high schools in Buffalo who completed the Fafsa. It is also credited with raising the system's college-going rate.

Hector Berrios, a senior at Buffalo's Bennett High School, typifies the challenges facing urban students. He recently left the home that he had shared with his mother to move in with his brother. When he first went online to fill out the Fafsa, he was able to create an identification number and enter some personal information. But he hit a roadblock when the form asked for his parents' income.

Mr. Daun-Barnett, an assistant professor of higher-education ad-

ministration in the university's Graduate School of Education, regularly volunteers at Bennett. He arranged to meet with the student and his mother at the high school, and they worked through the form's questions about income. "There were a lot of questions," Mr. Berrios recalls. "He helped us step-by-step to understand what the questions were asking."

Mr. Berrios plans to attend Niagara County Community College in the fall, and hopes eventually to earn a four-year degree in graphic design.

Student-privacy issues may have contributed to the problem of low Fafsa-completion rates in the past. The U.S. Department of Education, which sees the low rates as a barrier to the Obama administration's goal of sharply raising the number of students who earn college degrees, has become much more open recently about sharing individual-student data with states and school districts willing to sign confidentiality agreements. The department is sharing information with 90 districts, including Buffalo, in a continuing pilot study, which started in 2012-13. President Obama announced in March that the department was open to sharing student-specific information with all of the states by 2015.

The data allow districts to see in real time which students have successfully filed the form. Then it's up to districts and schools to work with students who are stumbling. "Just because you have data doesn't mean that anything will change—you have to have an action plan," says Greg Darnieder, a senior adviser to Education Secretary Arne Duncan. "We're asking school counselors to put on their organizing

*Continued on Following Page*

*Continued From Preceding Page*

hats and find volunteers to sit down with kids and help them fill out the Fafsa.”

The San Antonio Independent School District, in Texas, more than doubled the number of students completing the Fafsa by recruiting a slew of volunteers, so that each one could focus on just five families. The Riverside Unified School District, in California, saw a 21-percent-age-point increase in form completion when a handful of school counselors volunteered to work during the summer to call students whose Fafsa applications hadn't been accepted because of errors.

In Buffalo, Mr. Daun-Barnett took the lead on helping students complete the Fafsa after he heard about a 2009 study led by a Stanford University education professor. The study found that one-on-one work with students had led to increases in form-completion rates, while simply providing students with information about the application had not.

Mr. Daun-Barnett started in 2011 with a small project at Buffalo's South Park High School and greatly expanded the program over the next two academic years. He hopes to take it to other cities in New York, using the Education Department data that are likely to be shared in 2015.

The effort in Buffalo has also been aided by the 2012 establishment of a group called Say Yes to Education, which raises money from local businesses and individuals so it can promise scholarships that cover the full cost of tuition (after Pell Grants and other forms of aid, including state grants) to graduates of Buffalo public schools.

The project appears to be paying off. Some 66 percent of Buffalo public-school graduates went on to college or other forms of postsecondary education in 2013, up from 57 percent in 2012.

“That wouldn't have happened without the really good work that Nathan and his team are doing on the ground,” says David Rust, executive director of Say Yes in Buffalo.

Last year Mr. Daun-Barnett had only three paid employees and ran the program on a budget of \$5,000. This year he has budgeted \$30,000—Say Yes and the school district are splitting the cost—to pay 10 interns to help coordinate the work of 60 volunteers in the schools.

Will Keresztes, the district's chief of student support, says the college and graduate-school volunteers are trained to be respectful when dealing with low-income families, who may be sharing specifics about their finances for the first time.

“We knew we needed to do as much as possible to support our students,” Mr. Keresztes says. “We don't want anyone missing the ‘last dollar’ scholarship available through Say Yes because they face barriers in completing the federal form.”

The program has additional benefits for Buffalo's public schools. Counselors had been spending about 90 minutes per student helping complete the Fafsa. If volunteers work with 33 students at a school, the counselor gets back a total of 50 hours to spend on other important tasks, like helping students evaluate financial-aid packages.

“This gets the Fafsa off their plate,” Mr. Daun-Barnett says, “so they can spend more time helping students make informed choices.” ■

# A New Community College Keeps Students on Track With Structure

By SETH ZWEIFLER

**A**LFRÉD ROJAS wasn't sure what to expect when he decided to enroll at Guttman Community College. On one hand, he says, there was much to be excited about. If he graduated, he would become the first on his mother's side of the family to earn a college degree. Participating in class every day, he thought, would help him overcome his fear of public speaking. And a college education would help him land a job, he reasoned.

But Mr. Rojas, who grew up in Queens, N.Y., was also nervous. It was the fall of 2012, and Guttman, the newest community college in the City University of New York system, was getting ready to welcome its inaugural first-year class. What if the college wasn't what Mr. Rojas thought it would be? What if its experiential first-year program didn't work?

“Looking back, I know I made the right choice,” says Mr. Rojas, who will graduate as a member of the inaugural class in August.

More than a year and a half after Guttman opened its doors, many administrators, faculty and staff members, and students say that the Manhattan institution's first-year program—its academic hallmark—appears to be working. The program is an intensive, highly structured experience aimed at improving student engagement and retention rates. First-year students must attend full time. The curriculum draws upon the city itself, in courses that look at urban issues like sustainability and immigration, and spells out specific learning outcomes as goals.

The program caters to a predominantly low-income, first-generation student body; 77 percent of first-year students receive Pell Grant support, with 54 percent of that group receiving the maximum Pell amount, according to the college.

“After they complete a summer bridge program, they have a very programmed first year,” says Scott E. Evenbeck, Guttman's founding president and a prominent expert on education assessment. “If we know that choice shuts many students down, why do we so often give them

NEW YORK

a catalog with 10,000 courses and tell them to pick some?” During the bridge program, students are introduced to learning communities called “houses.” Each house consists of several cohorts of students, who attend all of their classes together.

The college's inaugural first-year class saw a retention rate of nearly 75 percent from the fall of 2012 to the fall of 2013, on target with the 75-percent goal. Nationally, community colleges located in large urban centers have averaged a one-year retention rate of 57 percent, according to CUNY data.

Guttman is expecting to graduate around 20 percent of its inaugural class in late August. The college is examining why the gap between its one-year retention rate and two-year graduation rate is as large as it is. Its three-year graduation-rate target is 35 percent.

In the fall of 2008, when the first paper laying out the foundation for Guttman was published, only 11 percent of the full-time, first-time freshmen who were enrolled in associate-degree programs in the CUNY system graduated within three years, the paper noted. A major driver of Guttman's founding, it said, was “the belief that a community college structured differently might better address the persistent challenges of improving graduation rates and preparing students for further study and job readiness.”

Administrators hope the Guttman model may one day catch on elsewhere across higher education. “Right now, we want to find out what transportable elements from our college may also benefit other institutions,” Mr. Evenbeck says. “In some cases, I think there may be a lot.”

**M**ANY FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS say that Guttman's rigid structure, while at times constraining, has kept them on track to graduate and enroll in a four-year college or pursue a job. “It can be a bit tedious, but it's helped me stay focused,” says Shikari Clayton-Hall, a first-year liberal-arts major from the Bronx. “I was lost when I graduated high school.”



On a recent Thursday in April, during his “Labss” course—Learning About Being a Successful Student—Mr. Clayton-Hall worked on polishing his résumé as he spent time discussing his interest in becoming a professional photographer with Eddy Dure, his student-success advocate. Staff members who serve as advocates are a staple of Guttman’s system of academic and social support. They work closely with students in the classroom and join professors as members of instructional teams that meet weekly to discuss student progress and learning outcomes.

Students also have access to a network of peer mentors. They provide support during the admissions process and summer bridge program, and continue to serve as academic resources to enrolled students.

A highlight of the first year is the “City Seminar,” which aims to get students engaged with New York while improving their reading, writing, and quantitative-reasoning skills. Students spend their first semester in the course discussing themes related to environmental sustainability. The second semester is built around the theme of immigration.

“You want to pick themes that are relevant and apply to their lives,” says Joan M. Lucariello, interim provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Some students have taken walking tours of Manhattan’s Lower East Side to learn more about immigrant communities. Others have visited museums in the city for the first time. And others have learned about sustainability as they walked the High Line, an elevated park in Manhattan, formerly a rail platform, that has been redesigned and replanted as a greenway.

“It’s one thing to listen to that in a classroom,” says Laura M. Gambino, a professor and scholar of teaching, learning, and assessment at Guttman. “It’s another to see it for yourself.” ■



MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE CHRONICLE

*Students practice for a fashion show at Guttman Community College, the City U. of New York’s newest campus. The college’s structured program is aimed at improving student engagement and retention.*



MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE CHRONICLE

*Students hang out and finish classwork in Guttman’s atrium. Unlike at other community colleges, first-year students here are required to enroll full time, so they are on the campus more often.*



# U. of Texas at El Paso Figures Out How to Beat the Odds

By BEN GOSE



ROBERT YEE FOR THE CHRONICLE

Vianey Alderete, a senior, works in the provost's office at UTEP, helping fellow students determine what courses they need to graduate on time.

**T**HE OFFICIAL graduation figures at the University of Texas at El Paso are nothing to write home about. Only 39 percent of those who started in the fall of 2007 as first-time freshmen went on to graduate within six years.

So how did UTEP land in the No. 7 spot on a national rankings list, between Stanford and Harvard?

UTEP ranked high on *Washington Monthly's* latest list of colleges that act "on behalf of the true public interest" because it takes low-income students—nearly 80 percent of whom are Hispanic—and graduates far more of them than one would expect. The rankings are based on colleges' performance in three categories: social mobility, research, and service. UTEP took the top spot in the social-mobility category, which recognizes colleges where graduation rates are higher than predicted on the basis of incoming students' standardized-test scores and the proportion who receive Pell Grants.

The university's success, say top administrators and some independent observers, comes from rigorously analyzing its own data to identify interventions that can help more students earn degrees. "They're using institutional data to address persistence to completion," says Deborah A. Santiago, chief operating officer and vice president for policy at Excelencia in Education, a national organization that maintains a list of college programs that help Latino students. "They learn what students need and then make changes to achieve success."

For students who started in the fall of 2005—the period covered by the rankings—the six-year graduation rate at UTEP was 37 percent. That rate, while below the 51-percent national rate for Hispanics, is above the 30.1 percent figure for Hispanics at open-access colleges like UTEP.

In analyzing its data, the university found little correlation between incoming students' standardized-test scores and subsequent graduation rates, but a strong correlation between high-school class rank and graduation rates. UTEP students in the third quartile of their high-school class—from the 50th to the 75th percentile—were far less likely to earn UTEP degrees than were students who graduated in the top half of their high-school class.

So the university set out to systematically provide more help to the lower-achieving students by providing summer programs and more academic support during the first semester.

The provost's office has also embraced

strategies that bubble up from the faculty. When Charles Ambler, a history professor, returned to the classroom after a decade as an administrator, he noticed that many of the students who failed his U.S.-history course would later drop out of college.

First-year courses like his, which can have as many as 350 students, were once considered gatekeepers, weeding out students who weren't up to snuff. But Mr. Ambler came to believe that the class's impersonal feel—not students' ability—was the real factor leading to failure.

"It just struck me that what was missing for students was a real connection to the class," he says. "What I needed to do was build that connection."

He started hammering students with slogans emphasizing that he expected them to succeed. He told them that failure on the first exam was impermissible—anyone who flunked would get an additional assignment. The approach worked, but it was also time-intensive and draining. So Mr. Ambler looked for technological help. Using a grant from the University of Texas system, he began working with a for-profit company on software that allows professors to divide groups of students into segments using an electronic gradebook, and then send email blasts to only those who, say, had failed to turn in the latest assignment. For the 40 or so students who were dangerously close to failing near the end of the semester, he sent a series of emails urging them to study for the final.

