The Art of Inclusion

Colleges of performing and fine arts embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion on a deeper level

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Georgia State University creates new institute dedicated to closing graduation gaps

LGBTQ college presidents discuss their hopes and concerns for higher education
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College Housing Challenges Extend to Faculty and Staff
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The Negative Effects of Recent Anti-LGBTQ Legislation Spread to Higher Education
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‘There is Solidarity Here’ A Q&A with LGBTQ College Presidents
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Colleges of Fine and Performing Arts Look to Embrace DEI on a Deeper Level
By Mariah Bohanon

On the cover: The University of Southern California School of Dramatic Arts stages “In the Red and Brown Water” in April 2022.

Above: A sculpture made in the likeness of a blind Black woman sits on display at the University of Florida as part of a collection that showcases models with disabilities and those who deviate from traditional Eurocentric standards of beauty. Photo courtesy Angela DeCarlis
Virginia Tech celebrated Pride Week, April 3-9, 2022 with a weeklong series of programs and events organized by the LGBTQ+ community.

Pride Week is the promotion of the self-affirmation, dignity, equality, and increased visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. Pride, as opposed to shame and social stigma, is the predominant outlook that bolsters most LGBT rights movements.

One of those events titled ‘Sunset Hike with Venture Out’ was offered as an opportunity for students to connect with peers in a space where they were able to identify with others in building community and enjoying the outdoors. The trips are led by Virginia Tech’s LGBTQ+ Resource Center staff who were able to create a natural sense of belonging by offering the students an opportunity to connect with nature and other queer folks. The students met at the Venture Out Center and drove to a local trail for a short hike to watch the sunset.

To learn more about Virginia Tech’s LGBTQ+ Resource Center visit [https://ccc.vt.edu/index/lgbtq.html](https://ccc.vt.edu/index/lgbtq.html)
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Higher Education Expected to Soon Face Financial Challenges Due to Inflation and Workforce Issues

Two recent reports from the financial research service Moody’s show that the higher education sector is expected to face unique challenges in the fall due to rising inflation.

The reports, titled “Macroeconomic Factors Will Influence Fall Enrollment Levels” and “Revenue Growth and Converging Forces Will Squeeze Budgets for Many Colleges and Universities,” predict that many colleges and universities will struggle fiscally due to staffing shortages, enrollment declines, and more.

Potential students, especially at community colleges, are more likely to forgo postsecondary education and head straight into the workforce, according to Moody’s. At the same time, staffing needs and hiring efforts — in addition to the rising cost of goods and services due to inflation — are expected to cause colleges and universities to experience an expense growth rate of 4 to 6 percent, the highest annual increase in more than a decade.

Despite these difficulties, the company’s analysts say that many higher education institutions will remain financially stable thanks to their endowments and higher levels of liquidity. Federal pandemic relief is thinning, however, and private universities and others that rely heavily on tuition revenue are susceptible to a financial budget squeeze beginning in fiscal year 2023.

“With the pandemic relief funding drying up, some institutions will be left with multi-year structural budget deficits that will potentially result in weaker credit quality,” Moody’s notes.

The reports also found that state funding is unlikely to help higher education overcome the losses caused by rising inflation.

The U.S. Department of Labor announced in April that the country’s consumer price index had risen 8.5 percent since March 2021, marking the highest annual inflation increase since 1981. Gasoline, housing, and food were found to be the largest contributors to the current spike, according to the department.●

A COMMITMENT TO ACCESS & OPPORTUNITY

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are woven into the very fabric of Suffolk University. We have been providing access and expanding opportunities for historically underrepresented groups since our founding in 1906.

Through student, faculty, and staff recruitment and support; community engagement; curriculum development; and research, the University community works to advance equity for every student, every day.

Learn more about how we manifest the core values of our mission at suffolk.edu/diversity.
Famed fashion designer Ralph Lauren recently collaborated with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to unveil his brand’s latest wardrobe collection that pays homage to Black collegiate fashion from the 1920s to the 1950s.

