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On the cover and above: University of Colorado College of Nursing students
Opportunity brings outcomes

Clemson University Men of Color National Summit

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For six years, Clemson University and the Men of Color National Summit have made it their mission to show young African American and Hispanic men that graduation from high school and college is closer than they think.

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clemson.edu/menofcolor

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University of Oregon Student Government Proposes Critical Race Theory Undergraduate Requirement

The University of Oregon’s (UO) student government is hoping to work with university administrators in implementing a critical race theory (CRT) curriculum requirement for undergraduate students. In December, representatives of the Associated Students of UO (ASUO) proposed the idea during a board of trustees meeting to address systemic racism and to support academics across the U.S. who have been banned or discouraged from teaching and researching issues of race, gender, and inequity.

“I think we’ve identified this as an issue across the nation, as something that’s relevant to not only the educational value for students, but also to the well-being of our community,” ASUO President Isaiah Boyd said at the board meeting.

Although UO requires students to take both “Global Perspectives” and “Difference, Inequality, and Agency” courses, some of the classes do not explicitly touch on issues of racial inequity. Boyd told the Oregon Public Broadcasting network that he hopes the university will implement CRT into the curriculum in a way that meaningfully affects students beyond graduation and into their careers.

ASUO’s proposal coincides with talks in the UO Senate about upholding academic freedom within the university and standing in solidarity with faculty members at other colleges and universities throughout the country. Over the past year, numerous states and local school boards have passed legislation that prevents educators at all levels from teaching about racial inequity, which is often incorrectly labeled as CRT.

“By passing this motion, which is one of many being considered by academic senates across the country, we will stand in solidarity with faculty at all levels of education who face explicit attempts by state legislatures, school boards, and even some boards of trustees, to prevent them from broaching topics that are claimed to be ‘divisive,’” Spike Gildea, UO Senate President and a linguistics professor, wrote in a report.

Boyd says the ASUO plans to work with the UO Senate and the provost’s office over the winter term to develop a potential framework for a CRT graduation requirement.

Increasing awareness of systemic racial inequities creates opportunity for people in power to engage in socially conscious action and decision-making within higher education,” Boyd wrote in a report to the UO Board of Trustees.

Spike in Medical School Enrollments Breaks Records

Medical school applications surged by a record-breaking 17.8 percent for the 2021-2022 academic year, according to new data from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). In comparison, applications for 2020-2021 declined by 0.6 percent from the previous year.

Acceptance and matriculation rates have also increased. Acceptance rates were up 2.6 percent, and first-year enrollment grew by 1.9 percent.

This year’s entering class of medical students also broke records for diversity.

For the first time since the AAMC began tracking race and ethnicity, the majority of new students are non-White by a thin margin of 0.3 percent. The racial demographics of the application pool are as follows:

- White: 49.7 percent
- Asian American: 25 percent
- Black: 11.7 percent
- Hispanic and Latinx: 11.7 percent
- Native American: 1 percent

“We are especially encouraged by the growth in applications and new enrollments by students in racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in medicine,” Geoffrey Young, PhD, AAMC’s senior director of Transforming the Health Care Workforce, said in a press release.

Many medical schools offered application fee waivers and other forms of assistance during the pandemic, making the application and enrollment processes more accessible. News sources have also reported that more students have been inspired to pursue careers in medicine to combat health disparities exacerbated by the pandemic.

Sandra Quezada, MD, associate dean for admissions at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM), told AAMC in a press release that “most of the people who applied had been thinking about it for years” and were inspired by recent societal events. UMSOM experienced a 28 percent increase in applications. Other schools seeing significant growth include St. Louis University School of Medicine, where applications rose 39 percent.

For the third year in a row, women made up the majority of new applicants and students. They comprised nearly 57 percent of the application pool and 55 percent of matriculants. By comparison, the number of men entering medical school declined for the sixth year in a row.
From the time she was a young girl growing up in western Kentucky Dr. Lovoria B. Williams knew that she wanted to be a nurse. Fast forward to today, and that young girl grew up to become a nurse scientist who’s done everything from critical care nursing, to caring for the homeless, veterans, tobacco dependent patients, to teaching other nurses and leading the charge for evidence-based community interventions to improve health outcomes for Communities of Color and the medically underserved.

Dr. Williams is a family nurse practitioner, tobacco treatment specialist, an associate professor in the University of Kentucky College of Nursing and the president of the Lexington Kentucky Chapter of the National Black Nurses Association. Her career is centered on achieving social justice and shifting the longstanding health inequities in this country through research and clinical practice. Dr. Williams is a boots-on-the-ground, proven change-maker, collaborator, mentor, and health equity nurse leader. With her deep understanding of the power of the church, the majority of her research is conducted in collaboration with Black church congregations and leaders.

Her research is guided by the input of an eight-member Community Advisory Board and her interventions are delivered by trained community members. She has set the vision of the CHANGE Team to emerge as a national leader in impactful nurse-driven community-level interventions.

Learn more at go.uky.edu/CHANGE
Long Beach City College Launches Safe Parking Program for Homeless Students

A 2020 COVID-19 student impact survey conducted by California Community Colleges found that 57 percent of students experienced housing and food insecurity during the pandemic, with students of color affected more than their White peers. Between 61 and 71 percent of students of color faced a basic needs deficit compared with 47 percent of White students, according to the survey.

To help address these needs, Long Beach City College (LBCC), a two-year institution in California, recently created the Safe Parking Program for its Pacific Coast campus to provide a secure sleeping space and amenities for students who are living out of their cars. The pilot program will allow them to leave their cars overnight in the college’s parking structure and grant them access to restrooms, electricity, showers, and wireless internet connection. This move will also alleviate worries of having the police called on students for sleeping in their vehicles.

“The unfortunate truth is that LBCC has close to 70 students sleeping in their cars each night — quite possibly more,” Mike Muñoz, the LBCC district’s interim superintendent-president, told the Long Beach Post. “If we can help to keep our students safe so they can better focus on their student responsibilities, this program is absolutely worth pursuing. Our goal at LBCC is always to remove barriers that get in the way of our students’ success.”

The program is limited to 15 students during the pilot period. Participants have use of the parking garage from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. and shower facilities from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. In 2020, an estimated 10 percent of LBCC’s students were homeless, according to the college. Stacey Toda, LBCC’s communications director, told the Post that the college is aware of the number being close to 200, but that it can only track those who have communicated with faculty or staff.

Although having students sleeping in their cars is not ideal, it is a better alternative than having them exposed to the elements, Andy Kerr, a homeless services advocate, told the local newspaper.

“It’s really creative on [LBCC’s] part,” he said. “It’s unfortunate that there is a need for that because of the housing affordability issue and so many young people struggling with food and housing insecurity and the inability to pay their rents.”

READ, WATCH, LISTEN

READ: Until I Am Free: Fannie Lou Hamer’s Enduring Message to America
Using current headlines as a framework, award-winning historian Keisha N. Blain traces the legacy of activist Fannie Lou Hamer from her humble beginnings as an impoverished child in Mississippi to her role as a central figure in the civil rights movement. The book examines key moments in Hamer’s life, including co-founding the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and helping to organize the Freedom Summer movement, and considers how her actions and words can be used to inspire a new generation of activists to fight for social justice causes. Published by Beacon Press

WATCH: Always Jane
This four-part series documents two years in the life of Jane Noury, a transgender teenager from New Jersey, as she navigates adolescence, undergoes gender confirmation surgery, and competes in an international modeling competition for transgender girls. While the show includes vulnerable moments that touch on issues of anti-trans discrimination, director Jonathan Hyde explained in a recent video interview that instead of taking a sensationalist approach, he “really wanted to tell a story where a family just shows their love and acceptance of their trans child.” Streaming on Amazon Prime Video

In response to evidence showing major racial and gender disparities in medical research, the U.S. Congress mandated in 1993 that all federally funded clinical studies must include women and underrepresented individuals. Despite this requirement, the amount of diversity in clinical research has yet to improve in the last 30 years. In this episode of the Washington Post Live podcast, several medical experts — including the director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities — discuss how organizations and pharmaceutical companies are addressing these inequities to ensure underrepresented populations are not excluded from life-saving medical interventions. Available on washingtonpost.com and all major podcast apps
Santa Rosa Junior College Associate Degree Nursing Program has been educating nurses for practice in Sonoma County for over 75 years and is one of the largest community college nursing programs in California. It has been our privilege to educate nursing students who practice safe, high quality nursing care, demonstrating attributes that are professional, competent, and culturally sensitive. Our graduates are prepared to work in a variety of health care settings and to be effective healthcare leaders in our diverse community.

We believe that nursing practice stands at the intersection of health care and social justice. Nursing knowledge achieved through education, research, and practice must be anchored in acceptance and cultural humility. The students at Santa Rosa Junior College Associate Degree Nursing program represent the community they serve and uphold the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism. Our model for practicing diversity and inclusion intentionally focuses on inclusivity; fostering an environment where students from all backgrounds thrive and work together for a common goal: to create, nurture, and sustain a just culture of excellence in nursing care.

NOW HIRING

SRJC is currently recruiting for three full-time, tenure track/continuing contract faculty, beginning Fall Semester, August 2022. We are seeking equity-minded faculty who are committed to educating our diverse prelicensure nursing student population. Please see www.schooljobs.com/careers/santarosajc for details on SRJC Employment Opportunities.

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DELAWARE
Fatimah Conley, JD, will serve as the inaugural vice president of institutional equity and chief diversity officer at the University of Delaware in Newark. Conley was senior counsel to the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals in Newark.

GEORGIA
Kamala Kiem has been selected as associate provost and dean of students at Clark University in Atlanta. Kiem previously served as associate dean of students and director of student engagement at Fairfield University in Connecticut.

INDIANA
Jacqueline Gatson, EdD, has been appointed assistant vice president of advancement for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the Purdue for Life Foundation in West Lafayette. Gatson was the associate director of the minority engineering program at Purdue University in West Lafayette.

ILLINOIS
Warren Anderson, EdD, will serve as the inaugural vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Bradley University in Peoria. Anderson was senior equity, diversity, and inclusion officer for the University of Wisconsin system.

TENNESSEE
Jazmine Rodriguez has been selected as director of equity and engagement in the Rhodes College Division of Student Life in Memphis. Rodriguez previously served as a recruitment and operations specialist and assistant director of campus life at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

TEXAS
Reginald DesRoches, PhD, is the first African American to be named president of Rice University in Houston. DesRoches was the Howard Hughes provost at the university.