"The amazing thing is how well it worked," Mr. Ambler says. "I typically had between 25 and 30 percent of students who got D's or F's or withdrew. I took that down to 12 to 15 percent."

The product, Zoom In, has since been used by about 20 other professors at UTEP, and a study of 1,500 students has found that it has a positive impact on grades and student engagement.

**M**ORE THAN HALF of UTEP's students are among the first generation of their families to go to college. The university's large number of Hispanic students face several hurdles, says Donna Ekal, associate provost for undergraduate studies. First they must want to go to college, and they must develop the skills to succeed. They have to figure out how to pay for tuition and a way to get to the campus. (Students from Mexico are eligible for in-state tuition at UTEP if they can show financial need.)

Those who make it past the hurdles still face plenty of challenges. "Life gets



in the way for our students,” Ms. Ekal says. “They’ve been working since they were 15 or 16 years old. Their job contributes to the family financial situation. They do sometimes have to choose whether to go to work or to school.”

UTEP doesn’t pay much attention to official graduation rates, she says. The university awards nearly 3,200 bachelor’s degrees per year, but only about 30 percent of those students start and progress in a way that allows them to be counted in official figures. “Our students start at community college, they swirl, they stop out,” Ms. Ekal says. “We don’t fit that metric.”

The university prefers to track bachelor’s degrees awarded—a number that has risen significantly for all students, including Hispanics, over the past decade. UTEP graduated 2,552 Hispanic students in 2012-13, up from just 1,367 a decade earlier.

Simply keeping students closer to the campus is another important strategy, Ms. Ekal says. UTEP has increased its student-job budget so that they can get to classes more easily.

**I**N HER FIRST YEAR at UTEP, Vi-  
aney Alderete worked at a JCPen-  
ney portrait studio. But Ms. Al-  
derete, a journalism major, had  
trouble getting time off from work for  
tests and classes or to pursue stories for  
the campus newspaper. Now, in her sec-  
ond year, she’s working in the provost’s  
office. “They emphasize that school  
comes first,” she says.

Ms. Alderete grew up just across the  
border, in Mexico, with her father be-  
fore moving to El Paso at age 11 to live  
with her mother. After eighth grade, she  
signed up for an Early College High  
School program, which UTEP officials  
say contributes to the strong growth in  
its graduation numbers.

The program allows high-school  
freshmen to attend one of six schools  
where they can simultaneously earn  
high-school diplomas and associate de-  
grees from El Paso Community College  
in four years. Students who then enroll  
at UTEP can earn bachelor’s degrees in  
two to two and a half years. The univer-  
sity has more than 500 graduates of the  
program on its campus this year.

Ms. Alderete thought she would be  
graduating this spring, at the age of 21,  
but she had overlooked four required  
liberal-arts courses. That will push her  
graduation date back to December—and  
she’s determined to help other students  
avoid similar mistakes.

Her main job in the provost’s office is  
working on “graduation maps,” show-  
ing Early College students with various  
majors what courses they need to take to  
graduate within two years. “My job is to  
help them make an easy transition,” she  
says.

UTEP is also reaching out to students  
who are close to earning degrees. The  
provost’s office sends deans and de-  
partment heads lists of all students who  
are 30 or fewer credit hours away from  
graduation, so faculty members can meet  
with them to make sure they’re taking  
the right courses.

“Some time taking that extra step, and

advising one last time on the back end,  
will make all the difference in whether  
a student graduates this summer versus  
next spring,” says David Ruitter, a former  
chairman of the English department  
who now works on academic and reten-  
tion issues for the provost.

Who knows? If enough students make  
it through, might UTEP one day sur-  
pass both Stanford and Harvard in the  
rankings?

“We like the neighborhood we’re in,”  
Ms. Ekal says. ■

The university  
graduates low-income  
students in large  
numbers by  
identifying what  
they need to succeed.

Health ▪ Sustainability ▪ Policy ▪ Technology

UC RIVERSIDE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

LIVING THE PROMISE

CEERT

Real World Solutions

Explore more sustainability impacts  
[promise.ucr.edu](http://promise.ucr.edu)

Clearing the air: Using the world’s largest indoor atmospheric research chamber, UCR engineer Akua Asa-Awuku studies air-polluting black carbon particles and the role they play in cloud formation and global warming.

- Sustainable Agriculture
- Invasive Species
- Green Energy
- Preserving Ecosystems



# Why So Few American Indians Earn Ph.D.'s, and What Colleges Can Do About It

By VIMAL PATEL

**D**ARRYL REANO struggled with guilt in graduate school at Purdue University, some 1,400 miles away from his home, in Acoma Pueblo, N.M. There, on his reservation, near a mesa west of Albuquerque, his aunt was dying. “She was on dialysis, and here I was earning my master’s degree,” he says. “I wasn’t around to give my mom a hug. That’s what hurt the most.”

Mr. Reano, who is set to start a Ph.D. program in geology and geoscience education this fall, struggled with feelings familiar to those of many American Indians who leave their reservations to pursue higher education. Graduate education in particular, which demands late nights spent in labs and libraries, can take a psychological toll on students whose identities are so deeply tied to families and communities.

Those ties are a major reason that

American Indians earn a troublingly low number of doctorates, say educators and advocates. Other factors are thought to include the extreme poverty typical of many tribal communities, a lack of faculty role models, and a financially challenged tribal-college system.

American Indians earned just 102 doctorates in 2012—even fewer than the 149 they earned 20 years before, according to the National Science Foundation’s Survey of Earned Doctorates. American Indians and Alaska Natives represented 1.2 percent of the U.S. population in 2012 but earned just 0.3 percent of the doctorates awarded to U.S. citizens and permanent residents. They were the only minority group that did not earn more doctorates—or increase their share of all doctorates earned—over the past two decades.

While many observers are still dissatisfied with gains made by blacks and

Hispanics, members of each of those groups earned about 6 percent of doctorates in 2012. (They represented about 13 percent and 17 percent of the population, respectively.) Twenty years ago, blacks earned 4 percent and Hispanics 3 percent of all doctorates.

American Indians have made progress at the bachelor’s- and master’s-degree levels. They earned nearly twice as many bachelor’s degrees in 2012—10,743—than two decades earlier, and nearly three times as many master’s degrees—3,275. Their share of those degrees also grew slightly during that time.

**S**O WHY haven’t those gains translated into more Ph.D.’s?

“The educational pipeline for American Indian students is pretty well built at the undergraduate level,” says Aislinn HeavyRunner-Rioux, a doctoral student in educational leadership at

*Darryl Reano, honored with a ceremonial blanket at Purdue U.’s Native American Educational and Cultural Center upon his graduation, will start a Ph.D. program in geology and geoscience education this fall.*



AARON P. BERNSTEIN FOR THE CHRONICLE



the University of Montana at Missoula. Her proposed dissertation will examine American Indian persistence in graduate education. “It’s strengthening at the master’s level. It’s still being built at the doctoral level.”

Ms. HeavyRunner-Rioux’s own trek through the education system illustrates the isolation, importance of family bonds, and financial struggles that can deter American Indians from pursuing doctorates. After her mother died of cancer, she struggled emotionally and financially, dropping out of college for five years. She eventually made it to graduate school but had to choose between providing child care for her two young daughters or health care for herself. It was hardly a choice. She chose child care and learned to navigate the services of the student health center when she had a medical issue.

Now, she is using her own background to devise a survey that she hopes will help explain why so few American Indians pursue doctorates. “How can I get other Native students to where I’m at?” she says. “What piece of the puzzle could I help put in place to help more students get further along in this journey?”

“I just want to know what works.”

**SOME GROUPS** have an idea about what works. Since 2003 the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has given more than \$17-million to a handful of colleges seeking to increase the number of American Indians pursuing master’s and doctoral degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math. The group is especially underrepresented in the physical sciences and engineering, earning just 13 of more than 8,000 doctorates awarded in those fields in 2012.

Colleges in the Sloan Indigenous Graduate Partnership use the money to provide financial support for students—paying for travel home for local ceremonies, for instance—and to create programs that can alleviate their sense of isolation on campus. Member institutions include the University of Alaska’s Anchorage and Fairbanks campuses, the University of Arizona, the University of Montana at Missoula, Montana Tech of the University of Montana, and Purdue University.

American Indian students are also more likely to be “nontraditional” students. A recent survey of current students in the Sloan partnership found that 25 percent were 35 or older, about 40 percent had dependent children, and 15 percent were supporting extended-family members other than their children or partner, says Maria Teresa Velez, an associate dean at the graduate college of the University of Arizona, where the Sloan program began.

“They place a very high priority on family, social network, and community obligations,” she says.

Before the Sloan program began at Purdue, in 2007, an American Indian student earned a master’s or doctorate in a STEM field every two years or so, says Kenneth Ridgway, an earth-sciences

professor there who is a director of the Sloan program at Purdue. Since then, 17 American Indian students taking part in the program at Purdue have earned such degrees, and 12 are now enrolled. Only three students have withdrawn. Mr. Ridgway attributes the high retention rate to the program’s focus on fostering community and matching students with the right research interests and supportive professors.

As part of the Sloan program, Purdue also created an educational and cultural center on the campus, where American Indian students can hang out. Graduate students meet regularly there to discuss their research projects and learn about the nuts and bolts of graduate school, like how to form a thesis committee and develop essential skills that first-generation graduate students may lack.

“It’s important to have a place like that,” Mr. Ridgway says. “Most Native Americans don’t see where they fit into America’s universities.”

To help them make those connections, Purdue faculty members visit tribal communities to better explain how university research can improve tribal lands and the lives of American Indians. A faculty member might explain Purdue’s studies of sand-dune migration on the Navajo reservation, for example, or efforts to restore the weasel-like pine marten to the woods of Wisconsin.

“We say, ‘Look, these are issues your communities are facing, and you need to have your own community members have the expertise to make these decisions,’” Mr. Ridgway says. “When you put it in that context, then the elders and students start to say, ‘OK, this is worth getting a graduate degree.’ That’s the first thing we need to do: Just make communities aware.”

**M. R. RIDGWAY** attributes those efforts to the growth in bachelor’s and master’s degrees among American Indians. But multiple factors have kept that success from extending to the Ph.D. level, he says.

“A Ph.D. basically means you have to go away from the reservation or your community for years, and they don’t see the direct connection about how it helps their community,” he says. “People raised in a traditional way evaluate whether they are successful not by whether they have a Ph.D., but by how much they have helped their community. That might be part of the disconnect you see there.”

Carrie Billy, president of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, which lobbies for more federal money for tribal colleges, is hopeful that the doctoral numbers will increase. She cited the gains made by American Indians at the bachelor’s and master’s level, including in STEM fields. As this infrastructure for American Indian higher education solidifies, she expects it to expand to doctoral programs.

“We have made tremendous strides since tribal colleges started to be established in the 1960s,” she says.

Of the consortium’s 37 tribal colleges,

which offer mostly two-year degrees, 13 now have bachelor’s programs, five have master’s programs, and one, Navajo Technical University, is laying the groundwork for the first doctoral program at a tribal college.

If you look at the evolution of historically black colleges and universities and even mainstream institutions, Ms. Billy says, “we’re kind of on that same evolutionary track, trying to grow as quickly as we can.”

## Number and Share of Doctorates Awarded by Race/Ethnicity, 1992 and 2012

	American Indians/ Native Alaskans	Asians	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites
<b>1992</b>	149 <b>0.5%</b>	1,755 <b>6.3%</b>	1,109 <b>4.0%</b>	912 <b>3.3%</b>	23,625 <b>84.3%</b>
<b>2012</b>	102 <b>0.3%</b>	2,980 <b>9.1%</b>	2,079 <b>6.3%</b>	2,141 <b>6.5%</b>	24,209 <b>73.5%</b>

Note: Percentages are based on the total of all doctorates awarded to U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Percentages do not add to 100 because figures exclude those who reported their race as “other” or listed more than one race. People reported as being of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race. The 2012 numbers for Asians do not include Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders.