The limited-edition Polo by Ralph Lauren collection launched globally this spring and draws upon fashions from Morehouse and Spelman Colleges. As part of the marketing campaign, the high-end brand also released a 30-minute mini documentary, *A Portrait of the American Dream*, featuring Morehouse and Spelman students, alumni, and faculty to bring historical context to the cultural contribution Black scholars have made to American fashion. It is available to stream for free on YouTube.com.

The collaboration is the brainchild of Morehouse alum James Jeter, the Ralph Lauren director of concept design and special projects, and Spelman alum Dara Douglas, director of inspirational content. This is the first time that Lauren has produced a collection and campaign featuring an all-Black team of models, photographers, cinematographers, and creators, largely sourced from the two HBCUs, according to the brand’s website.

“When I was approached with a collection inspired by the heritage and traditions of the timeless dressing of historically Black colleges and universities, it became clear that part of design sensibility has been missing,” Ralph Lauren stated in the documentary. “Our portrait of American style and our vision of the American dream would be incomplete without Black experiences like these.”

The vintage-inspired clothing ensemble comes after the brand was criticized in 2020 for placing the Greek letters of a Black fraternity on pants that retailed for more than $300. Upon facing backlash, the company discontinued the apparel, apologized, and committed to racial equity efforts. It also donated $2 million in scholarships for students at Morehouse, Spelman, and 10 additional HBCUs through the United Negro College Fund in December 2021.

The new collection has also sparked controversy, with some on social media criticizing the brand for cultural appropriation. Others have pointed out that the styles it draws upon have a complex history. On Twitter, fashion and costume historian Shelby Ivey Christie said of the collection:

“Something is a bit off — WASPY/preppy style was a self preservation tool for many generations of Black ppl. The thought of likening one’s self to whiteness would make you safe/seen. The same is seen in Gay history. Leveraging prep to “pass”/masc. That stuff goes unacknowledged imo.”

Christie and others have also said that while they appreciate the brand drawing attention to Black colleges, they wish that other HBCUS — rather than just the prominent Morehouse and Spelman — would receive attention. Overall, feedback from HBCU administrators has been positive about the fashion line’s homage to their institutions.

“The beauty of what Ralph Lauren did with us: They made us part of this project,” Morehouse President David Thomas said in a press release. “They didn’t come in and appropriate culturally inspiring images of Black people and then go off and do something with it.”

Jeter has said of the controversy that he is just happy the clothing has motivated discussion.

“What I love about the reaction is that it started a conversation,” Jeter told *The New York Times*. “It wasn’t all negative. It wasn’t all positive, but it was the ebb and flows of both, and I think in the end a lot of people arrive at a better place than where they started as a result of those conversations.”

Photo courtesy Ralph Lauren

Designer Ralph Lauren Debuts Ode to HBCU Fashion in Controversial New Collection
The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation recently announced that it is awarding more than $1.2 million in grants to nine universities and nonprofit organizations working to expose and mitigate the impact of disinformation on communities of color.

The foundation, which specializes in supporting journalism, communities, and the arts, previously issued a call for proposals that “advance independent scholarship, partnerships, tools, and interventions to combat disinformation,” a press release states. The winning projects represent a wide range of partnerships and research endeavors that address a variety of pressing issues for underserved ethnic and racial groups. Specific topics include Chinese-language news in the U.S., the targeting of Latinx voters in the 2022 election, and the spread of misinformation regarding the COVID-19 vaccine in marginalized communities.

“Recent scholarship shows that communities of color are often targeted to discourage participation in our country’s civic and political life,” John Sands, senior director of Media and Democracy, stated in the release. “This challenge isn’t going away, but projects like these show promising paths forward. They leverage community relationships and expertise to test and better understand the mechanisms that build resilience to disinformation.”

The selected projects will become part of the Knight Research Network, which connects experts and scholars who study the role of digital media in modern society. The foundation has committed more than $50 million since 2019 “for independent research and policy insight that can improve the quality of information online and foster informed engagement in the democratic process,” according to its website.