NEW YORK
Tarshia Stanley, PhD, has been selected as provost and vice president for academic affairs at Wagner College in Staten Island. Stanley previously served as dean of the St. Catherine University School of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences in St. Paul, Minnesota.

PENNSYLVANIA
Neeli Bendapudi, PhD, is the first woman to be named president of the Pennsylvania State University system. Bendapudi was president of the University of Louisville in Kentucky.

Has your campus recently hired a new administrator? INSIGHT Into Diversity would like to publish your news. Please email editor@insightintodiversity.com.
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uwf.edu/nursing

Family Photo Credit: Kista Haas Photography
The underrepresentation of Black Americans in science-related fields remains a significant problem in higher education and the workforce at large. African Americans make up only 9 percent of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) workers and just 6 percent of research and professional STEM doctorate degree recipients, according to a 2021 Pew Research Center study.

As more higher education institutions commit to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within STEM fields, it is important to recognize the Black innovators who, in the face of oppression and discrimination, were able to make significant advancements in these disciplines. In honor of Black History Month 2022, INSIGHT celebrates just a few of these trailblazing African Americans and their invaluable contributions to STEM.

George Washington Carver
c. 1864 — January 5, 1943
Born into slavery during the final year of the Civil War, George Washington Carver became one of the most renowned scientists of the early 20th century through his work in botany and agricultural science. After earning a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from Iowa State University, Carver was hired to lead the agricultural department at the Tuskegee Institute, a preeminent historically Black university. There, Carver developed various crop diversification methods and cash crop alternatives that helped many formerly enslaved sharecroppers in the South.

Alice Ball
July 24, 1892 — December 31, 1916
Alice Ball was a chemist who developed the first effective treatment against Hansen’s disease, commonly known as leprosy. She was the first woman and first African American to earn a master’s degree at the University of Hawaii (UH) as well as the first woman faculty member in the UH chemistry department. Ball initially developed the successful treatment for Hansen's disease but was unable to publish her findings before her untimely death at the age of 24. A colleague took credit for Ball's work before her original research was discovered in the UH archives in the 1970s. In 2000, the university dedicated a plaque to Ball, and Hawaii declared February 29 a state holiday to commemorate her and her work.

Percy Lavon Julian
April 11, 1899 — April 19, 1975
Percy Lavon Julian is widely regarded as one of most influential chemists in U.S. history due to his research in chemical synthesis, which led to drug treatments for arthritis and glaucoma. He earned a PhD from the University of Vienna in Austria after facing years of educational discrimination in the U.S. Julian was the first person to synthesize progesterone and testosterone on a large scale, resulting in the creation of cortisone, birth control pills, and corticosteroids. In 1973, he became the first Black chemist to be inducted into the National Academy of Sciences.

Katherine Johnson
August 26, 1918 — February 24, 2020
Katherine Johnson was one of the first Black women to work for NASA and a renowned mathematician who played a vital role in the agency’s initial space flights. After becoming the first Black woman to attend graduate school at West Virginia University, Johnson worked at NASA calculating launch windows, emergency return paths, and trajectories for the Apollo Moon landing and other early space flights. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015 and was one of the biographical subjects of the 2016 book and film Hidden Figures.

Gladys West
October 27, 1930 — Present
Gladys West is a mathematician whose research was integral to the creation of Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. Throughout her career, she worked on mathematical modeling of the Earth's shape and helped develop early satellites, both of which were key elements in the creation of GPS navigation. West holds bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics from Virginia State University, a master's degree in public administration from the University of Oklahoma, and a PhD in public administration from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which she earned after her retirement. West was inducted into the U.S. Air Force Hall of Fame in 2018.

Mae C. Jemison
October 17, 1956 — Present
Mae C. Jemison is an astronaut, physician, and engineer who became the first Black woman to travel to space in 1992. Jemison earned two bachelor’s degrees from Stanford University, one in chemical engineering and the other in African and African American studies. She later earned an MD from Weill Cornell Medicine and served as a medical officer for the Peace Corps, overseeing volunteer health in Liberia and Sierra Leone. After being accepted into NASA's astronaut corps, Jemison became a mission specialist on the Space Shuttle Endeavor. Her many honors include induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame and the International Space Hall of Fame.
Join us for the Indiana University National HIV Conference, *Stepping Into the 5th Decade–Evolving Our Response to HIV*. The four-day conference will host 1,000+ participants and features four nationally recognized keynote speakers, 200 workshops, 100 poster sessions within five key tracks with several expanded areas for dialogue. Most importantly, the gathering will provide a platform for conversation and knowledge sharing about the current state of HIV in this country, how to reach at-risk populations (especially college students), prevention resources, and treatment and care.
Education Department’s New Civil Rights Leader Could Mean Big Changes for Title IX

Catherine Lhamon’s contentious appointment signifies a major overhaul of sexual misconduct rules, but experts caution that process may be lengthy.

By Mariah Bohanon
Determining how to properly address charges of sexual harassment and assault has been one of the most divisive challenges faced by colleges and universities in recent years. The process for handling such allegations under Title IX law underwent significant, partisan-based revisions during both the Obama and Trump administrations as campus sexual misconduct became a politically charged issue.

Now, the appointment of civil rights assistant secretary Catherine Lhamon indicates there may be even more sweeping changes in store for Title IX policies.

Lhamon was confirmed to her post as head of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) on October 20 after Vice President Kamala Harris cast a tie-breaking vote in her favor. Support for Lhamon had been split evenly along party lines, with conservative lawmakers voicing fierce opposition to her appointment since President Joe Biden announced her nomination as assistant secretary in May. One of the primary criticisms of Lhamon is her track record on campus sexual misconduct.

As head of the OCR under President Barack Obama from 2013-2017, Lhamon oversaw some of the greatest changes in the law’s history. Her office helped lead efforts to institute more proactive measures for preventing and investigating incidents of sexual misconduct. Survivors’ rights advocates praised the Obama administration for overhauling previous Title IX guidelines that they considered lax and for taking a firm stance in support of survivors; critics said the changes stripped the accused of their rights and violated due process laws. In a July 2021 op-ed against Lhamon’s reappointment, The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board called the changes “[o]ne of the worst excesses of the Obama years.”

The OCR’s approach to sexual misconduct during Lhamon’s previous tenure was the focus of a July confirmation hearing led by Sen. Richard Burr (R-North Carolina), head of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Burr persistently questioned Lhamon about her beliefs regarding the rights of complainants versus those of the accused. He also brought up a May 2020 tweet in which Lhamon wrote that the Trump administration’s Title IX regulations allowed “students to rape and sexually harass with impunity.” Lhamon gave few specifics when asked about intended changes to these regulations but stated that she believed that the Trump administration weakened Title IX’s purpose. She also said that she would continue to enforce the guidelines established by the previous administration until the Education Department completes an ongoing Title IX review, which was launched under a Biden executive order in March.

After this review process, the Education Department will publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in April 2022 detailing potential revisions to the law, followed by a public review and comment period. This timeline, combined with an 18-month period for rewriting the law, means that new regulations will likely not be announced until late 2023 or early 2024, according to Brett Sokolow, JD, president of the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA).

In the meantime, ATIXA and its members are doing their best to prepare for any major overhauls.

“We’re working very closely with OCR as much as we can to give them feedback on what we hope the new regulations will look like,” Sokolow says, noting that ATIXA has advocated for more transparency from the Education Department. “We’ve talked with them a lot about the need to give the [Title IX] field a heads up when changes may be taking place. For colleges and universities, changing policies and procedures is a lot like trying to turn a cruise ship — we need time to plan ahead to address what could be a very broad required change.”

While definite revisions are yet to be seen, Sokolow says the OCR under Lhamon is sure to be more focused on the needs of survivors than the previous administration was. He also expects the office to “balance the need to protect all people who are involved in the Title IX process, both respondents and

From INSIGHT’s Archives

The [Trump administration’s] changes to Title IX have been a significant point of contention between advocates for survivors of sexual assault and those who say the previous guidelines violated due process rights for the accused. The American Civil Liberties Union and other organizations have filed suit to stop the new rules from going forward. Nearly 20 states issued a joint lawsuit that accuses the Education Department of reversing “decades of effort to end the corrosive effects of sexual harassment on equal access to education.” Included among their objections is the department’s requirement for colleges and universities to “completely overhaul” their proceedings for addressing sexual misconduct allegations within the span of three months — and during a global pandemic.

"The Battle Over Title IX" /INSIGHT Into Diversity July/August 2020
complainants,” he says. ATIXA is advocating for several specific revisions to the law in addition to its request for more transparency. The association submitted a recommendation to the OCR asking that the rules for conducting live hearings and cross examinations during sexual misconduct investigations be more flexible. Current rules mandate a live hearing in almost every Title IX case, but ATIXA suggests that courtroom-like hearings are not necessary in every situation and that the way they are structured can be less adversarial in nature.

The association has also pushed for increased flexibility overall, according to Sokolow. “We’ve tried to suggest that a greater level of discretion for Title IX administrators would be welcomed by the field and would give [us] greater flexibility to better calibrate the types of responses to the types of incidents that occur,” he says. Such discretion was the norm prior to changes implemented under the Trump administration, he adds.

“In the history of OCR, guidance on Title IX was meant to provide guardrails, and then the Trump administration became extremely prescriptive as to every step that a school needs to take to resolve a complaint,” Sokolow explains. Under the current rules, for example, Title IX officers must follow a specific process for sexual assault regardless of the severity of the offense, he says. “A lot of practitioners look at that and say it doesn’t make sense and maybe there’s a better way to handle this.”

Sokolow cautions that, while it may be frustrating to wait so long for new regulations to be announced, the lengthy process of crafting Title IX rules is essential to ensuring that the law is just and that everyone’s views are taken into account. The amount of input received during the public review and comment period affects this timeline, and there are bound to be plenty of viewpoints shared; the Education Department under Betsy DeVos received nearly 130,000 comments during a similar process.

“I know a lot of people want OCR in June to provide some relief from the Trump rule,” Sokolow says, “but there’s only so fast they can go when they have to respond to all of the comments that are submitted.”

Mariah Bohanon is the senior editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
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Colleges Revise Tenure Requirements to Include Diversity and Inclusion Accomplishments

By Mariah Stewart

Pomona College added a diversity requirement to its tenure review process in 2016 after faculty and students advocated for new diversity, equity, and inclusion policies.
A new movement is underway in academia that requires candidates who are eligible for tenure, promotion, and reappointment (TPR) review to provide details of their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) contributions as criteria for advancement. This action serves to recognize often overlooked but valuable DEI work that some faculty have long considered crucial to their role within a campus community. These criteria can also aid in the retention of diverse faculty members and encourage tenure-track employees to commit to making learning environments more inclusive for an increasingly diverse student population.