## Institutions That Awarded the Most Doctorates to American Indians, 2008-12

Rank	Institution	Doctorate recipients
1	U. of Arizona	28
2	Oklahoma State U. at Stillwater	25
3	U. of California at Berkeley	17
3	U. of Minnesota-Twin Cities	17
5	Arizona State U.	16
5	U. of Oklahoma at Norman	16
7	U. of Kansas	12
7	U. of New Mexico at Albuquerque	12
7	U. of Wisconsin at Madison	12
10	U. of Texas at Austin	11
10	U. of Washington	11
12	U. of North Dakota	10
13	Purdue U. main campus	9
14	U. of California at Davis	8
14	Virginia Tech	8
16	U. of Arkansas at Fayetteville	7
16	U. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	7
16	U. of North Texas	7
16	U. of Southern California	7
16	Washington State U.	7
<b>Top 20 institutions</b>		<b>247</b>
<b>All institutions reported (201)</b>		<b>629</b>

Note: Figures include Alaska Natives.

SOURCE: SURVEY OF EARNED DOCTORATES BY THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION AND FIVE OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES



# Help Struggling Students and You'll Help Their Classmates, Too

By MARK B. SCHNEIDER

**W**HAT WOULD we think of health professionals, or landscapers, or barbers who could do the least for those who needed their services the most? Amateurs, at best—probably downright incompetent. So what should we think of ourselves as educators? Shouldn't the success of the students most in need of our efforts be the true measure of our success?

In the Spring 2013 issue of *Liberal Education*, Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Uni-

versities, makes a strong case for the continuing value of liberal education. She argues further that the compulsion in academe to follow pedagogical fads (MOOCs, for instance) runs counter to the transformative, life-changing education offered by selective liberal-arts colleges.

I'm thoroughly persuaded by her arguments, yet at the same time I am troubled by other studies, such as those highlighted in Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa's *Academically*

*Adrift*, that suggest those who need the transformative experience of a liberal education the most are getting the least from it. It's disheartening to think that students who have been unjustly shortchanged by economics, discrimination, and chance are the ones still struggling the most in college. Don't we carry the bulk of responsibility for that?

That's why we should use the success of those disadvantaged students as the *primary* measure of our institutional effectiveness. Typically, institutions have put great effort into assessment for the campus as a whole but then, for these students, used the coarsest measures of success, like retention. I am deliberately vague about who such students are; they may vary from campus to campus, from decade to decade. But the underlying premise is that the hurdles for disadvantaged students are typically hurdles for all students—just not to the same extent.

At my own institution, we designed the Grinnell Science Project to increase success rates for students from groups underrepresented in science, math, and computer science: minorities, first-generation college students, and women. We began offering pre-orientations, mentoring, and more interactive curricular design, among other changes. Two decades of experience show that we have not only improved success rates for the target groups, but, in the process, also significantly improved science education for all our students.

In disability accommodation, this is called the principle of universal

We should use the success of disadvantaged students as the *primary* measure of our institutional effectiveness.



design. For example, an automatic door is essential for someone in a wheelchair but also benefits an able-bodied person carrying a heavy load. In our success-for-all model, we used the experiences of the least successful to identify what are barriers for them but often impediments for others, too. For instance, instructors should ask:

- What would a first-generation student not know about how to navigate a syllabus?





- What terminology would needlessly confuse a non-native speaker?
- How and where outside of the classroom are students actually learning, and how do class sessions aid that?
- How can I connect my students sooner with the academic services they need to improve in writing, math, time management, and so on? Support for students from all backgrounds isn't unusual. What I

believe would be new is the idea of making that the guiding principle for an otherwise traditional, national, selective liberal-arts college. Making this measure the foremost indicator of an institution's success would suddenly clarify much about its mission. It would unambiguously place learning at the forefront. It would integrate diversity issues into the college's mission. Success of minority students (or first-generation students, or women in science) would no longer be an auxiliary goal with a charitable or even condescending flavor but rather the key indicator of success. The message of universality would communicate a clear recognition of interdependence among racial and ethnic groups, regions, religions, and socioeconomic classes.

How might we measure our progress? Any and every way. At my own institution, as we created the Grinnell Science Project, studies of underserved populations showed significant differences in nearly all of the obvious, albeit flawed, measures, like grades, retention, graduation rates, and satisfaction surveys. In addition, simple measures of participation reflect engagement, and, as much research has shown, that's essential for academic success. So basic figures on attendance, office hours, and help sessions could be part of a constellation of quick statistics. A number of commercial packages are designed to track these bits of information and inform interventions. What I am suggesting does not demand new technology, but rather a conceptual change that brings forward the comparisons between groups as a tool to assess the college as a whole.

That's far from the kind of thorough and comprehensive assessment suggested by, say, the AAC&U Value rubrics, or the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile. So why suggest such a simplistic shortcut? Time. While the measures I suggest are coarse, they have very short time frames; midterm grades within a single course would be sufficient to allow adjustments. We have a large, built-in control group of sorts in the form of the overall student body.

Such measures obviously wouldn't excuse us from the broader consideration of a curriculum responding to the needs of 21st-century students. But they would help us become increasingly effective day to day, week by week, semester by semester. In any event, those larger issues are more appropriate for national and regional conversations undertaken by local consortia and organizations like AAC&U.

And a focus on the success of all students would generate additional benefits. The value to the institution of a diverse faculty and staff would become clear, as they provide visible role models. At the same time, the undue burdens placed on minority faculty members and others from underrepresented groups would be reduced as the success of all students became the business of all faculty members. The approach might even reduce the trend among many colleges to view faculty research as an end unto itself rather than as a tool that improves student learning directly (through student involvement) and indirectly (through faculty development).

But most important, a success-for-all approach would serve to remind those of us at selective liberal-arts institutions, and the nation as a whole, that we are leaders, not followers, in higher education. ■

*Mark B. Schneider is associate dean of Grinnell College.*

---

The hurdles for disadvantaged students are typically hurdles for all students—just not to the same extent.

---

*Illustrations  
by Jon Krause  
for The Chronicle*





## Sometimes ‘Hand-Holding’ Can Be a Good Thing

**W**E’VE ALL HEARD professors grumble that students shouldn’t need to have their hands held as they navigate the perilous shoals of freshman year. “I did it without coddling,” these professors boast to their colleagues.

“Let them sink or swim on their own.”

By **MONIQUE  
KLUCZYKOWSKI**

To my lasting shame, I once found myself saying the exact same thing. But when my own two daughters attended college, I quickly re-evaluated my attitude. There are excellent reasons a good number of students need “hand-holding,” at least for a brief time:

**First-generation college students often have no other mentors or role models.** As a professor of composition,

literature, and creative writing at the University of North Georgia (formerly Gainesville State College, and before that Gainesville Junior College), I have had first-year students from many different backgrounds in my classes. Most have been the first in their families to attend college.

As the daughter of working-class immigrants, I was a first-generation college student myself. My father was Polish, my mother was German, and our household was multilingual. In fact, I did not speak English until my family moved to America, when I was 7, so I could easily relate to many of the students in my classes. Neither they nor I had family members who could help us with the challenges of applying to college. When I wrote an essay my

freshman year about wanting to major in English but not wanting to teach, my composition professor took me to her office and spent an hour explaining my other options. It was a pivotal moment in my life. Someone took an interest, someone *cared*, and I finally felt I actually belonged in college.

Many professors complain about the informal way in which their students address them, both by email and in person. Students might use first names, or say “Ms.” instead of “Professor,” for example, or simply begin with “hey there!” What some professors fail to realize is that no one has taken the time to guide students through the expected protocols. When my younger daughter asked me whether to address her teachers as “Professor” or “Dr.,” I realized how much we simply assume about students. Now one of the first lessons I cover in my writing courses is the art of composing the academic email, which includes the Professor/Dr. question. (I advise my students to look up their professors in the college directory; if they are not listed as Dr. Stevens or Laura Stevens, Ph.D., then “Professor” is acceptable.) Recently a first-generation student sent me a formal, beautifully crafted email in which she apologized for her earlier informality and told me that no one had ever explained the unwritten rules of email communication to her.

**Navigating the academic experience has become more complex.** I have yet to use a college website that is truly user-friendly; most have so many layers and portals that I often feel I’m seeking admission to some super-secret file at the Pentagon. Just because many of our students have grown up with computers, we automatically assume they find web navigation easy. When an anxious 17-year-old says he can’t find our online learning community, that doesn’t mean he hasn’t tried. When a 32-year-old mom who has worked as a nursing-home caregiver for the last 10 years cannot figure out how to gain access to the library’s digital sources, she’s not stupid; she’s simply uninformed. For a professor to breezily say “you can find it online” is dismissive and unhelpful.

When my younger daughter decided to apply to college after earning her GED, I thought my general knowledge of the university system would be helpful. I was wrong. Deciphering admissions requirements, not to mention the financial-aid portal, was a nightmare. My daughter had acquired patience and persistence in the business world, so I can only imagine how many other students, without knowing whom to ask for help and advice, might simply have given up on college altogether.

**Nontraditional students have significantly changed campus demographics.** I still remember when our student body consisted primarily of students straight out of high school. Two decades later, we still have wide-eyed 18-year-olds, but we also have adults in their 30s, 40s, and beyond who are balancing



full-time work, families, and school. Our classes contain veterans, the unemployed, and sometimes even the homeless.

It angers me when I hear of colleges and professors requiring students to seek formal documentation in order to make up a missed examination. I now have a student whose wife is gravely ill, and who has had to miss some classes to be with her and their children. For me to ask him for a “doctor’s note” would be reprehensible.

Child care is another major issue. Our university schedule often does not synchronize with the public-school system’s calendar. Students who are also parents are torn between missing class and taking care of their children. My policy has always been to allow parents to bring a child, and sometimes even two, to class; in 26 years, I have yet to hear that this practice has created a major interruption or distraction.

Many of our students also struggle with severe financial hardships. Granting an extension to a student whose 10-year-old computer crashed while he was finishing his “Works Cited” page for a term paper is not “coddling”; it is an act of understanding and compassion that the student may long remember. I once had a thirty-something student burst into tears because she told me another professor would not allow her to make up an exam on a day when she had no money for gas to commute to school.

Another student, a single mother in her 40s, worked in a doctor’s office 30 minutes from our campus, then commuted home in the opposite direction for another 40 minutes. When none of my office hours fit her schedule for a writing conference, I stayed late after my night class so we could discuss her essays after her shift ended. It was a simple thing for me to do, but made a huge difference to her.

Lastly, students for whom English is a second language often have problems that are not readily apparent. I did not know that the reason my Vietnamese students never asked questions—even when they clearly did not understand—was that asking questions of a teacher can be deemed rude in their culture. I learned this when I mentioned to an ESL colleague that my students nodded and smiled throughout class, and then performed abysmally on grammar tests. After that I had the entire class submit questions anonymously, and comprehension improved for everyone.

**N**OT LONG AGO I received an email from a former student who had grown up in Puerto Rico. When I taught her she was in her 50s, raising her grandson and hoping to get her degree in education. Her writing skills were weak, and she often found it difficult to follow oral instructions. She would ask questions after every class, apologizing for doing so. I worked with her by reviewing the directions and giving her checklists of her most common grammar and idiom errors; it took very little extra time.

The news she was excited to share with me in the email was that she would soon be graduating with a degree in elementary education.