The research projects to be funded include the following:

- Florida International University and the Miami Herald – “Miami Latinos Misled: How Political Interests Seek to Sway 2022 Elections”
- Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health – “Building Vaccine Disinformation Resilience in Partnership with Latino Social Media Influencers”
- MediaJustice – “Resourcing Communities of Color to Combat Disinformation”
- Santa Clara University – “Chinese Language News Discussion Repository”
- Syracuse University S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications – “Co-Producing Disinformation Interventions on Syracuse’s South Side”
- Texas Tech University – “Pulpit, Publics, and Practitioners: Combating COVID-19 Mis- and Disinformation in Hispanic Communities Across the South Plains of Texas”
- University of Minnesota – “Trusted Messengers Can Leverage Connections to Combat Disinformation About Black Communities in Black Communities”
- The University of Texas at Austin and Rutgers University – “Addressing Disinformation Campaigns Against Diaspora Communities on Encrypted Messaging Applications”
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.

**Evolving Our Response to HIV**

Indiana University National HIV Conference

**June 8-11, 2022**

Indianapolis, Indiana

Learn more at: iunhc.indiana.edu
Princeton University Database Tracks Rise in LGBTQ Elected Officials Worldwide

Researchers at Princeton University’s School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) recently launched a database and interactive map that displays information about publicly self-identifying LGBTQ politicians and elected officials from around the globe. It is the latest project from the Queer Politics at Princeton (QP@P) program, a research-focused LGBTQ think tank that was formed in 2020 with the goal of bringing together queer activists, scholars, educators, and politicians.

The database includes information dating from as far back as the mid-1970s, when the first openly LGBTQ political pioneers, such as Harvey Milk, began taking public office. It primarily focuses on national, state, and provincial levels of government, although it offers information about some municipal officials, including mayors and council members. Users can filter their search by party ideology, level of government, sexual and gender identity, and more.

One of the key takeaways from the data is that the number of public officials who are openly LGBTQ has risen significantly over the past 40 years. Much of this progress has occurred within the last decade. Of the 363 publicly identifying LGBTQ officials elected in U.S. history, 230 are still in office. Of the 1,201 LGBTQ politicians recorded worldwide since 1976, 645 remain in office.

Although it is encouraging to see LGBTQ representation increase in politics, this demographic still makes up a small fraction of the total number of elected officials, said Andrew Reynolds, senior SPIA research scholar and QP@P founder, in a news release. Additionally, the data shows that political representation within the LGBTQ community is unbalanced, as a majority of these officials are gay White men, according to Reynolds.

“There’s a huge gap in representation for people who identify as bisexual, pansexual, transgender, and queer people of color,” he stated in the release. “I just hope this database helps us see these discrepancies clearly.”

At the heart of The University of Tulsa’s mission and values is a commitment to educate people of diverse backgrounds and identities in an environment of equity, inclusion and respect.

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READ, WATCH, LISTEN

READ: We’re Not OK: Black Faculty Experiences and Higher Education Strategies

Despite an increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion at most colleges and universities in recent years, African American faculty members continue to be underrepresented in higher education. Black educators face unique struggles that can affect mental health and retention efforts. In We’re Not OK, editors Antija Allen and Justin Stewart share the honest struggles of Black graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators and offer solutions for academic institutions hoping to diversify their ranks and promote inclusive campus environments. Published by Cambridge University Press

WATCH: We Feed People

In a new National Geographic documentary, renowned chef and humanitarian José Andrés shares the story of how he founded the nonprofit World Central Kitchen (WCK) to provide food to people affected by natural and social disasters around the globe. First established in 2010 in the wake of the devastating earthquake in Haiti, the organization has served more than 40 million fresh meals to individuals at the frontlines of numerous crises. The film provides a behind-the-scenes look at how Andrés, who was featured in INSIGHT’s October 2020 issue, and the volunteers at WCK have worked tirelessly to promote social justice and restore hope to millions of people in need. Streaming on Disney+