For underrepresented faculty, obtaining TPR is particularly difficult due to factors such as unconscious biases that persist on review committees. These employees are also tasked with the additional, often invisible labor that comes with promoting DEI, such as mentoring and assisting underserved students, which takes away time and energy that could be spent on research or other work required to obtain tenure. Studies show that the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in racism across the country have increased these unofficial responsibilities and exacerbated burnout among this demographic.

“A lot of people, especially people of color and especially women of color, are doing enormous amounts of DEI work and really not getting any credit for it,” says Marybeth Gasman, PhD, the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Endowed Chair in Education, a distinguished professor, and the associate dean for research in the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education.

The consideration of DEI in tenure review and promotion has been informally included at many schools for years, but recent events that have “hyper emphasized inequities,” such as the #MeToo and racial justice movements, have increased the pressure on higher education to take more concrete action, says Derek Smith, PhD, executive director of the Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC). The traditional TPR process is outdated and does not widen the narrow path to tenureship, he says.

“More than anything else, the process of tenure and promotion needs to be changed,” Smith says. “It’s antiquated. It was not built for who is currently in [higher education] and who we are trying to bring into [academia].”

The push to revise traditional considerations for TPR has gained so much interest that HERC and Rutgers decided to host a webinar on the subject in September. The event, moderated by Gasman, discussed how “DEI work could [be], and has been, incorporated into the long-standing, and infrequently changed, tenure and promotion review process,” according to a press release. It highlighted institutions that are currently implementing DEI criteria for TPR, including Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and Oregon State University (OSU).

The Faculty Council at IUPUI recently approved a new policy known as the Integrative DEI Case Type that will create an additional pathway toward advancement by allowing tenure-track faculty to “present a comprehensive argument for excellence across an integrated array of scholarly activities aligned with DEI,” according to the university website. “Most DEI cases will emphasize activities across teaching, research, and service activities.” The policy is set to take effect in early 2022.

Not all colleges and universities take the same approach when adding this consideration. OSU, for example, is opting to incorporate DEI by simply assessing this work alongside other tenure criteria.

Robert Gaines, PhD, dean of faculty and vice president for academic affairs at Pomona College, says that institutions planning to incorporate DEI into the TPR process should find a policy that works for their unique campus. Trying to measure a faculty...
member’s DEI efforts in the same way one measures research or service is challenging, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach, he explains.

Pomona added a DEI requirement to its tenure review process in 2016 and currently uses qualitative data to assess efforts. “We’re in the process of trying to develop better criteria for understanding how to evaluate DEI,” Gaines says. “I think that is really the challenge for us as well as for other institutions in the days ahead, trying to define what we mean by DEI specifically with respect to promotion and tenure.”

Faculty and students at Pomona were passionate about introducing these principles to the college’s TPR criteria, according to Gaines. Faculty governance systems and campuses wanting to take this approach “really need strong buy-in” to be successful, he says.

Smith believes that college and university leaders should realize that they cannot continue with the status quo for tenure and advancement if they truly want to uphold DEI values and mission statements.

“It’s very hard to come across any of the 3,000 colleges and universities in America and them not have something about DEI in their mission and vision,” he says. “A lot of people are saying, ‘Oh, that’s window dressing.’ Well, here’s how it will not be window dressing: Change the policies.”

Some conservatives have criticized these changes by claiming DEI requirements overlook areas in experience, capabilities, and other academic contributions. Broader support, however, is evident in the fact that outside organizations have begun rewarding these requirements. The National Science Foundation, for example, recently awarded grants to institutions, including OSU, for prioritizing DEI in their tenure and advancement reviews.

Gasman recommends that faculty who are up for tenure or promotion highlight their DEI work regardless of a school’s review requirements because it demonstrates their “immense contributions” to the campus community.

“I think people sometimes think they are going to be judged differently if they bring up DEI because the academy is almost 70 percent White faculty,” she says. “They may worry about this because not everyone sees DEI issues as important.”

In 2008, when Gasman was eligible for tenure at the University of Pennsylvania — which she received — she made sure to acknowledge all of the DEI efforts she was undertaking. This list included service work, such as creating a pipeline program to attract students from Minority-Serving Institutions to the university’s graduate programs, as well as teaching practices, such as incorporating diverse perspectives in her curriculum.

“This work is really important to the fabric of [institutions],” she says. “We should want people to do it, and it’s a lot easier to get people to do it when they’re getting credit for it.”

Mariah Stewart is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity. Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis is a 2012-2021 recipient and Oregon State University is a 2018-2021 recipient of the INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.
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By Lisa O’Malley

Over the last decade, the institutions that make up the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) have experienced drastic declines in student enrollment. Since 2010, five of the state-owned universities — Cheyney, Edinboro, Clarion, Mansfield, and Lock Haven — have seen drops of 45 percent or more, with a combined decrease of 25.8 percent across the entire system.

Despite freezing the price of tuition and spending $160 million on financial aid annually to support students, the system has continued to see enrollment decline. With the future of the system in dire straits, the State System’s Board of Governors voted unanimously in 2020 to approve a plan to consolidate six of the universities into two. In addition to safeguarding PASSHE’s financial sustainability, the merger is expected to expand educational access and opportunities as well as advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

On the western side of the state, California, Clarion, and Edinboro universities will combine to become Pennsylvania Western University, or PennWest, in summer 2022, pending approval of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Philadelphia-based accrediting body for colleges and universities in Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic states. Bloomsburg, Mansfield, and Lock Haven in the northeast will also merge, with a name for the new institution yet to be released. Each campus will maintain its own identity, but with the new moniker attached; Edinboro University, for example, will be known as PennWest Edinboro. The combined institutions will welcome their first students in fall 2022.

The merger will expand academic opportunities by enabling a student enrolled at one campus to take advantage of programs, internships, and other academic offerings at other campuses. PennWest is also developing an online campus — Global Online — that will offer fully online degree programs.

In addition, leaders anticipate the merger will enhance each school’s DEI capabilities.

“The process of integrating California, Clarion, and Edinboro universities accomplishes more than bringing the universities together under one fiscal umbrella,” said Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, EdD, president of Clarion and interim president of California and Edinboro universities, in a statement to INSIGHT. “It provides an opportunity to examine every aspect of what we do — from student enrollment and success, to hiring practices — through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

The intensified focus on DEI could potentially alleviate inequities between White and non-White students. Even though underrepresented students have doubled in number at PASSHE campuses since 2008, their graduation rate is 20 percent lower than White students, according to system data. As with many institutions in recent years, students have voiced concerns about discrimination and inequality within the system.

In August 2020, PASSHE took steps to address these issues by hiring Denise Pearson, PhD, as its inaugural vice chancellor and chief DEI officer. In the first six months of her tenure, Pearson says she spent time speaking with students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders across the system to determine strategies that would create a positive impact and increase feelings of belonging for all students, regardless of their backgrounds.

As a result of the meetings, Pearson was able to highlight five specific areas of focus for DEI efforts: faculty, staff and student diversity; equitable student outcomes; inclusive campus environments; curriculum diversity; and infrastructure, which includes funding, operational systems, incentives, and methods for accountability.

“When I came on board, it was clear to me that campuses were already doing excellent work, but they were doing it independently,” she explains. “I have the privilege of working with all 14 campuses and bringing us together as a convener so that we can share across institutions. We can share ideas, we can share resources, and we can coalesce around a unified strategy.”

The PASSHE merger will empower the campuses to assess their collective data in order to identify which DEI policies are most effective.
for building inclusive learning environments that lead to better retention and graduation rates.

“We’re talking about the actions and policies that promote feelings of belonging, feelings of respect and value,” Pearson says. “If you bring students to your campuses from historically excluded groups who are not treated equitably, and they do not feel as though they are included, they’re not going to stay.”

Terrence Mitchell, PhD, served as chief diversity and inclusion officer at Edinboro before being named PennWest’s vice president for DEI. He says that the PASSHE merger has allowed for better funding and the expansion of DEI staff, including bringing on additional Title IX officers who will assist with this work.

The three institutions under the PennWest umbrella are in the process of developing a unified DEI policy, according to Mitchell. Because the schools can work together and share insights, they’ve been able to identify which of their current programs and strategies are achieving the best outcomes and then applying those models across all three campuses. For example, each of the PennWest schools have Inclusive Community Assessment Teams that respond to reports of bias and hate speech. After reviewing them, Mitchell and his office determined that Clarion’s team was the most effective and thus could serve as a model for the other campuses.

The PennWest campuses are also working to bolster their DEI programming, according to Mitchell. There are several DEI programs already in the works for next fall, including a Pride conference at the California campus and a diversity conference at Edinboro. With more staff now available, the schools also plan to expand their Title IX and social equity efforts by doing a “deep dive into the data” and proposing solutions to challenges that have arisen in recent years, he says. A system-wide campus climate survey is currently planned for this spring.

Both Mitchell and Pearson say they are enthusiastic about the potential impact these new initiatives will have on the entire PASSHE community.

“[The integration] has helped us think larger about the ways we can help the students, faculty, and staff enjoy a welcoming, inclusive community,” Mitchell says. “We’ve had lots of time to think about the possibilities and ways we can expand our influence and our work with each other and really take advantage of the things that are special about each campus.”

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity. Millersville University is a 2012-2021 recipient, West Chester University of Pennsylvania is a 2020-2021 recipient, and Shippensburg University is a 2021 recipient of the INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award. All three are member institutions of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.
International Education Programs Adapt to Pandemic Challenges and Look to More Equitable Future

By Erik Cliburn

After a nearly two-year hiatus, higher education institutions across the U.S. are revitalizing their study abroad and international education programs. Colleges and universities are reporting a 68 percent increase in new international enrollment for the 2021-2022 academic year after experiencing a 46 percent decline in 2020, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE). Study abroad programs, which plummeted by 99 percent in summer 2020, are also seeing renewed student interest and have been hiring additional staff to keep up with demand, according to IIENetwork Lead Lindsay Calvert.

“We’re seeing more professional roles reopen or programs hiring again, because they need the faculty and the staff to support that [interest],” she says. “There is less of a hiring freeze, meaning that there is more programming being developed with the anticipation of enrolling more students.”