Many colleges concerned about student retention are creating elaborate programs or investing in expensive research to learn what works. But in the meantime, we shouldn’t overlook what may be the simplest and least-expensive

way to retain students of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds: Provide them with compassion, dignity, and the knowledge that, if they are drowning, someone will be there to throw them a life jacket. ■

*Monique Kluczykowski is an assistant professor of English at the University of North Georgia.*

## INCLUSION CULTIVATES EXCELLENCE



Cal State University, Fullerton (CSUF) strives to reflect the students that we serve, ranking ninth in the nation in terms of baccalaureate degrees awarded to minority students by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, based on data from the U.S. Department of Education. CSUF is proud to be designated as a Hispanic, Asian-American and Native American/Pacific Islander-Serving Institution and firmly believes that inclusion cultivates excellence.



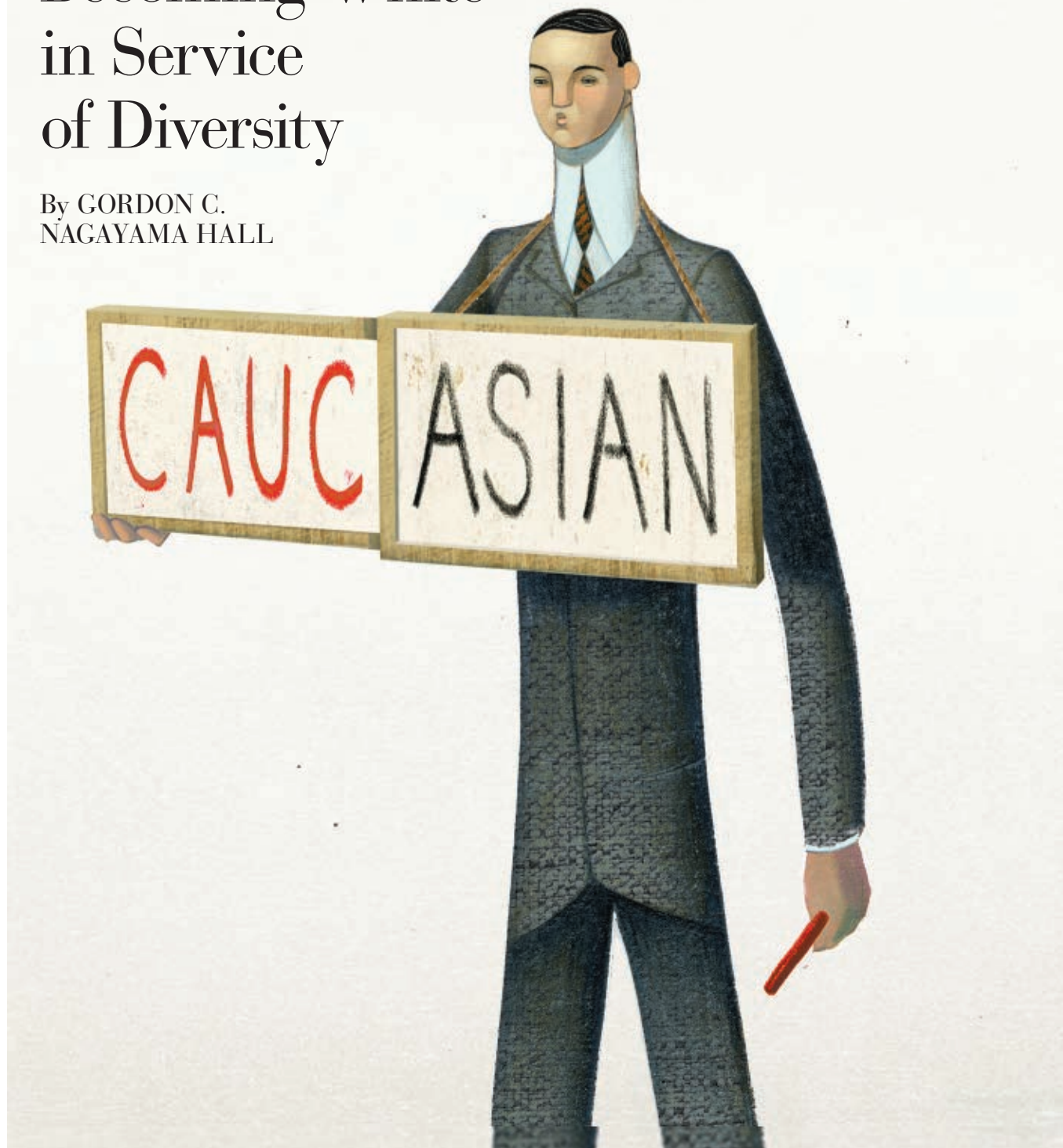
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
**FULLERTON**

We cordially invite you to embrace our mission.  
[hr.fullerton.edu/jobs](http://hr.fullerton.edu/jobs)



# Becoming White in Service of Diversity

By GORDON C.  
NAGAYAMA HALL



**U**NTIL RECENTLY, I had always checked the “Asian-American” box when asked to indicate my race.

Although my father was white, my mother was a Japanese-American and a native Californian who, because of her ancestry, was incarcerated in an internment camp during World War II. She named me Gordon Charles Hall because she wanted me to assimilate, but she also taught me the importance of civil rights and a Japanese-American identity. My professional career has focused on race, ethnicity, and culture. I have been elected president of national ethnic organizations in psychology, and I have championed efforts to culturally diversify the field of psychology. Checking the “Asian-American” box was an expression of my personal, political, and professional identity.

It was also a necessity if I wanted to reveal my Asian ethnicity, particularly before I added my wife’s last name, “Nagayama,” as an additional middle

name when we married. Being counted as an Asian-American has been important in professional settings to help create a critical mass that deserves attention and a voice. When the U.S. Census Bureau began allowing respondents to indicate more than one racial group, I continued to check only “Asian-American” out of concern that checking more than one box might disadvantage the Asian-American population by decreasing its numbers.

But a few months ago, I officially decided to become white.

I requested that my institution, the University of Oregon, change my race from Asian-American to white after I learned that Asian-American faculty members were not considered underrepresented in the psychology department relative to their availability in our field. The implication was that if we had a job opening, other racial groups should be the focus of our efforts to diversify our faculty, and that more Asian-Americans would not bring more diversity.

Another implication was that there

were too many Asian-Americans in our department.

Of the 28 tenure-line faculty members, the most recent institutional data indicate that there are 14 white men, eight white women, five Asian-American men (including me), and one Hispanic woman. Among all tenure-line faculty members at my university, the data show that 36 percent are women, 9 percent Asian-Americans, 5 percent Hispanic, 1 percent African-American, and less than 1 percent American Indian or Alaska Native.

The notion that it is not desirable to exceed a certain number of Asian-Americans seems like an invisible fence—a form of psychological incarceration. A white colleague remarked that no one seems to complain that we have too many white faculty members when we add to their numbers. The psychologist Alice Chang has characterized Asian-Americans as a minority of convenience: They are counted as a minority group when it is convenient



(when they can enhance a college's faculty-diversity image, for example), but not when it is inconvenient (such as when a department would lose out on resources aimed at increasing faculty diversity if it included them).

All that was required to change my race was my request. A university administrator told me my request had been granted and recorded in official records.

**S**O WHAT WERE the effects of changing my race to white? I don't know if having one fewer Asian-American faculty member will tip the balance toward Asian-Americans' being underrepresented in our department, but officially changing my race was at least a symbolic protest against an apparent quota system. Although the reduction of one minority professor may seem trivial, such a change usually does not go unnoticed in contexts in which diversity is limited.

The immediate personal effects of changing my race to white amounted to good-natured kidding from my friends. "Welcome to the world of privilege," they said. One advised me that if I ate at an Asian restaurant I should ask for that metal-spring device that turns your chopsticks into giant tweezers. "This will affect your basketball game," another told me (although it would be hard for my basketball game to get much worse). I also heard: "You can now tell white people apart." And: "You won't be 'randomly' screened at airport security." Another colleague wondered if I could start a movement in which people of color deliberately checked "white" in an effort to get institutions to diversify.

Some will say that checking a racial box is trivial, and that I am making a mountain out of a molehill. A common criticism is that racial identity is much more complex than a single question and should be assessed more comprehensively. I agree. But I also believe there is merit in using a single question. A group of people who checked the white category would be different than a group who checked a different racial category. I know this from personal experience with both groups.

Another criticism is that asking about one's race is an invasion of privacy. The motivation behind this criticism may be fear of discrimination. Will I be disadvantaged because I am white? Or because I am not? The most recent institutional demographic data at the University of Oregon indicate that 6 percent of our faculty and 2 percent of students do not report their race, which implies that the vast majority of faculty members and students do not see checking the race box as an invasion of privacy. Moreover, without race data, institutions would not be accountable for their hiring patterns.

**W**HAT IF I had checked the white box all along? Perhaps my life and career would have had a different trajectory. Perhaps I would have had different

friends and colleagues, different research interests, possibly an easier life.

The decision on which box to check, however, has not entirely been my own. Although I have experienced acceptance among whites, sooner or later I get the question, "What are you?" This question communicates to me that I am different, don't belong, and can't fully belong because I am not white.

For those who may object to my experiences as atypical, I would welcome the chance to be fully included.

After all, I am now officially part of the white group. ■

*Gordon C. Nagayama Hall is a professor of psychology and associate director of research in the Center on Diversity and Community at the University of Oregon.*



## Unconventional? Not at Rice.

Pretty amazing numbers considering that was how students graded Rice University in the 2014 edition of Princeton Review's "The Best 378 Colleges." The guide also includes student quotes about the university's "stellar faculty," "vibrant research program" and "diverse selection of courses and departments." Such rankings reflect the amazing efforts and dedication of the Rice faculty and staff to provide the best possible educational experience.



That's what we do at Rice University — apply unconventional wisdom to solve today's problems and deliver tomorrow's solutions. Find out more at [www.rice.edu/unconventional](http://www.rice.edu/unconventional).



# A Letter to My Sons

Toward a new vision of opportunity in America

By SHERYLL CASHIN

**D**EAR LANGSTON AND LOGAN, In my new book, I make arguments that hurt your chance to benefit from affirmative action. When you are older,

you'll learn what that is, or what it used to be. I have great confidence in you and believe you will amaze yourselves and better your country and your world. But other children will not have the opportunities you have, and I want them, too, to be successful and to contribute to society.

As I write this you are 6—and three-quarters, you would remind me. Your curiosity is boundless. Your willingness to work at things is growing. Your dad and I push you. But one day, all too soon, you will have to choose your own paths.

You will have to decide whether you will enter the fray that is elite

higher education. You cannot depend on your name, or your color, or your parents' connections. You must depend on yourselves and the lifelong project of cultivating what is unique and precious about you.

While you are pursuing your passions, recognize that some things are required of you that you won't enjoy, and just deal with it. Work and work and work some more until you get it. That is what African-American strivers have always done.

Grandpa did. I hope you will remember him, and not only as the old man we visited at the nursing home. Before he was in a wheelchair, before his voice had diminished to a whisper and words eluded him, he strode proudly in the world. At Fisk University, where he and his parents went, he would get up at 4 or 5 in the morning to study. He was expelled for having a party in his dorm room, but he recovered from that mistake and went on to graduate first in his class at Meharry Medical

College. Grandpa learned the habits of success from his mother, my Grandma Grace, a school principal who raised both of her sons to be valedictorians.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SHERYLL CASHIN

*The author with her husband, Marque, and their children, Logan (left) and Langston.*

Grandpa's habits became my habits. And you have watched your father, too, toil for hours, researching and writing papers for his master's degree. He already had two degrees, from college and law school. In middle age, even with a full-time job, he decided to go back to school, because he wanted to do more in life, and he wanted to explore a subject that interested him. That is your legacy. Embrace it and know that you are capable of more than you ever thought possible.