LISTEN: After 1954

This five-part podcast series chronicles the history surrounding the U.S. Supreme Court’s Brown v. Board of Education ruling in 1954 and the lingering effects that the historic decision has had on Black teachers in the U.S. Hosted by educational nonprofit leader Aimée Eubanks Davis, the series traces the reasons why the ruling, despite its intention to end segregation, actually led to the firing of thousands of Black teachers in the South. It also explores the impact losing that workforce had on African American students and why it is vital to support Black educators for the future. Available on all major podcast apps

The 2022 INSIGHT Into Diversity HEED Award applications are now available. The deadline to apply is June 30. Learn more at insightintodiversity.com/HEED.
The challenges faced by cities across the U.S. are not unique, but our approach to addressing them is. Virginia Commonwealth University’s Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry and Innovation builds transdisciplinary teams of nationally recognized scholars and partner with leaders of the communities it serves to deploy innovating solutions that simply work.

Learn more at icubed.vcu.edu.
Tyrone Tanner, EdD, has been named dean of graduate studies at Prairie View A&M University. Tanner previously served as the executive director of the Northwest Houston Center and a professor of educational leadership and counseling for the university.

Jane Irungu, PhD, has been selected as the inaugural vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Utah State University in Logan. Irungu was associate provost of inclusive excellence at the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

Khuram Hussain, PhD, has been named vice president for equity and inclusion at Middlebury College. Hussain previously served as vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York.

Parwinder Grewal, PhD, has been selected as the inaugural president of Vermont State University in Montpelier. Grewal was special assistant to the president at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg.

Mary Jane “Gigi” Secuban, EdD, has been selected as the inaugural vice president of institutional inclusive excellence at Texas State University in San Marcos. Secuban was the vice president of diversity and inclusion at Ohio University in Athens.

Has your campus recently hired a new administrator? INSIGHT Into Diversity would like to publish your news. Please email editor@insightintodiversity.com.
Minority-Serving Institutions Partner with U.S. Energy Department to Advance Solar Energy Research

The U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) recently awarded $3.2 million to seven Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) as part of the Science and Technology Research Partnership pilot program. The program’s goal is twofold: to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within STEM fields and to advance the development of clean energy.

The DOE funding will support eight two-year solar energy research projects across the seven schools, which include historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI). The participating schools are:

- Florida A&M University, an HBCU
- San Diego State University, an HSI and AANAPISI
- Texas State University, an HSI
- University of Arizona, an HSI
- University of the District of Columbia, an HBCU
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas, an HSI
- University of New Mexico, an HSI

Each project will focus on a different area of solar energy research and also involve performance and career training for participating team members. Individual research projects include analyzing the impact of power outages on disadvantaged communities, improving the efficiency of certain solar cells, creating a solar energy storage platform, and more.

In addition to furthering clean energy initiatives, the pilot program serves as a way to build stronger relationships between the DOE and institutions that have long been underrepresented among the department’s research programs, said Kelly Speakes-Backman, principal deputy assistant secretary for the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, in a news release.

“This pilot program is a great opportunity to support and expand a diverse STEM workforce, prioritizing Minority-Serving Institutions in DOE’s research ecosystem,” Speakes-Backman said. “We’re proud to partner with these researchers as they bring innovative ideas and deep scientific expertise to advance solar energy on behalf of all Americans.”

The July/August issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity will feature a special report on law schools and focus on military veterans. The advertising deadline is June 17. For information, please call 314-200-9955 or email ads@insightintodiversity.com.
Campuses Resume In-Person Pride Events Following Pandemic Hiatus

Over the past two years, many major LGBTQ Pride celebrations have been canceled, postponed, or moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those at colleges and universities. Now, with most campuses fully reopened, many have opted to bring back in-person Pride events.