Still, experts know to remain cautious following the uncertain progression of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Omicron variant as well as the potential discovery of new coronavirus strains have some institutions hesitant to reinstate international education, but many other colleges and universities are continuing or planning to launch programming in the spring and summer 2022 semesters. The Ohio State University, for example, recently approved study abroad programs in Ecuador, South Korea, and throughout Europe. In early December, New York University and the University of Sydney in Australia announced a student exchange partnership that will begin in July 2022.

“One of the challenges has been around risk assessment and safety, which has always been an ongoing and ever-evolving import issue for international education as a whole, but [COVID-19] has added one more layer to that,” Calvert says. “The downside is that there may be some enrollment drops, there might be some late cancellations, and there might be programs that ultimately won’t get off of the ground due to the different safety measures that need to take place.”

Additionally, institutions will need to develop contingency plans to respond to potentially rapid changes in international travel. Such possibilities are evident in the sudden travel restrictions imposed by and against southern African nations following

Nearly 60 percent of U.S. students who studied abroad during the 2019-2020 academic year did so in a European country, with Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom being the most popular destinations, according to the Institute for International Education. As more study abroad programs reopen, the popularity of such countries may be affected by the risk of COVID-19 infection. As of December 17, 2021, the UK had more than 87,000 active cases, the highest count of the three countries, and nearly 70 percent of its population was fully vaccinated, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.

One challenge for such programs going forward will be implementing strenuous safety measures for students leaving and entering the country. Study abroad facilitators will have to take COVID-19 vaccination, testing, and potential quarantine requirements into consideration, which could affect the cost and learning outcomes of international programs.
the Omicron variant’s discovery. A similar incident occurred in mid-November when Austria instituted a national lockdown to curb a rise in cases. University of Chicago students participating in the Vienna in Western Civilization program were prevented from leaving their dormitories or attending in-person classes, prompting university officials to advise them to return to the U.S.

Despite these challenges, many have found innovative methods for adapting to the pandemic. Western Michigan University launched a series of virtual study abroad offerings that match students with online cultural courses from countries around the world. As virtual education is far more affordable than in-person study abroad, these programs have the added benefit of making cross-cultural education more accessible for low-income students. The IIE reported that 45 percent of its partner institutions offered multiple online global learning experiences in 2020.

“[These experiences] have created supplemental ways to keep that [international] connection or establish new relationships that might evolve and expand to in-person where possible,” Calvert says.

The IIE and its member colleges have also used the pandemic period to reinforce diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. The organization has encouraged institutions to examine their policies regarding campus xenophobia and discrimination. It also launched a virtual engagement series that focuses on topics such as supporting Black and LGBTQ student communities and creating systemic change within international education.

While diverse participation in study abroad has increased in recent years — growing from 21 percent to 30 percent between 2009 and 2019 — most participants are White and middle- or upper-class, according to the IIE. The enhanced focus on racial and social justice throughout the pandemic, however, will hopefully lead to more international opportunities for the underrepresented, Calvert says.

“It’s a wonderful thing, because if that [focus] is going to address critical issues and bring more students to these experiences, that’s just going to be so beneficial to all of us,” Calvert says. “We’ve definitely seen an increase in the diversity of students who’ve been participating over the last 20 years, and we certainly want to continue to see that.”

Erik Cliburn is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
CYBERATTACKS POSE HUGE FINANCIAL THREAT TO STRUGGLING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Cyberattacks against higher education institutions are skyrocketing — and the financial strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has left many without the resources to respond to assaults.

By Lisa O’Malley
In June 2020, the University of California, San Francisco announced it had paid a $1.14 million ransom to a hacker who took over several servers at its medical school. Two months later, University of Utah officials spent $457,000 to prevent cybercriminals from spreading confidential student, faculty, and staff data. Since then, multiple institutions — from regional community colleges to Howard University — have dealt with the financial toll of canceled classes, data leaks, and network outages caused by cyberattacks.

These incidents are no longer considered anomalies — nearly half of all higher education institutions worldwide reported being targeted by similar attacks last year, according to a recent survey by the cybersecurity firm Sophos. Between 2019 and 2020, cyberattacks targeting colleges and universities increased 100 percent, according to an analysis by the cybersecurity services company BlueVoyant.

Known as ransomware attacks, these incidents involve hackers using malicious software to block an organization’s access to its own computer system unless officials provide a financial payout. In some cases, attackers also threaten to publish personal data. Of the institutions that were targeted last year, 58 percent said the criminals were successfully able to encrypt their data, rendering it inaccessible to information technology (IT) administrators.

Hackers are often able to gain entry to a system through email phishing scams, BlueVoyant reports. Even worse is the fact that students tend to use simple passwords that are easy to compromise. Additionally, institutions often put themselves at risk by using third-party software that is more susceptible to data breaches. Several — including Harvard Business School, the University of Miami, and the University of Colorado system — fell prey to a cyberattack when the filesharing company Accellion Inc. was hacked in July 2021. In September, Blackbaud, a cloud-based service provider used by many higher education institutions to manage alumni and donor databases, announced that hackers had gained access to its customer data, including Social Security numbers and banking information.

The FBI’s Cyber Division determined in March 2021 that the extreme vulnerability of educational institutions to these cybercrimes was serious enough to warrant an advisory notice. The notice states that colleges, universities, and K-12 schools are particularly at risk due to the vast amount of sensitive information stored on their networks. The FBI urged campus officials not to cave to hackers’ demands, as such a response may “embolden adversaries to target additional organizations, encourage other criminal actors to engage in the distribution of ransomware, and/or fund illicit activities.”

With the private information of thousands of students and employees subject to compromise, many feel they have no choice but to pay up. Schools that do make ransom payments can expect to experience demands, on average, of close to $115,000, according to the Sophos survey. When the additional cost of network outages for higher education institutions is factored in, that price skyrockets to $2.73 million on average — the highest of any industry.

Furthermore, paying ransom is not a guarantee that data will be fully returned; 35 percent of schools surveyed said they handed over money to their attackers, but only 68 percent of those had their data restored.

“Th.is is an industry that has had to rapidly pivot to online learning, changing their standard methods of learning, practically overnight,” Jim Rosenthal, co-founder and CEO of BlueVoyant, said in a statement. “The education sector is also under huge financial and regulatory pressure. Threat actors know that there are vulnerabilities to be exploited, and they are taking advantage of these vulnerabilities at every opportunity — making it an imperative for universities to adopt a solid cybersecurity threat posture to ensure that the wealth of sensitive data is properly defended against adversaries.”

More than 70 percent of campuses surveyed in a 2021 Sophos report stated their IT teams had increased workloads because of the shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing their ability to respond to potential cyber threats.

Between 2019 and 2020, cyberattacks targeting colleges and universities increased 100 percent, according to an analysis by the cybersecurity services company BlueVoyant.

To thwart the success of attempted attacks, the FBI and other experts advise that university officials implement more robust security measures, such as using multifactor authentication, regularly updating software and systems, and providing training to students and staff. For many institutions, this effort may require directing more funding toward campus IT offices.

Some schools may be forced to take these measures in order to comply with new requirements from the U.S. Department of Education’s Federal Student Aid Office. In December 2020, the office released a memo announcing it would be forming a Campus Cybersecurity Program over the next several years that will assess whether Title IV institutions are properly protected. While specific guidelines have yet to be released, schools that fail to meet federal standards could potentially lose their
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Title IV designation, costing them significant funding and taking away their ability to distribute financial aid. This loss could have devastating effects on students, especially those from underrepresented groups.

Not all institutions are financially prepared to make costly security updates, especially while recovering from the tremendous economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, in a May 2020 survey by the nonprofit Educause, most reported they planned to reduce their IT budgets by 5 to 30 percent.

In response, the nonprofit organization Student Freedom Initiative (SFI), a public charity dedicated to reducing the financial stress experienced by students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), has partnered with technology corporation Cisco to ensure that these institutions do not lose their Title IV status. Cisco committed $100 million to SFI to improve the networking, security, and collaboration technologies at HBCUs. The partnership began with nine schools and expanded to include another 37 when the United Negro College Fund joined this effort in May of this year.

“We are thrilled to welcome Cisco and AVC Technologies as strategic partners for SFI in addressing the digital divide faced by our HBCUs,” said Robert F. Smith, chairman of SFI, in a press release. “Their expertise and generosity will ensure that HBCUs are secure and robust institutions that empower Black students.”

The increased use of new technologies over the past year has demonstrated that cybersecurity must be a top priority for colleges and universities in the future. Experts at companies such as Sophos recommend that schools should assume they will be hit by a ransomware attack, develop action plans for how to respond in advance to avoid major disruptions, and safeguard important data.

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of **INSIGHT Into Diversity.**
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University of Louisville Advances the Goal of Becoming a Premier Anti-Racist University

Diversity Champions exemplify an unyielding commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout their campus communities, across academic programs, and at the highest administrative levels. INSIGHT Into Diversity selected institutions that rank in the top tier of Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award recipients.

By Mariah Bohanon

In July 2020, University of Louisville (UofL) announced that it was undertaking an ambitious goal: to become a premier anti-racist metropolitan research university.

Now, nearly a year-and-a-half later, the school has made amazing strides in advancing its Cardinal Anti-Racism Agenda. It has developed multiple initiatives, new staff roles, and other efforts dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). These new endeavors build upon existing programs and offerings that have long supported the diverse campus community and surrounding city of Louisville, Kentucky.

The university’s dedication to DEI is shared by the entire UofL community, including its law and medical campuses. This collective vision allows for collaboration, mutual support, and building ever greater goals in the quest to provide a truly equitable higher education environment.

Anti-Racist Medical School Curriculum
In March 2020, Breonna Taylor was killed by police officers in her home in Louisville just miles from the UofL campus. Her murder, along with those of George Floyd and other Black Americans, spurred the UofL School of Medicine (ULSOM) community to action. Hundreds of physicians and students participated in a White Coats for Black Lives rally and other demonstrations. School leadership formed an anti-racism task force to determine how the medical college could take a proactive, leading role in combating racial injustice.

One of the task force’s decisions was the creation of a director position to oversee the dissemination of an anti-racist curriculum and other efforts aimed at “undoing race-based medicine,” according to a February 2021 press release. John Chenault, PhD, a longtime UofL faculty member, was chosen for the role as the ULSOM Office of Undergraduate Medical Education’s (UME)
Introducing these efforts to aspiring physicians and faculty is crucial to not only combating health disparities but to combating the existence of racism itself, Chenault says. As a former medical librarian in the UofL Kornhauser Health Sciences Library and faculty member in the UofL Pan African Studies department, Chenault is an expert on the history of discrimination against African Americans under the guise of medical science. Understanding this legacy and being acutely aware of the longstanding biases in health care should be central to physician education, he says.