But for African-Americans, possibility is matched by peril. If the police are called to a party where kids of all colors smoke marijuana or drink alcohol, you may be the only one who gets arrested and hauled off to jail. That is an old story. Your great-great-grandfather, Herschel V. Cashin, was ejected violently from a train in Alabama in the 1890s because he sat where he wanted to. It didn't matter that he was a lawyer dressed like the patrician that he was. In the 1950s an Alabama state trooper knocked my father unconscious with a police stick, all because Grandpa had exited his fancy convertible and spoke too confidently, in the trooper's estimation, after a stop for speeding. A po-

liceman stopped me for driving too fast on a dark road in Georgia. It was 1986. I was skinny then and clearly no threat, but the officer made me get out of the car and stand spread-eagle against it while he frisked me.

Neither affirmative action nor I can protect you from predatory policing, gun violence, or the fact that society will never love you the way I do. All I can do is prepare you and pray. One day you will cease being adorable in the eyes of strangers. Even before your first facial hairs emerge, you will notice that some people are afraid of you. They may lack the empathy that you already possess. You notice a homeless man on the street and ask about his life, how he got there, how he eats. You told your father the other day that you wanted to give your money to people who don't have very much. Giving and caring about others is also your legacy.

Grandma Harriette's mother and father, Hattie and John Francis Clark, raised five children in Charleston, W.Va. Four of them became doctors and the fifth a lawyer. Great-Grandpa Clark earned degrees from the University of Chicago and Harvard and

*Herschel V. Cashin, the young twins' great-great grandfather*



*With his oldest daughter, Mr. Cashin holds his first grandson.*



*Harriette Clark, paternal grandmother*



became a high-school principal, the leading educator of Negro children in Charleston. Hattie became a school-teacher at 15 and bought her first piece of land at 17. Your great-grandparents were always investing and building. They built a post office and leased it to the government. They started a family corporation that is now run by a third generation of descendants.

In the Depression, the Clark home was filled to bursting with relatives and friends who had lost everything. Hattie Clark would take them in. One family lived on the back porch. Mommy and Daddy were following Hattie's example when we invited your cousin to live with us and sponsored her through college. That is another tradition you must continue: Take care of your family. Lift up the ones who stumble. They will lift you when you fall.

Find your allies, whatever color they may be, and don't worry about those who are difficult to connect with. Try to understand how they see the world, but then move on. *A maître d'* once asked me whether you would become rappers or ball players. "Aiming kind of high, aren't we?" he said when I suggested doctor or lawyer



*Hattie and John Francis Clark, the twins' great-grandparents; Harriette Clark is their daughter.*

instead. At first I was angry. Then I realized that he may have been struggling to take care of his own children on what he earned working in that restaurant. You enjoy advantages his children do not.

That is why I do not believe that you

need or deserve affirmative action. It is not enough that each of you is an African-American male, that you will be profiled, that some people see you as an endangered species, that you may offer a "black" perspective, whatever that is, in the classroom. There are other black children who have a lot less than you do who need the fair shot at life your parents are providing you. If you apply to college and are allowed to benefit merely from the fact that you are black, then some people will continue to resent you, and that will make it harder for the country to adopt policies that help poor children of all colors.

I would trade the benefit to you of affirmative action for a country that does not fear and demonize people who look like you. America is divided, but your generation, the first in American history in which no one group is a majority, will do better. Prove wrong others' assumptions about you, find your multiracial army, and fight for the country you deserve. ■

*Sheryll Cashin is a professor of law at Georgetown University. This is an excerpt from Place, Not Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America, just published by Beacon Press.*

# A UNIVERSITY SHOULD BE AS DIVERSE AS THE WORLD AROUND IT.

MSU DENVER IS THE LEADER IN DIVERSE ENROLLMENT AMONG COLORADO'S FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITIES.

JOIN US IN TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION.



METROPOLITAN  
STATE UNIVERSITY<sup>SM</sup>  
OF DENVER

LIVES TRANSFORMED

[msudenver.edu](http://msudenver.edu)





## A Black Female Professor Struggles With ‘Going Mean’

By DEIDRE L.  
REDMOND

**O**N TWO OCCASIONS recently, I have heard an African-American female professor described as “mean” or “difficult” or someone who takes herself too seriously.

The first case involved a colleague who had been invited to join a trip overseas that was to be led by an African-American professor. While my colleague got along well with the trip leader, other faculty members had told her the woman was “difficult.”

Not long afterward, I spoke with a student who told me she was having a similar problem with a different African-American female professor. This professor came across as overly authoritative, frequently reminding the class of her status, the student told me: “She wants us to know that she is the professor and we are the students.” Apparently the professor was clear about the distinction between students and professors, and gave students specific instructions to address her as Dr. So-and-so.

By the time I heard the second complaint, I had nearly completed my first semester as a faculty member, and better understood the dynamics facing African-American female professors. I am willing to guess that the trip leader who was described as “difficult”

had reached a point where she was fed up with her students’ and colleagues’ constantly questioning her and, in response, developed a tough skin and a cold disposition.

I took a moment on the last day of class to be candid with the student who had complained. I referred back to a lesson about health disparities and health behavior that I had used in my

**Some minority professors are so overwhelmed that they turn cold and, dare I say it, angry.**

medical-sociology class. “Remember what we learned earlier this semester about health behaviors?” I asked.

I had taught my students that one erroneous argument about the cause of health disparities among socioeconomic groups is that poor people do not care about their health, and therefore do not exercise or eat healthy foods, etc. That theory is sometimes used to explain why those in lower socioeconomic positions have shorter

life expectancies and are more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses. I explained that we see the problem as what is immediately visible to us—the health behavior of poor people. However, if we use our sociological imaginations, we can consider how socioeconomic differences create differences in opportunity (for a healthy diet and exercise) that then produce differences in health behaviors.

The student nodded in agreement. Similarly, I continued, we may take issue with what is immediately visible to us about this professor—her cold disposition.

“You are looking at a manifestation of a larger problem of race in institutions of higher education,” I told the student. The behavior of the overly authoritative professor was a symptom of being devalued and disrespected by students and colleagues, I said. While unfortunate, I assured the student that such dynamics were part and parcel of the minority and female academic experience. My student then used her sociological imagination to describe how this woman’s place in history had probably played a significant role as well. She said, “Yeah, this woman started in the 1970s. It must have been really tough being a black professor



then.” I was satisfied with her use of the sociological imagination and ended the conversation by confirming the astuteness of her insight.

I was truthful with the student about how being a black academic is an uphill battle (something I first saw while teaching in graduate school). Indeed, I almost made the decision during that first semester to “go mean” on my own students. I told her that I had felt I was at a crossroads—frustrated about being devalued by my colleagues and disrespected by my students. I had an internal conversation about whether I would continue to be my jovial self or purposefully be cold and differentiate myself from my students and colleagues. However, such behavior would be only a symptom of a larger problem that I was having as a minority female professor. And if I had decided to act coldly, I would merely be seen as “difficult” or as having an “attitude.”

**O**N ONE HAND, we forget that white privilege gives certain groups (in particular, white males) immediate merit and authority. No one questions their authority or whether they deserve their status in the university—or anywhere

else for that matter. On the other hand, we forget that minorities and women, especially minority women, are not granted authority even after earning a doctorate and being hired in a very competitive academic market. It is an uphill battle for authority; they must prove their merit. For women and minorities, it is a frustrating process,

### At times I have feared that the “mean professor” was a reflection of my future self.

and feeling as if they don’t have the same status creates distance between them and their colleagues and their students. I believe that helps explain why some minority professors become so overwhelmed that they “go mean.” They become cold and, dare I say it, angry.

After having been a professor for just a few months, I understand how this could happen. It’s a symptom of years of devaluation and disrespect.

Although at first I did not identify with the “mean” African-American female professor, at times I have feared that I was staring at a reflection of my future self.

Now, when I become overwhelmed by this pattern, I set clear boundaries that indicate I am the authority figure. Of course, I do not say to my students, “I have a doctorate, and I am running the show.” I use more subtle messages to indicate that I am a warm person—I will help you if you need it, and my office door is open—but also that I am in charge of this class. Whether they think I deserve to be in this position is another matter. I deal with this issue by doing the best job I can, and working hard to be prepared for every class so students do not have any grounds to question my professionalism.

Yet I see the benefit of going mean. It creates a distance that inhibits questioning a professor’s authority or devaluing that person. But I prefer to use other strategies to create a comfortable learning environment and an appropriate distance between myself and my students.

I have decided against going mean. ■

*Deidre L. Redmond is an assistant professor of sociology at Murray State University.*

## Northern Arizona University

is a national leader in awarding baccalaureate degrees to minority students in more than 50 categories, including the **TOP 10** for awarding degrees in:

- engineering
- business, management, marketing
- natural resources and conservation

We are committed to creating a culture of inclusion.

To discover how we can help you achieve your goals, visit [nau.edu/chronicle](http://nau.edu/chronicle) today.

Based on 2013 analysis of U.S. Department of Education reports submitted by institutions nationwide.



The Difference that Matters.

NAU is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution/UM\_05.14



# My Life in the Classroom, Where Race Always Matters

**W**HEN YOU WALK into a classroom, what's your demeanor? Are you approachable, even casual? Or do you favor authority and formality? After Katrina Gulliver, a lecturer at the University of New South Wales, wrote an essay recently lamenting an

By **DAVID LEONARD**

"epidemic of familiarity" in the lecture hall, I've been reading professors' reflections on those questions. Will Miller, of Flagler College, pushed back against Gulliver: "I have been known to occasionally teach in clothes that I could mow the lawn in," he wrote, "and apparently a student or two have at some point said I was cool. That's not my goal, however." I'm a casual dresser, too, but that's

not what struck me about Miller's essay. What stood out was this line: "I may be a white male, but this has nothing to do with why I am comfortable in a classroom." There's a lot to digest here. But let me start with this: I, too, am a white male, and that has everything to do with why I am comfortable in a classroom, why I am respected, and how I'm read by students and others.

That is my story, and the story of my career within academe.

**Berkeley, Calif., Summer 1998:** I still remember the excitement I felt when I taught my first class solo, at the University of California at Berkeley. No discussion sections, no grading demands from other professors: This was my syllabus, my approach, my opportunity to develop relationships with students. The course covered the civil-rights movement, and I was thrilled by the opportunity to share my passion for the untold stories of the movement.

As a white male graduate student, I worried: Would my knowledge and academic background be enough to make students respect me as an authority on civil-rights history? But back then, I figured that my extensive reading list and my preparation were enough. Beyond that initial burst of anxiety, I gave little thought to what my whiteness meant inside the classroom.

About halfway through the course, we prepared to watch Spike Lee's *Little Girls*, a powerful documentary that chronicles the trauma and terror of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, in Birmingham, Ala. Wanting the students to sit with the film, to reflect, and to emotionally connect with it, I encouraged them to bypass the standard practice of detached, academic note-taking. "Sit back," I said, "and enjoy the film."

Looking back, I cannot believe I said those words. But I'm not entirely surprised: My privilege needed to be checked. In my mind, I was simply reminding them to watch, listen, learn, and feel. Yet that's not what came out of my mouth. What I said seemed like an attempt to turn a film about terror into a moment of pleasure and enjoyment.

A few weeks later, two African-American students approached me separately. They each challenged me to think about what I had said, why it was significant, and how my whiteness mattered. They were right. I was blinded by privilege and the belief that "it's all about the material," not even questioning how I presented that material. My distance from the history shaped how I talked about the civil-rights movements and white-supremacist violence. When I reached into my pedagogical toolbox, steeped in whiteness and my middle-class Los Angeles upbringing, I grabbed hold of "enjoy the film" with little forethought about how such an insensitive phrase might trigger emotions and anger. It was the first of many lessons on how race always matters in the classroom.