While Pride Month officially takes place in June, higher education institutions of all types and sizes across the U.S. hosted their own celebrations during the spring semester, giving their entire campus communities the opportunity to participate. Recognizing Pride on campus is especially crucial at this time, as a growing number of states are looking to pass or enforce anti-LGBTQ legislation.

In honor of Pride Month, INSIGHT has highlighted below just a few colleges and universities that have recently celebrated LGBTQ history, culture, and community.

Dickinson College
This April marked the first-ever Campus Pride Week at Dickinson College, a private liberal arts institution in Pennsylvania. The college’s Office of LGBTQ Services began the celebration on April 2 with a festival and professional development opportunities, including a career navigation workshop for LGBTQ employees. Other events included educational sessions on activism, a discussion for LGBTQ students looking to study abroad, an LGBTQ employee social, a poetry slam, and a miniature golf outing. The week closed with a keynote speech titled “Healing and Wholeness in Coming Out” by 1966 Dickinson alum Emily Newberry, a writer, performance poet, and speaker.

New Mexico State University
At New Mexico State University (NMSU), officials chose to have an extended Pride season rather than a single festival or celebration. The events spanned March and April and included guest speakers and experts on topics such as the representation of LGBTQ people with disabilities in the media and the role of Latinx LGBTQ people in sports. The university also hosted the 2022 Pride Season Drag Show and film screenings organized by LGBTQ student groups. The season ended with a presentation from Lehua M. Taitano, a queer Pacific Islander artist and writer, who discussed her works with the campus community.

Pennsylvania State University
Through its Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, Pennsylvania State University hosted a series of in-person events to celebrate LGBTQ Pride this spring. The festivities began on April 11 with a march and rally on campus. Other events included musical and theater performances, a drag show for queer and transgender people of color, and a 5K race for LGBTQ runners. Comedian, actor, and writer Cameron Esposito delivered the keynote address. The series of celebrations ended with the university’s annual Lavender Graduation to recognize the achievements of graduating LGBTQ students.
CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR EVERYONE

At the University of Alabama at Birmingham, we affirm our shared values of diversity and inclusiveness, accountability collaboration, integrity, and respect. We recognize the importance of creating a safe campus environment and strive to foster a community that promotes understanding, acceptance, learning, empowerment, and visibility of people with marginalized genders and sexualities.

borderTRANS

borderTrans is a safe space open to all UAB undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who identify as: Trans, Transgender, Genderqueer, Fluid, Non-Binary, FTM, MTF, Two Spirit, Intersex, Gender Questioning and Transexual.

The Alliance

The Alliance is an employee-resource group of UAB that exists to provide advocacy, support, and networking for faculty and staff members of UAB’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Allies (LGBTQIA+) community.

GRADient

GRADient is an organization dedicated to the pursuit of academic excellence and social and political awareness with respect to LGBTQIA+ graduate and professional students as well as postdoctoral scholars.

MedPride: Gay/Straight Alliance

MedPride, a student group in the UAB School of Medicine, works to create a safe place for LGBTQIA+ persons in medicine, as well as their straight allies, and educate the UAB community about the realities of LGBTQIA+ health needs through campus activities and panel discussions and equip future medical providers with skills to address physical and mental health concerns of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Gender and Sexuality Union

The Gender and Sexuality Union provides educational opportunities for students, creates safe spaces throughout the UAB community, fosters dialogue about LGBTQIA+ issues and creates agendas, innovations and momentum to engage the UAB community in social change and justice.
Rutgers University
This year, Rutgers University celebrated “Gaypril” through a series of educational and celebratory events for queer and transgender communities. The opening event, “Voices of Diversity–LGBTQIA+ Student Stories,” was a student-led panel that allowed faculty and staff to learn about the experiences of their LGBTQ students and how to better support them. Rutgers Hillel hosted two events in honor of the Jewish LGBTQ community, including a Pride Shabbat on April 8 and a DIY Passover Seder on April 20. The university also organized a conversation with George M. Johnson, a Black nonbinary author, on April 19. The celebrations concluded on May 4 with the annual Rainbow Graduation ceremony, which honored graduating LGBTQ students who have upheld the traditions of activism on campus.