“Our approach is one that emphasizes a historical perspective and competency,” explains Chenault, “because if you do not understand medical history, then you cannot understand the current problems with health disparities and why some people have better health outcomes than others.”

Since assuming his role in February 2021, Chenault and the UME have focused on integrating this content into the school’s curriculum and adding course sessions dedicated to anti-racism. They have also audited existing course content for evidence of systemic racism. Chenault evaluates lecture materials, problem-based learning, standardized patient cases, and more for problematic language or other issues.

“We encourage faculty to remove those problem items and find alternatives,” he says. “We just make suggestions about how to go about doing that in terms of providing guidelines for the use of language [and similar issues] and what to look for.”

Chenault notes that ULSOM’s objective is to address curricular content, not to scrutinize faculty members or question their motives. The goal is to create an atmosphere of mutual support as the entire campus community becomes leaders in the fight against racism and health disparities.

“We have emphasized the fact that in moving from race-based medicine to post-racial medicine, we’re entering a brand-new territory because the entire history of medicine has been based on race,” Chenault says. “There will be errors in this process, and we recognize there will be roadblocks, but we intend [to use them] as opportunities for growth and improvement.”

The university’s progressiveness in this area has garnered the attention of others in higher education and health care. As governing bodies and major organizations such as the National Institutes of Health have issued statements of solidarity and calls for action, many groups have begun...
reaching out to ULSOM for guidance, according to Chenault.

**UofL Law School’s Central High School Partnership**

In its two decades of existence, the Central High School Partnership with the UofL Louis D. Brandeis School of Law (Brandeis Law) has provided rigorous legal education to hundreds of underserved youths.

Through the partnership, Brandeis Law students visit the school several times each week to teach special courses for sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the Central Law and Government Magnet Program. The high schoolers spend three years learning about complex legal issues ranging from juvenile justice to workplace rights to civil liberties, all before enrolling in college.

Program alums have gone on to become attorneys, earn PhDs, and enter careers in public service. Almost all have “outperformed predictors” for students attending urban, low-income high schools, says partnership co-founder Laura Rothstein, JD, PhD, a professor and distinguished scholar at Brandeis Law.

“My goal when we started the program was never that [the students] all become lawyers — it was that they all become active citizens,” says Rothstein, who oversees the program with Central High teacher Joe Gutmann. “I really believe that’s become true. They care about voting, they are aware of civic matters, and they get involved.”

The program includes special campus visits, an essay contest, and three courses for the law and government magnet program.

**Street Law**, for Central High’s sophomores, is based on a national curriculum that teaches teenagers about legal issues, such as immigration law, that affect their lives and communities. Juniors in the program take a Writing Skills and Mentorship course that focuses on developing writing, vocabulary, and other competencies. The Marshall-Brennan Civil Liberties course, for seniors, focuses on constitutional literacy and legal rights.

The law students who teach these courses earn public service hours or academic credit; the greatest reward, however, is the experience itself. “I do an end-of-year survey of [participants] and so many of them say this program was the best thing they did in law school,” Rothstein says. “It’s an eye-opening experience. They go into an urban school and see the world through the eyes of these students.”

Most of the Brandeis Law students who participate in the program are White and do not come from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, according to Rothstein. By comparison, Central High School is primarily non-White and low-income. The opportunity to serve the community while learning diverse perspectives is invaluable, she says.

**Counseling Center’s Race-Based Trauma Therapy**

The UofL Counseling Center staff are a diverse group of mental health professionals who offer a wide array of support services for student and employee well-being. In summer 2021, they added race-based trauma therapy to their areas of expertise.

The decision to have every staff member trained in this innovative form of mental health support is indicative of the center’s dedication to meeting the unique needs of each member of the multicultural UofL community, says Aesha L. Uqdah, PsyD, the center’s director and UofL’s assistant vice president for student affairs and student well-being.

“There’s a fairly diverse student body here, and they deserve to have people who are trained to help them with whatever they might be going through,” Uqdah says.
The center employs practitioners who represent a variety of sociocultural identities, and its website offers thorough introductions and videos of each staff member so that students can feel comfortable requesting a specific counselor if they so choose. However, Uqdah explains, it may not always be possible for a student of color to be paired with a counselor of color; nor does she believe that staff members of color should be the only ones responsible for supporting these students when they confront race-based trauma.

“The center employs practitioners who represent a variety of sociocultural identities, and its website offers thorough introductions and videos of each staff member so that students can feel comfortable requesting a specific counselor if they so choose. However, Uqdah explains, it may not always be possible for a student of color to be paired with a counselor of color; nor does she believe that staff members of color should be the only ones responsible for supporting these students when they confront race-based trauma.

The effects of race-based trauma include the following:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Sudden shifts in behavior and relationships
- Physical exhaustion
- Feelings of anger or hopelessness
- Feeling that you are emotionally overreacting to situations
- Difficulty with concentration and focus

Source: University of Louisville Counseling Center

“...the site states. As stories of racial injustice and police-based violence against African Americans have gained more media attention in recent years, awareness of this trauma and its detrimental effects has grown.

The university’s counseling staff participated in a 10-hour training designed by one of the nation’s leading experts on race-based trauma therapy, Steven Kniffley, a psychology scholar at nearby Spalding University. In addition to the training, UofL’s counselors participate in ongoing consultation sessions with Kniffley. In a YouTube video titled “Treating Race-based Stress and Trauma,” Kniffley explains that this unique form of therapy provides space to process racism, develop racial identity, and cultivate coping skills, such as learning to challenge microaggressions.

Uqdah notes that creating a truly supportive environment for those experiencing race-based trauma is the responsibility of the entire campus community, not just counseling staff. After the death of Breonna Taylor, for example, the university offered resources and support sessions for individuals struggling to cope with the news.

“[UofL] had support sessions for students and employees, and we made sure that we had clinicians there to help,” explains Uqdah. “That is one way that we let our students know we are here for them, and this training is another way of showing up for our students.”

Mariah Bohanon is the senior editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity. The University of Louisville is a 2020 and 2021 INSIGHT Into Diversity Diversity Champion and a 2014-2021 recipient of the INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.
University of Kentucky Research Team Uniquely Poised to Reach Black American Communities, Fight Health Disparities

By Amanda Nelson

The populations Danelle Stevens-Watkins, PhD, seeks to help are often difficult to reach. It is a common predicament in health disparity research. One of her latest projects at the University of Kentucky (UK) requires asking Black Americans who use opioids to talk about their lives. Opening up is risky.

“For women, they are afraid of losing custody of their children. For men, they often question whether they want to draw attention to themselves, given the criminalization of addiction,” says Stevens-Watkins, an associate professor of counseling psychology in the UK College of Education and UK’s associate vice president for research in diversity and inclusion.

Still, participants are signing up. They are telling stories that are rarely discussed openly in Black American communities. Sharing intimate details of their lives with a researcher, they are finding, can be therapeutic when their histories are received with care.

The fact the study is working likely has much to do with the people who are conducting it. Less than 2 percent of National Institutes of Health-funded senior investigators are Black, and there has been a persistent funding gap for Black scientists applying for research project grants. An exception is Stevens-Watkins’ lab, composed entirely of Black scholars, in the UK College of Education Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology.

“I don’t know how many people ever have an opportunity to be on a research team,” says Candice Hargons, PhD, an associate professor of counseling psychology and qualitative research expert for the lab. “Having that chance is really nice because I’ve been a person who participated in other research studies as a student, staff member, or intern, and they would study Black people, but the principal investigator was not a Black person.”

In addition to an opioid study, Danelle Stevens-Watkins’ lab at the University of Kentucky is also doing the following:

- Interviewing Black American women about breastfeeding messages and myths and training breastfeeding peer support counselors
- Testing an evidence-based intervention for HIV prevention for Black American women in geographic hotspots in Kentucky and Georgia
- Training Black American community first responders in mental health first aid to improve mental health awareness, literacy, service initiation, and access

The graduate students and post-doctoral scholars on the team say they chose to come to UK — an institution, like many in America, that bears a painful racial past — not just to earn their degrees but also to help document the experiences of people who use drugs and study other health disparities in Black populations. They want to use their time on the team to develop information that leads to change.

“We get to be literally feet on the ground out in the community talking to Black people and showing them research can be done by trustworthy people who are just like them,” says Jardin Dogan, a fifth-year PhD candidate.

The lab’s largest study to date is funded by a $3.2 million grant and is one of the nation’s first studies on nonmedical prescription opioid use among Black Americans. The funding, from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, will help fill a dire need for data on this underserved group.

“So often, funding and resources related to the opioid epidemic have gone towards helping rural, White communities. [This] allows Black people’s voices to be heard and gives our team the opportunity to help our community in meaningful ways while collecting data that will have an impact,” says Shemeka Thorpe, PhD, a UK Lyman T. Johnson postdoctoral scholar.

A recent racial awakening in America has put more focus on health disparity research, a field Stevens-Watkins has been in for nearly two decades. To now have a chance to do
this work with a team of all Black American women and directly build a pipeline of underrepresented scholars, she says, is one of the most rewarding experiences of her career.

The power and responsibility that come with being on such a team has not been lost on its members, and they hold each other accountable.

“We, as a lab, are so uniquely positioned to do this work, [which] is completely unexplored in the literature thus far,” says Paris Wheeler, a sixth-year counseling psychology PhD candidate. “As a team of all Black academics, we are able to receive the stories of Black Americans with care, collect data, and ultimately publish it, making known to the rest of the world what we already know from lived experience, the things that are important in our communities to be investigating and to be highlighting, in order to make a difference with these disparities.”

When Wheeler first began her doctoral research, she was working with data others had collected. Being part of this lab’s studies from the beginning has been an important experience in her training.

“Being able to be on the ground and see what it’s like to find people, engage them, and have conversations with potential participants has given me a chance to utilize the foundational counseling skills I’ve formed through the years. I’ve been able to build rapport, and that has been a critical part of my development as a researcher,” she says. “It is not enough to just know how to analyze the data. You need to know how to talk with people in the communities you are aiming to investigate.”

The ability to craft research from the start makes it possible to transform a project into something that truly impacts the community being studied, says Jasmine Jester, a second-year PhD student.

Already, the researchers have been able to follow up with some of the people who have shared their stories for the project.

“We are able to say, ‘You made a difference in research and your voice is heard. Your interview has meant something already, and we are going to recruit 800 more people in a way that’s based off your experience that you were vulnerable enough to share,’” Jester says. “I’m really excited about that piece of this.”