**Berkeley, Calif., Spring 2002:** As I approached the completion of my Ph.D., I was afforded the opportunity to teach an upper-level undergraduate ethnic-studies class with more than 200 students. It was daunting. Between wrangling eight teaching assistants (many of whom were my friends) and lecturing to all those undergraduates, I was apprehensive—if not scared—for much of the semester.

*As part of its new strategic plan, AAC&U's Board of Directors expanded its mission to focus on both liberal education and inclusive excellence. In June 2013, the AAC&U Board of Directors issued the following statement:*



## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence

The Association of American Colleges and Universities' commitment to equity begins with the conviction that all students who have completed high school deserve the opportunity to attend college and to obtain an education that will prepare them well for work, life, and citizenship. The learning needed for full participation in the life of this diverse American democracy has long been what AAC&U means by a liberal education.

As AAC&U's board of directors affirmed in 1998, liberal education is "global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility." In embracing a diversity of ideas and experiences, liberal education likewise embraces a diversity of people, for the opportunity to learn with and from diverse peers is also a critical element of educational excellence. This commitment to diversity and equity in all their forms is what we mean by inclusive excellence.

To make excellence inclusive, our society must break free of earlier views that an excellent liberal education should be reserved for the few. Instead we insist that liberal education should be an expectation for all college students. Increasing college access and degree completion for all is necessary but insufficient to foster the growth of an educated citizenry for our globally engaged democracy. We need to define student success not exclusively as degree attainment, but also as the achievement of the primary goals of liberal education: broad and in-depth knowledge, the capacity to integrate and apply learning to new situations, and the intellectual creativity and resilience to face challenges.

We must be vigilant to ensure not only that all students have access to such an education, but also that they have an equitable opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. A high-quality education must be documented by robust assessment. At the institutional level, we need to provide effective evidence-based pedagogies and inclusive program designs. We must build on students' talents and capacities—focusing on the assets that all students bring to college rather than on perceived deficits.

Making excellence inclusive means attending both to the demographic diversity of the student body and also to the need for nurturing climates and cultures so that all students have a chance to succeed. Commitment to student success in these terms requires broad-based, compassionate leadership and equity-minded<sup>1</sup> practice—not only within individual institutions, but also across states and systems and in policy circles that make decisions affecting the nation. Seeking inclusive excellence requires reversing the current stratification of higher education and ensuring that all students develop capacities to prosper economically, contribute civically, and flourish personally.

Making excellence inclusive is a fundamentally democratic ideal. It expresses our confidence in the liberating power of education. Without inclusion, there is no true excellence.

<sup>1</sup> "Equity-mindedness" means that educational leaders, faculty, and staff demonstrate awareness of and proactive willingness to address their institution's equity and inequity issues (Bensimon 2007).

### REFERENCES

AAC&U Board of Directors. 1998. "Statement on Liberal Learning." Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. [www.aacu.org/about/statements/liberal\\_learning.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/about/statements/liberal_learning.cfm).

—. 2010. *The Quality Imperative*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Bensimon, Estela Mara. 2007. "The Underestimated Significance of Practitioner Knowledge in the Scholarship on Student Success." *Review of Higher Education* 30 (4): 441–69.

**For more information visit: <http://www.aacu.org/about/statements/2013/inclusiveexcellence.cfm>**



Over the years, I have been asked over and over again: Did the students—either the legendarily political Berkeley crew or the less-progressive students who just were taking the course for a general-education requirement—ever challenge me, question why I was teaching the class, or simply resist my pedagogical approach? Never happened. Even though I lectured about genocide, enslavement, mass incarceration, and persistent white supremacy, students offered little resistance.

That all changed, though, when a fellow graduate student—an African-American man—delivered a couple of guest lectures about the prison-industrial complex. After two mind-blowing and brilliant talks, I was excited to continue the conversation with the class. My students? Not so much. They lamented the guest lecturer’s “attitude.” They described him as “angry,” as “biased” and “sarcastic,” and as “different from me.” Several students seemed more interested in litigating his pedagogical choices than discussing the injustices of the American judicial system.

We (I’m indebted to one of my TA’s for her work here) refused to hold this conversation in his absence, so we brought him back into the classroom. And we pushed the class to reflect on why I was seen as an objective, fair-minded, truth-telling, and lovable “teddy bear,” whereas he was angry, biased, and more interested in a political agenda than the truths of history. The

conversations that resulted from these interventions were powerful, spotlighting that race, racism, and privilege didn’t just operate outside the classroom, in history and in culture. They played a role within our learning space as well.

The wages of whiteness were paid inside and outside the classroom. I was seen as an objective authority, I realized, in part because I was a white male.

**Pullman, Wash., 2004:** Since joining the faculty at Washington State University, I have been known to swear in class. I’ve worn ripped-up jeans along with a Lakers jersey. I ask my students to call me David, though I do tell them that if they are interested in formality, “Prof” or “Dr.” is fine.

I’m less able to pass as a student these days—I’ve got a gray beard, a balding head, and an old person’s sartorial style—but I’ve embraced blending into student populations. For me, this isn’t simply about being cool or fitting in or feeling young. I consider it a pedagogical intervention: The idea is to challenge our collective understanding of what it means to be an intellectual, and to show that scholarly pursuits are not incompatible with the “everyday.” Sure, I could lecture on Bourdieu, but I could just as easily talk trash about another Lakers’ championship—remember, 2004 was a while ago—or talk shop about the latest Madden incarnation.

But my ability to do this—to maintain authority even while wearing a

Zinedine Zidane or Terrell Owens jersey—is predicated on what George Lipsitz called “the possessive investment in whiteness.” In other words, institutional biases and individual prejudices reinforce one another. They certainly affect my place as a professor. My status as a white male is intertwined with the respect I receive. Women and scholars of color are not afforded this built-in respect, whatever their individual accomplishments, sartorial choices, degrees, or pedagogical styles. As a white male, I benefit from being seen as a professor, as an authority, before I actually say or do anything.

In my 12 years at Washington State, I have never had a student complain about my sartorial choices, my profanity, my propensity for “tangents,” or my professionalism. The same cannot be said about my colleagues, women and faculty of color, whose professionalism, authority, and preparedness are routinely challenged. My wardrobe of jerseys, hoodies, baseball hats, and sagging jeans is not subject to the evaluative scrutiny of future Mr. Blackwells. Contrast that with the women and people of color in the academy whose clothing selections are questioned and used to evaluate their expertise.

On the basketball court, it might be the shoes that make the player. In the classroom, though, it’s the privileges afforded along racial and gender lines that make the professor. Or it’s those privileges, at least, that color how stu-

dents, faculty members, and administrators measure a professor’s success.

**Pullman, Wash., May 2014:** I have spoken, by now, in numerous classrooms, at conferences, and in many other venues; for the longest time, I felt uncomfortable with any sort of introduction that noted my academic background, publications, or accomplishments. I scoffed at pretense and formality; I was David.

I know now that that was a luxury. More than my degrees or my publications, my whiteness was authenticating me. I had thought that by refusing the accouterments of academe, I was bucking the system. Instead, I was merely cashing in on the societal privileges afforded to me because of my identity.

So what have I learned? My education is continuing: I still wince at the lack of critical awareness I showed, early on, in giving underdeveloped introductions to guest speakers in class or at conferences. And I haven’t started to demand a level of classroom formality that doesn’t work for me. But I’m more sensitive to the experiences of others. I’m more aware of how my whiteness matters. Not many of us would be naïve enough to think that the classroom is a colorblind nirvana, but too many of us still act as if that’s the case. ■

*David Leonard is an associate professor in the department of critical culture, gender, and race studies at Washington State University at Pullman.*



**Rivier**  
UNIVERSITY

**Transforming hearts and minds  
to serve the world**

For 80 years, Rivier University has been inspiring students to serve the world in which they live. We cultivate critical thought, sound judgment, and respect for all people, and our foundation is the faith heritage, intellectual tradition, and social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

With Nashua, New Hampshire as our home and the world as our classroom, the Rivier experience ensures that students develop an awareness and appreciation of diverse cultures in New England and around the world.

[www.rivier.edu](http://www.rivier.edu)







SUNY  
ONEONTA

### WHERE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ARE KEY

As a campus community, we believe that our differences are great assets, that learning from one another's perspectives enriches our lives, and that by striving for diversity within our faculty, staff and student body, we honor the uniqueness of each individual and celebrate our collective experience, knowledge and wisdom.

For more information about the SUNY Oneonta campus community, please visit

[WWW.ONEONTA.EDU/EMPLOYINGEDUCATORS](http://WWW.ONEONTA.EDU/EMPLOYINGEDUCATORS)

## When Being Nice Isn't Enough

By CHARLES W. GREEN

**R**ACIAL HARASSMENT—hazing, theme parties, angry rants, and so much more—is, sadly, still a regular feature of life on college campuses. We know all too well the litany of such events, and the inevitable press releases, meetings, task forces, and reports that follow. And, after a pause, the next vicious incident.

The cycle of harassment is odd, when you think about it, because most of us are pretty nice people, most of the time. And when it comes to race, most of us (most of us who are white, at least) believe that Nice is what it's all about—that if we are pleasant, or at least inoffensive, we have done our part to make our campus inclusive.

To which I say: Forget nice. Not as a personal virtue of being gentle or kind, but as an institutional strategy for inclusion. I am a social psychologist and faculty member in a learning community focused on understanding issues of race and culture at Hope College, in Michigan. In class, in workshops, on trips, and in the residence hall, we have created a strong community among students from many backgrounds—which has fostered cross-cultural understanding and improved graduation rates, and has tripled the number of black and Latino students at Hope in the past 10 years. The student body is now 85 percent white, down from 96 percent a little more than a decade ago.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to be on the margins of any campus where the power structure remains overwhelmingly white. When one of our minority students is subjected to harassment, I see up close the shock and pain that follow. Often, harassment crystallizes myriad other, smaller events that the student has been experiencing all along. As a rule, harassment isn't the exception to the student's experience of the campus; it's the exclamation point.

Those of us who work closely with marginalized students know that nice is a cover for people whose real goal is the preservation of the status quo. It's an attempt to avoid real change. The hope is that if everyone will be sufficiently, if superficially, pleasant, there won't be any pressure to alter the underlying power structures. You see, if you're nice enough:

- You don't have to ask why some people attend your school but others don't, and why some graduate but others don't.

- You don't have to recruit a diverse faculty and staff to serve an increasingly diverse student body.

- You can redefine daily “micro-aggressions”—a racially tinged assumption, an offhand remark—as innocent, unintentional, or unrepresentative. Only macro-aggressions—major incidents that make the news—have to be taken seriously.

- You can offer diversity opportunities for those who are interested and let everyone else off the hook.

- You can measure success by the number of people who come hear your “diversity speakers,” while paying no attention to what those speakers say.

- You can have an administration in which nearly everyone who makes key decisions is white—and, quite often, male—and refuse to acknowledge that's a problem.

- Most important: If you're nice, you can believe it simply isn't fair for anyone to ask for anything else. If the sole requirement for being inclusive is for those of us in the majority to be individually nice people, and we believe that we are, then all other requests, complaints, or perspectives are unworthy of serious attention. You can dismiss the dissatisfied as bitter, angry, or unreasonable.

That is why most universities respond quickly, if not always effectively, to incidents of racial harassment—once they are publicized. When people aren't nice, they puncture our rationale for keeping things as they are. But the things that really matter are far more important than nice: Genuine community. Representative leadership. Respect. A seat at the table. A voice that is heard. When you're in the minority, you don't want to stand on the margins while a nice majority continues to operate as if you weren't even there. You don't want to have to be a “good fit.” You want to really belong, to be recognized as someone who has something important, something positive, to contribute.

The irony is that when an organization is truly inclusive—when leadership is representative, and policies and practices reflect a wide range of traditions and perspectives—those in the majority don't have to work so hard at being nice.