University of Missouri
The University of Missouri’s Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity organized a mixture of in-person and virtual events throughout April to celebrate Pride. Programming included an online workshop on how to be a better transgender ally, a panel discussion for queer educators, and a campus prom hosted by the student group Queer and Trans People of Color. Among the special guest speakers to visit campus were actor and LGBTQ activist Stephanie Beatriz and writer and physicist Kate Greene. The monthlong festivities concluded on April 26 with the presentation of the Catalyst Awards, which recognize members of campus and the local community for their commitment to promoting LGBTQ inclusion.

University of Utah
The University of Utah hosted Pride Week in late March with the theme “Solidarity.” Officials stated that the theme represents the campus LGBTQ community’s commitment to stand with marginalized groups by protecting the sovereignty of Indigenous nations, promoting racial justice movements, and defending transgender communities. Some of the events hosted by the university’s LGBT Resource Center included Queer Prom, a Religious Solidarity Panel, and Pride Paint night. Writer and activist Raquel Willis, who is dedicated to Black transgender liberation, delivered the keynote speech on March 29.

To honor Pride Week at the University of Utah (U of U), the well-known Block U on campus was wrapped in the colors of the Progress Pride flag. Photo courtesy U of U

Vincennes University
Vincennes University embraces the ideas and perspectives of a diverse pool of talented people of every background, race and life experience. As Indiana’s first institution of higher learning, Vincennes University has a rich history of serving the diverse populations of Indiana and beyond. Now in our third century of existence, VU remains committed to the values of diversity, equity and inclusion for the students, employees and communities we serve.

Vincennes University offers employees a wide variety of career paths within the campuses of Vincennes, Jasper, Indianapolis and Gibson County, Indiana. In addition, VU is a strong leader in developing Early College statewide and military sites throughout the nation. VU provides faculty and staff with great opportunities and benefits for health, paid leave and retirement plans throughout their time here on campus.

Vincennes University has open full-time and part-time opportunities in Administration/Professional Staff, Faculty/Adjunct Faculty and Support Staff. For more information about joining the Trailblazer family please visit: https://www.vinu.edu/employment.
Committed to Our LGBTQ+ Patients, Visitors, and Employees

MUSC is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive experience for our students, employees, patients and their families. We are proud to be recognized as a 2022 Top Performer nationwide and Leader in LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.
Beyond Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigners: Creating A New Vision for Asian American Empowerment and Belonging

By Yvette Alex-Assensoh, PhD, JD

One hundred and twenty-five. That is the number of times that a Black man punched an elderly Asian American woman, without any provocation, as she entered her apartment in New York City in March.

This brutal and senseless beating was wrong, and the perpetrator must be appropriately punished. As anti-Asian hate crimes continue unabated, these incidents have rekindled the national discussion around “Stop Asian Hate.” More specifically, this recent spate of hate crimes has put the spotlight on tensions between Asian American and Black communities, despite evidence that anti-Asian hate — from the 1880s’ Chinese Exclusion Act to the 1940s’ Internment of 100,000 Japanese American citizens to today — is as American as baseball, collard greens, and apple pie.

While our country is long overdue for an exploration of the racialized conflicts that pit different racial groups against one another, much of the national discussion currently taking place is repeating mistakes of the past by framing these incidents as if they exist in a vacuum. Make no mistake: We condemn the violence targeting Asian Americans. Full stop. Yet the pathway to understanding and addressing anti-Asian violence does not lie in focusing only on individual incidents. We must condemn such violence in unambiguous terms while also confronting how centuries of discrimination and oppression fuel it in myriad ways.

Claire Jean Kim, a Korean American, developed a theory of racial triangulation in the 1990s that provides a spot-on explanation of the structural factors currently at play. Because Asians and Asian Americans are considered neither White nor Black, Kim argues that Asian Americans across ethnicities are stereotyped as both perpetual foreigners and model minorities. In this context, they often serve as a foil or wedge in the historical and ongoing racialized contestation between Blacks and Whites.