Natalie Malone, a fourth-year PhD student, says that the project is the ethically correct way to do research. “Your findings will be aligned with what the community actually wants to say. Plus, as I am recruiting participants, I get the chance to offer help with things people are experiencing in that moment,” she explains. “I have had the chance to provide info on Narcan, answer questions on mental health, and provide interpersonal violence resources. Because we are there on the ground doing this, we can also get back together and look at the strategies we used for recruitment and talk about whether it was effective for our community. Those data and techniques go into our papers to inform the next group of researchers.”

Supporting One Another

The strength in community applies to members of the research team just as it does to their study participants.

“I wanted a program where I could feel supported by people who look like me,” explains Jester. “Being mentored by a Black woman was very important to me. The counseling psychology program at UK had not one, but two
Black women to learn from in an area of research that I was interested in. I saw this as a program with groundbreaking research and where I could grow as a researcher and mental health professional."

The work of the team is constant. They meet once per week to regroup but are in continuous communication. “Our meetings serve as a way to remind one another we are in this together,” Stevens-Watkins says. “They are able to hear me talk about different grant ideas and help me cultivate those ideas. We are a sounding board for one another and are open and honest with each other about what we are experiencing.”

Participating in research adds to the learning experiences of the graduate and postdoctoral scholars. Brittany Miller-Roenigk, a postdoctoral fellow, says the faculty provide many opportunities to bolster the training the project provides. “They help us learn how to apply skills [that] all directly relate to the projects we are doing. We learn about and apply advanced statistical methods, and we have grant and job development discussions, too. It’s not just our research agenda we are talking about, but professional development talks as well,” she explains.

The team has become like a family. “We find time to laugh and have fun together, which is also important,” Malone says. “Families have their moments too, and we work those out. That’s the value of collectivism.”

The lab faculty are actively applying for grants and creating new projects. Importantly, they want to continue recruiting talented and motivated scholars to join the work. There is a lot of work to do, Stevens-Watkins says. “We are uniquely positioned to use science to have a positive impact on our community. It is meaningful to the communities we serve when you have a team where the power structure looks totally different than what academia and science typically look like,” she explains. “I want to leverage UK, as the major, flagship research institution in the Commonwealth, to have a positive impact in the Black community by building trust, conducting respectful and culturally appropriate research.”

Amanda Nelson is a co-director of communications for the University of Kentucky College of Education. The University of Kentucky is a 2017-2021 INSIGHT Into Diversity Diversity Champion and a 2017-2021 recipient of the INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.
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Over the last two years, nursing and pharmacy professionals have battled intense workloads, the risk of exposure, and tremendous stress to provide essential care during the COVID-19 pandemic. While burnout and labor shortages have plagued health care professions for decades, the pandemic has exacerbated these issues to unprecedented levels. The severity of this crisis has escalated to the point that groups such as the World Health Organization have made public statements calling on nations around the globe to do more to help their overburdened health care workers.

Nursing and pharmacy schools are leading the charge to address these concerns and ensure that their students are offered the best quality education and the necessary skills to navigate the difficulties inherent to their professions, especially in times of crisis. Despite the recent challenges facing higher education and health care, these institutions have continued to imagine new ways to educate and empower their students.

The following special section explores some of the specific methods that pharmacy and nursing schools are using to build resiliency, increase and measure diversity, and foster inclusive learning environments that provide students with the knowledge and cultural understanding necessary to address the nation’s urgent health care needs and disparities.

University of St. Thomas to Open New Nursing School with Focus on Student Diversity and Health Equity

The University of St. Thomas (UST) recently announced the creation of a nursing school dedicated to teaching cultural awareness, recruiting underrepresented students, and reducing health inequity in underserved communities. The school will be housed within UST’s Morrison Family College of Health and will offer bachelor’s and master’s programs.

Developing everything from the ground up provides a unique opportunity to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into the culture, curricula, and admissions process from the start, according to the university. Officials are aiming to have students of color, rural students, and first-generation learners make up at least 30 percent of the inaugural class.

“When we have nurses out there that look like the communities they’re caring for, the outcomes are actually better for patients,” Martha Scheckel, the school’s founding director, told the StarTribune.

To attract underrepresented students, the college has established an admissions process that values experiences and attributes more than grades. While admissions counselors still prefer to see applicants meet a 3.0 GPA, they will consider students with lower grades depending on their backgrounds.

Curricula will continuously build students’ cultural competency and awareness by challenging them to understand different perspectives. The school is also developing partnerships with local organizations such as the Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District and the St. Paul Public Library so that students have opportunities to provide care for homeless patients and teach underserved children and families about health education.

MayKao Hang, dean of Morrison Family College of Health, told the StarTribune that the school will take “a street-level approach” to clinical education.

Scheckel and Hang say that those experiences will allow nursing students to have a deeper understanding of the social and economic determinants of health, which in turn will help reduce disparities in underrepresented communities.

“A field such as nursing is a powerful tool for social justice, and we will be working to create a school culture where students feel supported in pursuing this mission of social justice,” Scheckel told the StarTribune.

“Our health care system has many disparities already, and the increased use of technology could be our chance to bridge this gap.”

Amir Behdani, PharmD candidate and co-founder of Pharmacists for Digital Health, in “Virginia Commonwealth University Pharmacy Students Create Digital Tool to Improve Health Care Access,” page 44

Americans have chosen nursing as the most “honest and ethical” profession for 19 years in a row in Gallup’s annual “Honesty and Ethics” poll. Nurses earned a record 89 percent very high/high score in the 2021 survey, up 4 percentage points from the previous year. Pharmacists rose 7 points, receiving a score of 71 percent for honesty and ethics.
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College of Pharmacy

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Learn more at www.pharmacy.tamu.edu/diversity
To help address the national pharmacist shortage, two Midwestern colleges recently collaborated to create a pathway program for high schoolers to earn a bachelor’s degree and doctor of pharmacy (PharmD) within five years.

The accelerated program, called Direct to PharmD, is offered in partnership between the Sullivan University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (SU COPHS) in Louisville, Kentucky, and Indiana University Southeast (IUS) in New Albany, Indiana. The two schools are roughly five miles apart, making it easy for area high school seniors to begin an early pharmacy track and eventually enhance the region’s pharmacy care workforce.

“Oftentimes, students share they must leave the area to attend a pharmacy school to become licensed pharmacists,” Michele Zimmerman, PhD, IUS professor and pre-pharmacy advisor, said in a press statement. “That belief couldn’t be farther from the truth. This new agreement allows high school students to remain in the southern Indiana/Louisville metropolitan area and earn two degrees in just five years.”

Exceptional area high school seniors are eligible for the program by first applying to IUS through the traditional freshman application process. Admission to the pathway “will occur on a rolling basis,” the SU website states. Each year there will be 28 openings for the program, ABC News reports. Students will complete pre-pharmacy coursework and an undergraduate degree at IUS and be given a provisional PharmD seat at SU COPHS if they successfully finish required courses and the PharmD application.

“We want to help [students] to be successful in maintaining resiliency and to go out in the workforce as leaders who can help others within the profession who maybe haven’t had that training or education.”

Laura Rosenthal, DNP, associate professor of clinical teaching and assistant dean of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at the University of Colorado College of Nursing, in “Nursing and Pharmacy Education Prepares Students to Enter Professions in Crisis,” page 54
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Telehealth technology, body sensors on smart watches, and hundreds of health-focused mobile apps are increasingly popular tools for monitoring patient well-being. Experts project that these and other innovative technologies will soon lead to a health care landscape that is vastly different from today’s.

Despite these breakthroughs, “many hospital systems and clinics still depend on yesterday’s technology — or even last decade’s technology,” according to Emily Ko, a student at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Pharmacy. Furthermore, the digital divide for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas hinders access to these innovations, thus exacerbating health disparities.

To address these issues, Ko and classmate Amir Behdani recently created an award-winning app prototype called myDigital Analytics and Responsive Care (myDigitalARC) to improve health care access for low-income patients. It is designed to provide free clinics, which often have limited staff and resources, with real-time tracking of patient vitals such as blood pressure. Patients can take these measurements at home and text the information through the myDigitalARC platform on their smartphones. It is then securely sent to a data dashboard visible to their health care providers, allowing them to see patient progress without the need for in-person visits.

“The way myDigitalARC’s pipeline is set up allows us to keep the price tag at no cost for free clinics, which means better access to health care providers, improved bidirectional communication, and a streamlined, HIPAA-compliant pipeline for the low-income patients,” Ko says. “I believe that access to data and consistent patient empowerment can help to better patient outcomes.”

The myDigitalARC dashboard will be able to monitor blood pressure, blood glucose, weight, exercise minutes, and other factors that patients can easily measure at home. By tracking this information in real time, health care workers can intervene at an early stage when concerns arise — such as a pattern of high blood glucose readings for a diabetic. The result is better health outcomes for users while costs are kept down for both patients and providers.

“I personally think in an era [in which] a lot of prominent health technology companies are shifting their focus to investing in expensive devices and tools that might not be accessible to everyone, we should not lose track of the big picture,” Behdani says. “Our health care system has many disparities already, and the increased use of technology could be our chance to bridge this gap.”

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WHAT IS DIGITAL HEALTH?

The broad scope of digital health includes categories such as mobile health, health information technology, wearable devices, telehealth and telemedicine, and personalized medicine.

From mobile medical apps and software that support the clinical decisions doctors make every day to artificial intelligence and machine learning, digital technology has been driving a revolution in health care. Digital health tools have the vast potential to improve our ability to accurately diagnose and treat disease and to enhance the delivery of health care for the individual.

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He and Ko co-founded Pharmacists for Digital Health (PDH), a student group and national nonprofit, in January 2021 after realizing there are limited resources for students to explore digital health or develop skill sets for solving real-world challenges. PDH’s mission is to create a global platform “to discuss and engage in the innovative applications of digital health in pharmacy and health care and to shape the future of digital health solutions through education,” its website states.

The group recently placed second in a national collegiate competition, Pharmacy Quality Alliance Healthcare Quality Innovation Challenge, for the development of myDigitalARC.

Pharmacy professionals are expected to play an increasingly important role in the integration of digital health technology, according to a November 2021 article in Pharmacy Times. “Pharmacists may find themselves serving as coaches, curators, and digital translators for patients, accessing data on remote patient monitoring platforms, assisting with setting up software or devices, engaging with patients via hybrid care models, and matching individuals with medication and a digital companion, all to contribute to health and wellness and support treatment optimization,” the authors write.