SAMUEL MERRITT UNIVERSITY. Educating students to be highly skilled and compassionate healthcare professionals to meet the needs of diverse communities. ✦

DEGREES in nursing, occupational therapy, physician assistant, physical therapy, and podiatric medicine.



[www.samuelmerritt.edu](http://www.samuelmerritt.edu)

1.800.607.6377

OAKLAND • SACRAMENTO • SAN MATEO



**I**N 2007 four white students at the University of the Free State, in Bloemfontein, South Africa, made a video mocking a group of black custodians. The video showed one of the students apparently urinating into a bowl of stew, which was later served to the custodians. Although the students later pleaded guilty in South African court to injuring another person's dignity, the university's then-new rector, Jonathan Jansen—the first black person to hold that position—did not seek to punish them, but instead took a number of steps to make the university more inclusive.

Under his leadership, the university has established an Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice; integrated classrooms and residence halls; nurtured promising young scholars from all racial backgrounds; trained student leaders to help improve the campus climate; revised the undergraduate curriculum to promote a cross-disciplinary approach to solving key social problems; and worked closely with low-per-

forming high schools to increase the number of qualified black students attending the university—all while raising admissions requirements.

The rector recognized that there are

If you're nice,  
you can believe it  
simply isn't fair  
for anyone to ask  
for anything else.

two dimensions to race: The first is understanding and respecting cultural difference. We have roots in different places, differences that are amplified by pervasive segregation, and we need to learn how to communicate effectively and respectfully with one another. The second dimension is access to power and resources. The United States is

highly stratified by race; our life opportunities vary sharply by the racial or cultural groups to which we belong. That's why nice will never cut it.

Is it possible to follow Jonathan Jansen's lead in our own colleges? To strive for representative leadership? To incorporate the history, traditions, and values of many groups into our curriculum? To develop a strong community that affirms both common goals and diverse perspectives? To embed inclusion into our daily lives and continuing efforts, abandoning the hope that a one-time fix will suffice?

Not only would that lead to fewer racist incidents, but it would also make our responses to them more effective and more credible. More important, it would ease the daily grind of marginalization that gives overt harassment such power. And that would be a whole lot better than nice. ■

*Charles W. Green is a professor of psychology at Hope College.*



*Together  
we will...*

**NADOHE**  
National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education

## Lead Higher Education Towards Inclusive Excellence

**JOIN NADOHE** and affect positive change on your campuses. NADOHE membership can provide you with opportunities to:

- Connect with a vibrant community committed to your success;
- Network with thought leaders for diversity in higher education;
- Keep your skills sharp, access members-only best practices, resources, and professional development opportunities;
- Obtain practical guidance and policy analysis;
- Stay current on issues of race and ethnicity in higher education, and much more with free subscriptions to the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *DIVERSE: Issues in Higher Education* and *INSIGHT into Diversity*; and
- Shape the future of higher education!

Learn more at [NADOHE.org](http://NADOHE.org)

National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education  
4440 PGA Boulevard, #600, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410  
561-472-8479; [www.nadohe.org](http://www.nadohe.org)



# ‘Good Hair’: A Cape Verdean Struggles With Her Racial Identity

By ANA SOFIA DE BRITO

**T**HE ISSUE OF RACE has always been a problem in my Cape Verdean family—and in my life. We constantly argue about whether we’re white or black. My dad says he stayed with my mom to better his race, by lightening the color of his children, and I’d better not mess up his plan by bringing a black boy home.

It wasn’t until I was away at college that I started to question him seriously about his past. It was in Mozambique that my father’s views about race were formed. As the Cape Verdean son of an official in the administration of a Portuguese colony, my father led a privileged life, living in a big house with many servants.

All of that changed when he went away to a boarding school attended almost entirely by the children of white Portuguese settlers. My dad was neither Portuguese nor white, so he was constantly bullied, beaten up, made fun of,

and humiliated. The whiter students called him “nigger” and other epithets, the very names he now calls people who are darker than he is. Had my dad’s family stayed in Cape Verde, where color lines are blurred and there is no outright racism, I believe my dad would not be the way he is.

My mother is the lightest in our family, and her thin, fine hair goes with the rest of her features. She has round dark eyes and a straight, European-looking nose, the thin lips associated with being white, and a pale complexion. My brother and I both inherited many of her features, but our noses differ. Mine is broader and his is straighter, on account of our having different dads. And even though we have similar features and complexions, we have different mind-sets. We both identify strongly as Cape Verdean; he, however, identifies with being white, whereas I identify with being black.

It gets complicated when my family talks about skin color. They believe that black is ugly, but so is being “too white”; our Cape Verdean color is just right. The reality is that Cape Verdeans are mixed both culturally and racially, and are many different shades.

My elementary school, after we moved to the United States, was attended mostly by Cape Verdean children of all colors, some Latinos, African-Americans, and a few whites. I never thought of myself as a “minority.”

That changed when I transferred to a private all-girls Quaker high school attended primarily by white Jewish girls. Overnight I became not only a minority but, because of my mixed racial background, also “exotic” and very much the “other.” In this society, I wasn’t just Cape Verdean—I was black. My parents had told me I was a white Cape Verdean, but being in a majority-white

The Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership celebrates its first anniversary this month at the City College of New York, one of the nation’s most diverse, publicly funded institutions.

We’ve had a momentous year, one filled with achievements such as Fulbright awards and the establishment of a new and committed leadership structure—our Board of Visitors—that will support and sustain our school into the future. To our donors, board, faculty, students, and friends, thank you for your unflagging support. Through you and because of you we are redefining leadership and building on the proud City College tradition: access to excellence for all.

[www.cuny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool](http://www.cuny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool)

## A PIVOTAL YEAR

We rolled out a sweeping network of student services and resources, building a new vision for student success.

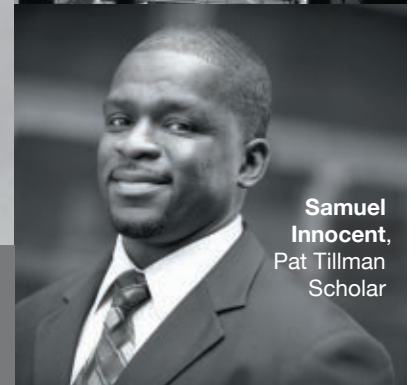
We launched the Colin Powell School Semester in Washington, a scholarship-supported program that helps define career paths in public service.

We radically expanded service-learning and civic-engagement opportunities as key elements of student curricula and faculty professional activity.

We launched a vibrant program of public events and named lectureships designed to bridge the realms of academic study and public discourse.

Our co-produced City College Human Rights Forum made CCNY a leading place for vital discussions about the defense of our sacred rights.

We deepened the CCNY tradition of scholarly excellence and student achievement.



Samuel Innocent, Pat Tillman Scholar

**Colin Powell School**  
for Civic and Global Leadership

The City College  
of New York



school made me think maybe I wasn't white enough.

I remember the first time I felt that I was better than my cousins because I was lighter. I was 7, and my hair was down to my waist. I was standing in front of the mirror having my cousins detangle my hair when the "hair problem" reared its ugly head. My cousins always fought with each other over who would comb my hair, which was soft and curly and long—not "black" hair.

My cousins and I had just come back from the beach, and all of us had washed and combed our hair. Mine was air-drying; theirs was being flat-ironed and pulled in every direction by their mother to make it straight. My young cousin asked her mother why my hair didn't need to be straightened like hers. "Because her hair is nice and is not kinky like yours," her mother replied with a sigh. I beamed. To me at age 7, those words meant that I had won, that, despite my African features, I had one thing they didn't have—nicer hair—and therefore I was whiter. I was too young to understand that my hair's being "whiter" made me less black.

**T**ODAY I FIND MYSELF wishing my hair were kinkier in order to qualify truly as "black." I do not use chemicals to make it straight; all it needs is one good pass of the flat iron—just like a white girl's hair. Being able to walk out of the shower and let my hair air-dry into my hairstyle is a freedom that my black friends do not have. Because of my hair, the black community has identified me as not being truly black. Thus I have to prove to them that I am African and that I, too, have experienced racism. It's a constant struggle for me to identify as black, and I wonder how many more years I will have to fight to amass sufficient cultural capital to be considered black by other blacks.

The privileges I supposedly receive in America because of my light skin have been detailed to me by my friends at college who are considerably darker than I am. They say that white people will treat me with more respect because I am light-skinned; that if I straightened my hair more often, I could easily be taken for a "maybe" white girl; and that I will be able to get jobs a darker-skinned person will not. With each such "privilege," my separation from black people becomes increasingly clear.

When I have challenged the idea that my hair can determine the course of my life, my black college friends say, "Of course your hair matters! It's been proven by scientific research that when a black girl wears her hair straight to a job interview, then she is more likely to get hired than if she wears her hair natural."

A dark-skinned Dominican friend said, "When I have my hair curly, I

always get curious looks, but when I have my hair straight, I don't. Watch. Straighten your hair for one day and see the difference in the comments you get."

So I decided to straighten my hair for one day and walk around the campus to see what would happen. Sure enough, people came up to me asking to touch my hair, and I got lots of positive comments: "Your hair looks so pretty." "Your hair is so long!" "Can I touch it? Wow, it's so silky!"

White standards of beauty had won; my straight hair got me more attention than my curly hair. The most dramatic difference I noticed was that white boys who had never paid attention to me gave me flirty smiles and talked to me. Not once while I was wearing my hair curly had white boys struck up a conversation with me on a nonacademic topic.

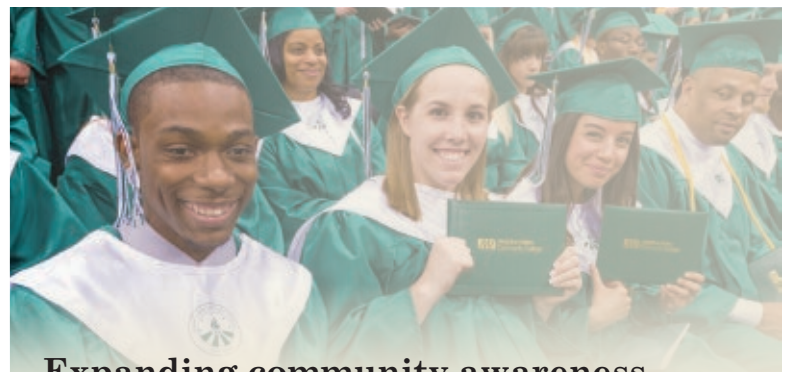
Despite all of the attention I get with straight hair, I still prefer my natural hairstyle, which I believe makes me appear more ethnic, more black.

**I**DENTIFY AS BLACK, but in the eyes of the world I am neither black nor white. When I try to affiliate with black student organizations, black students often don't know what to make of me. They say, "I don't know what you're doing here," implying that, as a light-skinned girl, I don't know what it is to be truly black. They seem to consider themselves the arbiters of who is truly black, and I get lost in the shuffle.

Although I am African and I identify mostly with African-American culture, I feel as if I'm not being taken seriously at black group events because of my light skin. To make up for the lack of recognition by fellow black people, I tend to adopt my friends' accents and mannerisms to appear "more black." I leave my hair curly to keep from looking "too white." I stay out in the summer sun as much as possible to get a tan and appear "more black." I take classes in African-American studies, where I often feel that comments from lighter-skinned and African students are delegitimized because we have not gone through the same experiences as the African-American students.