As America’s designated model minority, Asian Americans are positioned above other marginalized racial groups on the hierarchy of White supremacy. Asian Americans are valorized vis-à-vis Blacks and, by extension, Latinx and Native Americans too. The thinly veiled implication of designating Asian Americans as the model minority is that if Black, Latinx, and Native people just worked and studied harder, they too could achieve the success of Asian Americans. This trope is also used to explain the presence of Asian American stores in urban neighborhoods where racism in the form of redlining, poor quality schools, and over-policing has created a hand-to-mouth existence for Black and, increasingly, Latinx residents, and where Asian Americans who own businesses — many of them small and struggling — are sometimes seen as unfriendly and exploitative.

The most recent use of the model minority paradigm involves a small group of Asian Americans as plaintiffs (with the help of White-led law firms) in a challenge to race-conscious admissions policies at Harvard University. If successful, this lawsuit would undermine decades of work from civil rights leaders and allies, including Asian Americans, across racial lines.

This challenge has been filed despite the fact that some Asian American ethnic groups suffer from poverty and poor educational contexts that make race-conscious admissions important. Most significantly, in light of historical and contemporary discriminatory structures, race-conscious admissions are beneficial for everyone. Yet White supremacy and American racialization processes elevate some Asian Americans while simultaneously setting them up to be scapegoated, attacked, and excluded from important conversations. That’s where the other aspect of Kim’s thesis comes into play — the idea that Asian Americans are also seen as perpetual foreigners.

Who can forget how President Donald Trump manipulated this trope by characterizing COVID-19 as the “China virus,” creating an environment where violence and attacks against this population proliferated? In fact,
according to research from the nonprofit group Stop AAPI Hate, a total of 10,905 hate incidents targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders was reported between March 19, 2020 and December 31, 2021.

This violence is borne disproportionately by women. March 2022 marked the one-year anniversary of the mass shooting of six Asian American women by a White gunman in Atlanta. In a media context where this demographic is portrayed as exotic and hypersexualized, these senseless killings are not merely someone having a bad day. Rather, they are the outcome of structural stereotypes that give way to deadly violence.

Sadly, since Asian Americans are also portrayed as the model minority, incidents of violence against and by them are often downplayed, leaving America’s fastest growing minority group out of vital conversations regarding their political power and their lives. This lack of visibility reinforces the narrative that all is well with Asian Americans who are actually suffering in silence.

If the trope of Asian–Black conflict is bankrupt, and our conversations about anti-Asian hate are too simplistic to be effective, what is the pathway to better understanding? As institutions of higher education, the path forward must include us. We must identify and reward the kind of scholarship that addresses the historical and structural underpinnings of contemporary conflicts. This has to be done not only in our tenure and promotion processes, but also in legitimizing scholarship and engagement with communities, nonprofits, and other organizations that are working at the grassroots level to create understanding and build community across racial and ethnic groups. We must take sides in ways that shine the spotlight on fairness and justice. We must incorporate these issues into our fundraising, governance structures, and our town-gown visions for a better future.

What would happen if Blacks, Native Americans, and Latinx people who have mastered the art and science of vocalizing, advocating, and pressing for change shared their strategies with various Asian American ethnicities who, in turn, practiced them? Also, what would happen if Asian American groups who have penetrated educational and economic systems that have been closed to Native American, Black, and Latinx individuals used their privilege to ensure fairness, justice, and access for everyone? What if White co-conspirators as well as financially able Black, Latinx, and Native Americans used their privilege, voice, and power to dismantle the racist structures that are creating an existential crisis for us all? We have to recognize, dismantle, and then build new relationships and structures. That is the path to the just and democratic society that we aspire to be.