Students and professionals who are interested in designing and implementing digital health technology to help underserved patients should begin by imagining the patient’s viewpoint, according to Ko. “What is it like being a patient with limited access to transportation? Or a patient experiencing difficulty moving, perhaps with a less than ideal living situation? Imagine how one factor like socioeconomic background can color that whole image,” she says.

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Behdani encourages anyone who has a passion for serving low-income communities to consider the many capabilities of digital health. “There are tons of opportunities and initiatives that pharmacy students can take to help patients from low socioeconomic backgrounds with technology, like the myDigitalARC project,” he says. “The first step is to see the problem from these patients’ perspectives and try to solve the issues in a manner that is applicable to everyone. Everything else will come in place afterward.”

The Center for Healthy Hearts, a local free clinic, has been working with PDH to implement myDigitalARC. Ko and Behdani are also collaborating with another VCU pharmacy student, Silas Contaifer, who researches virtual reality technology, to transfer the myDigitalARC data pipeline into the Amazon Web Services platform to prepare for scaling the application.

“We are learning things we never thought we would learn when first starting pharmacy school. In the meantime, as second-year PharmD students, we are learning about therapeutics and clinical outcomes that will ultimately better inform our final product that will better serve clinics,” Ko says. “It has been a beautiful experience being able to contribute a solution as mere students.”

Mariah Stewart is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity. To learn more about Pharmacists in Digital Health, including information on starting a campus chapter, visit pdhrx.org.
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New Medical School Cohort to Build Long-Term Strategies to Combat Systemic Racism

By Erik Cliburn

The health fields in the U.S. have a long history of institutional racism and discrimination. Now, amid growing calls for racial justice, a nationwide program aims to rectify this problem starting with medical schools.

The Anti-Racist Transformation in Medical Education (ART in Med Ed) initiative, which launched in October, brings together a cohort of 10 medical colleges in the U.S. and one in Canada in order to shift racist mindsets and cultures through community-led programs, discussions, and more.

“There is a long history [in medicine] that needs to be addressed, dismantled, and reconciled,” says Leona Hess, PhD, a principal investigator of ART in Med Ed and director of strategy and equity education programs at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS). “Every institution has systemic racism, but I think medicine is a very significant place to start.”

Spearheaded by ISMMS, the project aims to develop broad strategies that can be adopted and customized by any health care school that wants to advance anti-racism policies. It is divided into six phases over three years, during which each cohort’s members will collaborate to find the most effective policies. The phases include a cohort introduction, dialogue and goal framing, self-directed learning, coaching and outcome mapping, establishing a community of practice, and in-person site visits.

ART in Med Ed officials selected schools for the cohort that vary in geographic location, institutional resources, and student and employee demographics. They also chose institutions that are at different stages of implementing anti-racist policies and practices, whether just beginning to introduce diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts or having long held these values as core to their campus-wide missions. Such cohort diversity will be key to determining which anti-racist strategies are most effective, says David Muller, MD, a principal investigator and dean for medical education at ISMMS.

Member institutions include the following:

- Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons
- David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles
- Duke University School of Medicine
- East Carolina University Brody School of Medicine
- The George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences
- The Ohio State University College of Medicine
- University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix
- University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine
- University of Minnesota Medical School
- University of Missouri–Columbia School of Medicine
- University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine

Because the cohort was so recently formed, many members are still developing their specific anti-racism goals and intended outcomes. The program is founded on ISMMS’s methodology of change management, which Hess defines as a guiding discipline that supports organizational development by “follow[ing] a structured process and employ[ing] tools that are customized, targeted, system-focused, and research-based.” ISMMS’s method focuses primarily on creating long-term, systemic change among the entire campus community rather than addressing individual issues.

“It’s an approach that has more to do with trying to transform a culture as opposed to trying to fix problems,” Muller says, explaining that this process centers on “understanding the ways people think, behave, and act.” ISMMS first developed this methodology when launching its Racism and Bias Initiative in 2015. Its work has advanced to make ISSMS a more equitable space where discussing race and racism is acceptable and encouraged, according to Hess and Muller.

Early in its anti-racist planning, ISMMS concentrated on language use and how discussions centered...
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**Leon McDougle**

Before and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Leon McDougle, MD, chief diversity officer and associate dean for diversity and inclusion at The Ohio State Wexner Medical Center, has long been a leader of health care workforce diversity advocacy efforts. He was president of the National Medical Association (NMA), the largest collective voice for parity and justice for African American physicians, from August 2020 to July 2021. In this role, he testified before the U.S. Senate in May 2021 about the health care workforce shortage and the critical need to increase diversity to improve patient outcomes. Among other recommendations, McDougle stressed the necessity of expanding health care pipeline programs to engage with underrepresented students at younger ages.

“We need to build out initiatives that reach pre-K through elementary [school], through middle school, through high school to increase the number of students who are equipped to excel in health professions schools and graduate biomedical science schools to become MDs, PhDs, pharmacists, and allied health professionals,” McDougle said in an interview with *INSIGHT.* “We need all hands on deck.”

Following the testimony, McDougle invited Senators Bernie Sanders and Susan Collins to speak at the annual NMA conference. To his surprise, the senators accepted the invitation and affirmed their support for diversifying the medical field. That affirmation from such prominent leaders is vital in increasing support and drawing attention to a longstanding issue, McDougle says.

“When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .." When you have national leaders who are held in such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your organization concerning the importance of increasing the diversity of the health professions workforce and the number of Black men in medicine, that expands the diversity of the health professions workforce and organization concerning the importance of increasing such high esteem aligned and in agreement with your .."

on racism and White supremacy culture can help shift attitudes. Hess and Muller recognized that prior discussions about racism were often considered taboo and therefore discouraged among administrators and faculty. Since then, they have noticed that people are much more receptive to change when community-led dialogues on race are taking place — something they hope to see replicated in other ART in Med Ed schools.

Creating campus-wide change requires community-led efforts across all areas of an institution rather than through a top-down, siloed approach, according to Hess and Muller. This shift toward broad collaboration can often be

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intimidating to those used to working in separate departments and divisions, but it is vital to achieving large-scale transformation, says Jennifer Dias, a student at ISMMS and co-investigator of the ART in Med Ed program.

“Being connected to the purpose of this change and what we’re all trying to accomplish as a community, not just in these individual stakeholder groups, is really important and central to what we’re trying to do,” Dias says.

Because ART in Med Ed is seeking to address anti-racism so broadly, the hope is that the overarching framework will be adaptable for any institution.

“The goal [of the initiative] is to work together to build an anti-racist culture to support learner development, staff development, faculty development, and grow an environment where everyone can thrive,” says Leon McDougle, MD, chief diversity officer and associate dean for diversity and inclusion at The Ohio State Wexner Medical Center and the former president of the National Medical Association.

The Ohio State University College of Medicine (OSUMC), which is part of the medical center, is one of the ART in Med Ed pilot participants that has long worked to support DEI and anti-racism. The school has focused largely on increasing diversity within health professions fields through admissions policies and providing support to underrepresented students.

McDougle sees the ART in Med Ed initiative as a perfect fit with OSUMC’s long-term goals of addressing racism, bias, and the lack of diversity within medicine. With the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting major health disparities nationwide, this is an important time for institutions to work together to become pillars for change in their communities, he says.

“I think with the COVID-19 pandemic pulling off the cover of racism and exposing the inequity related to the social determinants of health, medical students and the [American Association of Medical Colleges] have become even more aware of [this need],” he says. “As anchor institutions, we need to meet the community and partner with the community to help address these national priorities and advance health equity.”

Erik Cliburn is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity. The Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai is a 2016-2020 recipient of the INSIGHT Into Diversity Health Professions Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award. The Ohio State University College of Medicine is a 2017-2021 recipient of the Health Professions HEED Award.
New Resource Makes it Possible to Track Health Care Diversity Nationwide

By Mariah Stewart

A new online tool developed by George Washington University’s Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity (GWMI) may revolutionize the way that diversity is assessed in health care education and professions.

Launched in November, the Health Workforce Diversity Tracker functions as an interactive map that allows users to access demographic data on recent graduates from nearly 3,900 health care programs. It also provides demographic data on 10 specific professions, including: advanced practice registered nurses (APRN), dentists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, physical therapists, physicians, physician assistants, respiratory therapists, registered nurses, and speech pathologists.

The tool currently tracks the representation of Black, Latinx, and White Americans — the nation’s three largest ethnic and racial groups. Researchers will regularly update the online map and eventually include data on Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans, according to Edward Salsberg, lead research scientist and co-director of the GWMI’s Health Workforce Diversity Initiative.

“We’re hoping that this data will motivate schools to take action,” he says. To navigate the tool, users can choose whether they want to see information on new graduates or the current workforce, then select a profession, race, and region or state. The tracker also provides a diversity index scale to help users better understand the significance of the data. The index “allows for comparison of performance across diverse states and professions as well as over time,” the institute’s website states.

“This data will give decision makers a [comprehensive] picture of the widespread lack of diversity in many health professions and inspire a sense of urgency and targeted efforts to improve diversity within health care pipelines and workforce.”

For example, only 9 percent of recent APRN graduates nationwide are Hispanic or Latinx, earning the U.S. a low diversity index score of 0.44 for that demographic. Florida, on the other hand, has a high index score of 1.44 for this demographic, as 32.5 of its recent APRN graduates are Hispanic or Latinx.

The map also tracks data at the level of individual schools. Users can see how one institution’s health care education programs compare to others in their region or anywhere in the country.

Of the 3,900 health care education programs tracked by the online tool, approximately 12 percent were found to have no Black graduates and 9 percent had zero Hispanic/Latinx.

The Health Workforce Diversity Tracker (Diversity Tracker) will monitor progress (or lack thereof) toward the goal of greater racial and ethnic parity in the health workforce through four major components:

- The collection and analysis of data on the diversity of the health workforce with a focus on the educational pipeline
- Dissemination of the data and findings, including “report cards” for states, professions, and institutions, publications, and interactive website
- Support for research on the impact of interventions/strategies to increase diversity
- Advocacy through targeted distribution of the findings and convening of organizations and groups supportive of the goal of more racial and ethnic parity in the health workforce.
graduates between 2017 and 2019. The tracker also found that Black employees are underrepresented by an average of 46 percent across 10 health care professions.

“This data will give decision makers a [comprehensive] picture of the widespread lack of diversity in many health professions and inspire a sense of urgency and targeted efforts to improve diversity within health care pipelines and workforce,” says Maria Portela, MD, a co-director of the GW Diversity Initiative and an assistant professor at the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences, said in a press release.