I will continue to state that I am black, despite being labeled a "nigger lover" by my family, being made fun of as the whitest person in a group of "truly black" people, and always having to fight to be accepted as black. Maybe someday those racial categories can be dissolved and I'll no longer have to choose. ■

*Ana Sofia De Brito graduated from Dartmouth College in 2012 with a major in Latin American, Latino, and Caribbean studies. This essay is adapted from a chapter in the book Mixed: Multiracial College Students Tell Their Life Stories, edited by Andrew Garrod, Robert Kilkenny, and Christina Gómez (Cornell University Press, 2014).*



## Expanding community awareness.

*Moraine Valley embraces our role as an educational resource to our local community by offering excellent education, a variety of programs, cultural events, and entertaining performances for all.*

As a world-class, student success-focused college, Moraine Valley recognizes diversity and inclusion as essential to the way we achieve our mission. Reaching into our community as true partners enriches the lives of both students and neighbors alike. By building awareness and sharing diverse viewpoints, we help students prepare for what's ahead in our ever-changing world. What will your unique experiences bring to our students?

Help us continue to expand upon our strong community partnership. To be considered, you must provide us with a resume and cover letter indicating your specialty area of interest. For further information or to apply, visit: <http://jobs.morainevalley.edu>

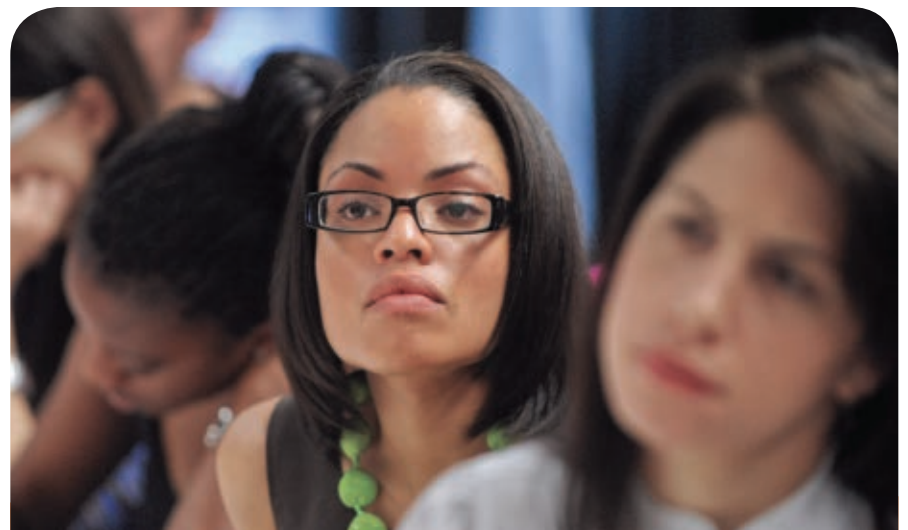
<http://jobs.morainevalley.edu>

Moraine Valley is an EEO/AF/D/V employer that values diversity and is committed to excellence.



**M** Moraine Valley  
Community College  
Changing Lives for a Changing World

9000 W. College Pkwy. • Palos Hills, IL 60465-0937  
[morainevalley.edu](http://morainevalley.edu)



## SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Long known as a place of opportunity and inclusion, Syracuse University strives to promote a culture of respect among students, faculty, and staff. Syracuse's Equal Opportunity, Inclusion, and Resolution Services unit works across the University to advance this commitment.

[syr.edu](http://syr.edu)








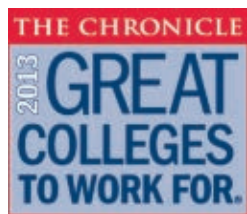
Office of Diversity and Inclusion  
State University of New York  
Downstate Medical Center at Brooklyn

# World-Class Medical Education in Brooklyn

- ★ College of Medicine
- ★ College of Nursing
- ★ College of Health Related Professions
- ★ School of Graduate Studies
- ★ School of Public Health

 **SUNY DOWNSTATE** College of Medicine  
Medical Center 450 Clarkson Avenue ★ Brooklyn, New York 11203 ★ phone: (718) 270-3776 ★ fax: (718) 270-4074

## Educating Tomorrow's Health Care Leaders



- ▶ Nursing
- ▶ Occupational Therapy
- ▶ Physician Assistant Studies (developing program)
- ▶ Physical Therapy
- ▶ Speech-Language Pathology

Today's diverse patient population requires health professionals who are culturally competent and able to function effectively across an array of situations. Educating leaders to meet this challenge is part of our mission, and it's part of our everyday practice.



**MGH INSTITUTE**  
OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS  
A graduate school founded by Massachusetts General Hospital  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

[www.mghihp.edu](http://www.mghihp.edu)

## Who Are You Calling Underprivileged?

By NATASHA RODRIGUEZ

I HAVE COME to loathe the word “underprivileged.” When I filled out my college applications, I checked off the Latino/Hispanic box whenever I was asked to give my ethnicity. My parents in turn indicated their income, hoping that we would qualify for financial aid. But while I waited for acceptances and rejections, several colleges I was considering sent me material that made me feel worthless rather than excited about attending those institutions.

The first mailing I received was a brochure that featured a photograph of African-American, Asian, and Latino teens standing around in a cluster, their faces full of laughter and joy. The title of the brochure was “Help for Underprivileged Students.” At first I was confused: “Underprivileged” was not a word that I associated with myself. But there was the handout, with my name printed boldly on the surface.

The text went on to inform me that, since I was a student who had experienced an underprivileged life, I could qualify for several kinds of financial aid and scholarships. While I appreciated the intent, I was turned off by that one word—“underprivileged.”

I had never been called that before. The word made me question how I saw myself in the world. Yes, I needed financial aid, and I had received generous scholarships to help me attend a private high school on the Upper East Side of New York. Surely that didn't mean that I had lived a less-privileged life than others. My upbringing had been very happy.

What does “underprivileged” actually mean? According to most dictionaries, the word refers to a person who does not enjoy the same standard of living or rights as a majority of people in a society. I don't fit that definition. Even though my family does not have a lot of money, we have always had enough to get by, and I have received an excellent education.

What angered me most about the label was why colleges would ever use such a term. Who wants to be called underprivileged? I'm sure that even those who have had no opportunities would not want their social status rubbed in their faces so blatantly. People should be referred to as underpriv-

ileged only if they're the ones who are calling themselves that.

Misfortune, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. It's not appropriate to slap labels on people that they might not like or even agree with. Social research has found that those who are negatively labeled usually have lower self-esteem than others who are not labeled in that way. So why does the label of “underprivileged” persist?

Most colleges brag about the diversity of their students. But I don't want to be bragged about if my ethnicity

Even those who have had no opportunities would not want their social status rubbed in their faces.

is automatically associated with “underprivileged.” Several colleges that had not even received information on my parents' finances just assumed that I was underprivileged because I had checked “Latino/Hispanic” on their applications.

That kind of labeling has to stop. Brochures and handouts could be titled “Help for Students in Need” rather than “Help for Underprivileged Students.” I am sure that many people, myself included, are more than willing to admit that they require financial aid, and would feel fine about a college that referred to them as a student in need.

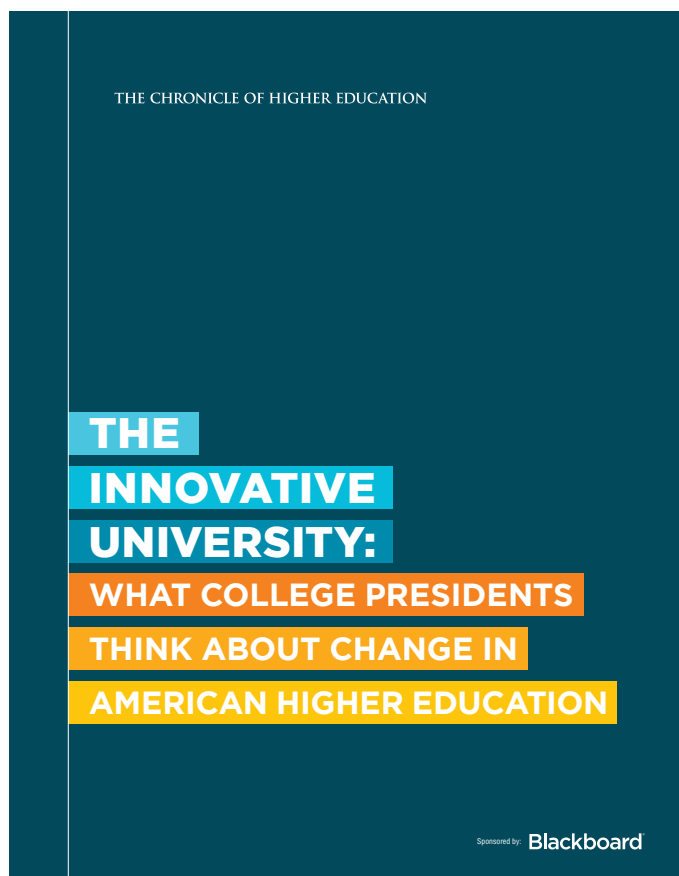
That's a definition I can agree with. I *am* a student in need; I'm just not an underprivileged one. ■

*Natasha Rodriguez is a rising junior at Sarah Lawrence College and the features editor of the college's newspaper, The Phoenix.*

*The Chronicle Crossword will return in next week's issue of The Chronicle Review, dated June 6, 2014.*



# ARE U.S. COLLEGES KEEPING UP WITH THEIR GLOBAL PEERS?



Learn what college and university presidents think about this and other topics related to innovation in higher education. Discover:

- What innovation 81% of presidents believe will have the biggest impact on teaching and learning.
- Who should influence change in higher education.
- Where U.S. higher education will stand in worldwide rankings 10 years from now.

## FIND OUT WHAT PRESIDENTS THINK.

DOWNLOAD  
NEW REPORT

[Chronicle.com/TheInnovativeUniversity14](http://Chronicle.com/TheInnovativeUniversity14)

The Innovative University: What College Presidents Think About Change in American Higher Education is based on a survey conducted by Maguire Associates, Inc., was edited by Jeffrey J. Selingo, contributing editor at The Chronicle of Higher Education Inc., and is sponsored by Blackboard. The Chronicle is fully responsible for the report's editorial content. Copyright © 2014

Sponsored by:

**Blackboard®**



# TWICE LIPPER IN A ROW.

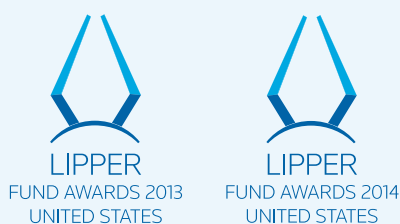
TIAA-CREF has now won the Lipper Award for Best Overall Large Fund Company two years in a row.<sup>1</sup> It's a rare honor that few firms can claim. But the more you know about the long-term performance of our asset management team, the less surprising those awards become. Every day, we deliver Outcomes That Matter.



Financial Services

Outcomes  
That Matter

**Our award-winning funds are available to everyone. Get started at [TIAA.org/lipper2X](http://TIAA.org/lipper2X)**



**BEST OVERALL LARGE FUND COMPANY<sup>1</sup>**

The Lipper Awards are based on a review of 36 companies' 2012 and 48 companies' 2013 risk-adjusted performance.

<sup>1</sup>The Lipper Award is given to the group with the lowest average decile ranking of three years' Consistent Return for eligible funds over the three-year period ended 11/30/12 and 11/30/13, respectively. TIAA-CREF was ranked against 36 fund companies in 2012 and 48 fund companies in 2013 with at least five equity, five bond, or three mixed-asset portfolios. Past performance does not guarantee future results. For current performance and rankings, please visit the Research and Performance section on [tiaa-cref.org](http://tiaa-cref.org). TIAA-CREF Individual & Institutional Services, LLC, and Teachers Personal Investors Services Inc. ©2014 Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America – College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), 730 Third Avenue, New York, NY, 10017. C15547

Consider investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses carefully before investing. Go to [tiaa-cref.org](http://tiaa-cref.org) for product and fund prospectuses that contain this and other information. Read carefully before investing. TIAA-CREF funds are subject to market and other risk factors.