Salsberg and his team are also working with the Beyond Flexner Alliance (BFA), a national network of colleges and organizations “focused on health equity and training health professionals as agents of more equitable health care,” according to its website. This connection makes it possible for the Health Workforce Diversity Initiative to work more closely with schools to address disparity issues, according to Salsberg.

After identifying which schools were successful at graduating underrepresented students, officials from BFA and the initiative worked together in researching each institution’s recruitment and retention strategies. Salsberg says a future goal is to receive additional funding to establish collaborative education programs for institutions that want to be more successful in this area.

The California Endowment, a health care equality foundation, and the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to improving health professions education, originally provided funding for the tracker’s development in summer 2020.

Over the next several months, the tool will expand to include nearly 25 specific health care professions, according to Salsberg. It could serve as a model for other disciplines as well. “Although we’ve created this tool for health care occupations, there’s no reason why this couldn’t be done for law or engineering or any other higher education [discipline]. The data is available,” says Salsberg. “In fact, I would love to work with people in other professions that want to do the same thing for their professions.”

To learn more about the Health Workforce Diversity Tracker, visit gwhwi.org/diversitytracker.html.

Mariah Stewart is a senior writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
NURSING AND PHARMACY EDUCATION PREPARES STUDENTS TO ENTER PROFESSIONS IN CRISIS

By Lisa O’Malley
Although anxiety, burnout, and other mental health issues have long been concerns for the health care fields, the emotional toll from the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many nurses and pharmacists to consider leaving their professions. As of May 2021, more than 22 percent of nursing professionals said they were thinking about switching careers or retiring, according to a report by the management consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Additionally, a September 2020 study in the Journal of the American Pharmacists Association found that nearly 75 percent of community pharmacists reported meeting at least one of the criteria for burnout. Pharmacists experiencing these conditions are 2.5 times more likely to leave their current job, according to the American Pharmacists Association.

At the same time, both of these professions are suffering from critical staffing shortages. Areas that were already underserved are having an especially hard time finding nurses and pharmacists to fill open positions. Rural regions make up 60 percent of the areas experiencing health care worker shortages, as reported in June 2021 by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration.

This issue is also having a significant impact on populations that are already underserved and have difficulty accessing quality health care, including low-income, Black, Native American, and Latinx people. Staff at safety net health centers, which provide care regardless of a patient’s insurance status, are experiencing high levels of stress due to insufficient resources and large patient loads, according to research by the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved. In addition, low literacy rates, poverty, and other socioeconomic challenges faced by these patients increase the workload for clinicians who are already overburdened, the study states.

In order to prevent these shortages from worsening and to ensure high-quality care, nursing and pharmacy schools are pioneering new strategies to recruit students and equip them with self-care and resiliency skills to decrease the likelihood they will end up leaving their careers.

**Nursing Schools**

Even prior to the pandemic, the nursing field was facing a critical labor shortage, largely due to many in the profession reaching retirement age. In 2017, a Health Affairs study estimated that 1 million of the 3.8 million registered nurses in the U.S. will leave the workforce by 2030. A growing population, especially of older Americans, has also increased the need for more professionals to fill these roles.

National organizations such as the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) are acutely aware of the pressing need to graduate more nurses, says Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, chair of the AACN Board of Directors and vice president for nursing affairs, professor, and dean at Oregon Health & Science University School of Nursing.

Although the AACN reported a nearly 6 percent increase in enrollment for entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs in fall 2020 and 4.1 percent and 8.9 percent for master’s and DNP programs respectively, Bakewell-Sachs explains that many schools lack the facilities and staff to admit more students. More than 80,000 qualified applicants were turned away from nursing programs last year, according to AACN data.

The association is also encouraging schools to offer accelerated postbaccalaureate and entry master’s programs. Both require individuals to already have a bachelor’s degree and take only 12 to 15 months to complete rather than a full two years; they also help diversify the profession by

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**A 2011 study in the New England Journal of Medicine revealed that a lack of adequate nursing staff leads to higher patient mortality rates.**

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Schools like the University of Colorado College of Nursing (CU Nursing) are making greater efforts to monitor student well-being and offer resiliency skills to prevent turnover in the profession. Photo courtesy CU Nursing

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Susan Bakewell-Sachs
attracting students with different life experiences and drawing more men to the profession, helping to bring these roles to a field that is nearly 88 percent women, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To address burnout and stress for students’ time in school and later in their career, the AACN introduced new core competency expectations for nursing education that are intended to “promote diversity and retention in the profession, self-awareness, avoidance of stress-induced emotional and mental exhaustion, and redirection of energy from negative perceptions to positive influence through leadership opportunities,” according to the association’s website. In an email to INSIGHT, AACN chief communications officer Robert Rosseter explains that these expectations require nursing graduates to be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate healthy, self-care behaviors that promote wellness and resiliency
- Contribute to an environment that promotes self-care, personal health, and well-being
- Evaluate the workplace environment to determine level of health and well-being
- Engage in guided and spontaneous reflection of one’s practice

The challenge ahead is for faculty to determine what these healthy, self-care behaviors will look like and how they are to be assessed, according to Rosseter.

Some schools are focusing on mental health to build students’ resiliency. Following the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, instructors at the University of Colorado College of Nursing (CU Nursing) conducted a student survey after becoming concerned about the mental health toll that juggling academic studies with clinical work on the frontlines was taking on their graduate students. The results, which were published in the July/August 2021 issue of Nurse Educator, showed close to a quarter of the 222 respondents reported experiencing increased levels of stress,
WHAT'S HIGHER THAN #1?

A multitude of nursing schools — including those at the University of Kentucky, Purdue University, and the University of South Florida — have recently announced plans to expand their nursing programs to allow more students to enroll.

anxiety, and depression. Nearly 24 percent had "clinically concerning scores" for depression and anxiety, close to 10 percent had a possible diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, and more than 6 percent had high enough scores that the stress levels could potentially suppress their immune system functions. “There was essentially an underlying prevalence of post-traumatic stress [in students] as well as ongoing emotional changes,” says the study’s author, Laura Rosenthal, DNP, who serves as associate professor of clinical teaching and assistant dean of the DNP program at the college.

CU Nursing had already been working to incorporate mental health into its training, but the pandemic has accelerated this process, Rosenthal says. Over the next two years, the school plans to overhaul its curriculum and determine how faculty can permanently and successfully address self-care and resiliency by bringing in mental health experts and others who will help them implement evidence-based practices into the curriculum.

“We want to help [students] be successful in maintaining resiliency and go out in the workforce as leaders who can help others within the profession who maybe haven’t had that training or education,” Rosenthal says.

Pharmacy Schools
National pharmacist organizations are also seeing burnout among their members, as many pharmacists are also dealing with a surge in demand for COVID-19 vaccinations and tests.

The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) expressed their concern about the shortage, with President Stuart Haines stating in a recent press release that it “affects interactions with patients — you see an increase in medical errors and it can have an impact on relationships with patients as well as teammates. Recognizing that if we invest in well-being, it’s not just for our own personal and
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The University of North Carolina Eshelman School of Pharmacy (UNC Pharmacy) has introduced several initiatives to address students’ mental health in recent years, including hiring a director of well-being and resiliency in 2020. Photo courtesy UNC Pharmacy.

In 2021 the AACP introduced a new focus on “well-being for all” in its strategic plan that aims to support the mental health of its members, fellow health care professionals, patients, and caretakers. As part of this effort, pharmacy schools will begin integrating more training on wellness and resiliency in their curricula, according to the press release.

The association had recommended that schools educate students on how to manage angry patients and potentially unsafe situations, provide formal training on behavioral health awareness, offer strategies for handling personal financial issues, and more.

Pharmacy schools can support students in this manner by implementing assessments on the well-being of the campus community, according to Suzanne Harris, PharmD, director of well-being and resiliency at the University of North Carolina Eshelman School of Pharmacy (UNC Pharmacy). The school administered its first survey on student and employee well-being in March 2021. It plans to expand this into a longitudinal study that measures progress and can help determine which campus supports should be enhanced.

Harris also collaborates with internal partners in the pharmacy school, UNC’s health professions schools, and other colleges of pharmacy to share and learn best practices.

Another critical component is providing training on how to spot signs of mental distress in peers and colleagues, she says. Recently, UNC Pharmacy introduced mental health first aid training to teach participants how to respond to a crisis and connect professional growth but thinking about how that translates into improved patient outcomes.”
National chains such as CVS Health and Walgreens have recently announced plans to hire thousands of pharmacy technicians nationwide to help with staffing shortages.

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For pharmacy schools looking to undergo similar efforts, Harris says it is important to stay positive and driven as implementing new policies and practices can be a long and arduous process, especially in a pharmacy program that is heavily driven by data and science.

“We have to understand that [information] published in the literature as evidence-based interventions for well-being is growing, but it’s still pretty sparse,” she explains.

It is also necessary to find champions among an institution’s senior leadership team, as changing a school’s culture requires a top-down approach, Harris says. Students need to see the importance of well-being modeled by faculty and administrators in a way that is sincere and genuine. This can be achieved by establishing year-round, mandatory programs on mental health instead of only holding a few events throughout the year, she explains.

Creating a dedicated position such as hers can also help schools stay on track with their goals.

UNC Pharmacy’s efforts appear to be paying off so far, based on feedback from students, faculty, and staff.

“What I sense from the data that we gathered so far is that people do feel that we’re moving in the right direction by the fact that we have established an infrastructure within our school,” she says. “We do know that there’s more to be done, but that we’re moving in the right direction for listening, paying attention, and then using that information to set our priorities as we continue to move forward.”

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
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LoneStar.edu/Employment
As part of its Veterans Month celebration, on November 9, 2021, the University of Central Florida (UCF) hosted a 30-minute salute to recognize its students who have served in the military. The program included a flag-raising ceremony, the playing of “Taps,” and remarks from campus leaders and students. Ahead of the event, Air Force ROTC members and the Veterans Academic Resource Center (VARC) placed more than 1,400 U.S. flags on campus, each of which represented a student veteran enrolled at the school. Throughout the month of November, UCF and VARC also held several other events, such as the Veterans Graduation Recognition Ceremony and a series of networking and peer mentorship opportunities.

“As the sister of two combat veterans, I know firsthand that the uniform and accolades also symbolize years away from family and friends and scars that are often unseen or unspoken,” wrote Andrea Guzmán, UCF’s vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion, in a letter leading up to Veterans Day. “The sacrifices of our veterans are too numerous to commemorate in a single day.”

University of Central Florida Honors Student Veterans

Photos courtesy University of Central Florida
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