Yvette Alex-Assensoh, PhD, JD, is the vice president of equity and inclusion and a professor in the department of political science at the University of Oregon.
In the May 2022 issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity, we reported on the challenges college students currently face when it comes to finding affordable housing. In part 2 of this report, INSIGHT explores the impact of the housing crisis on faculty and staff and the approaches some colleges and universities are taking to ensure they can recruit and retain a talented workforce.
The shortage of affordable housing for students, faculty, and staff has been a longstanding issue for colleges and universities in densely populated areas such as southern California and New York City. But a rise in housing costs caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a nationwide problem for higher education institutions.

Increased rental and home purchase costs can be especially difficult for faculty and staff who are burdened by education debt. In a 2021 National Education Association (NEA) survey of more than 400 college faculty, 46 percent reported that they are paying off student loan debt. Out of more than 250 higher education support professionals — which the survey classifies as graduate teaching and research assistants — 57 percent said they are making student loan payments. As people of color are even more likely to have education debt and in larger amounts than their White counterparts, underrepresented faculty are disproportionately burdened by such loans, according to the NEA.

With these considerations in mind, more faculty and staff are prioritizing the cost of living, and especially housing, when job hunting. Accordingly, universities in locations where affordable housing is scarce are feeling the effects on their employee recruitment and retention efforts. This has been the case for California State University, East Bay (CSUEB), located in Hayward near the San Francisco Bay Area, which has some of the highest housing prices in the nation.

“If we have faculty who resign to take a position elsewhere, often we hear the cost of living is better where [they are] going, so it is a factor,” says Cathy Sandeen, PhD, the president of CSUEB. “And in terms of people who decide not to take jobs [with CSUEB], they’ll say the salary isn’t high enough. Sometimes we can move it up a little bit, but oftentimes when they’re looking at their total cost of living, housing is a big part of it.”

The CSUEB Faculty and Staff Housing Task Force, established in 2019, is working to solve some of these issues for university employees. It is currently conducting a market demand survey to determine if there is interest in developing on-campus housing for workers and students with families, according to Martin Castillo, EdD, co-chair of the task force and assistant vice president of campus life at CSUEB. The university is also looking into providing transitional housing options to offer some security for faculty and staff who are searching for long-term solutions.

Across the country, many other higher education institutions are also exploring strategies to defray housing costs for their workforce. Several schools, such as Temple University in Philadelphia and the University of Washington in Seattle, have implemented programs to assist employees with down payments on new homes. Fort Lewis College, located in Durango, Colorado, took this approach in late 2021 after a survey revealed that faculty and staff were concerned about exorbitant housing prices in the area. Thus far, the college has invested $1 million in its assistance program.

For some colleges, however, the most direct solution is to simply build more housing. This is not easy for all institutions, as it depends on the resources, funding, and land available. One school that has been successful in this endeavor is San José State University in California, which announced plans in 2020 to convert a state office building near campus into a housing development with 800 to 1,200 residential units for faculty, staff, graduate students, and students with families. The new development, which will be available for sale at rates below market value, is expected to be completed by 2025, then-university President Mary Papazian said during a news conference. Papazian went on to describe the need for housing as “one of the most urgent issues of our time.”

At CSUEB, Sandeen echoes this sentiment and says it is vital for institutions to address housing barriers head-on before they become serious impediments to employee recruitment and retention.

“This is not a problem that is going to disappear,” Sandeen says. “It’s a problem that is with us today and is likely to get worse.”

She says it is also important to develop partnerships with local community organizations that are working to change laws and policies to allow the construction of more affordable housing. “It’s a huge issue for us to be able to retain these really critical [faculty and staff] positions,” explains Sandeen. “It is our job to think about what we can do to help employees with these housing challenges.”

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity. CSUEB is a 2014-2019 INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award recipient.
The Negative Effects of Recent Anti-LGBTQ Legislation Spread to Higher Education

By Lisa O’Malley

As LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff come together to celebrate Pride, a cloud looms overhead. Across the country, conservative lawmakers are leveling legislative attacks against the LGBTQ community to roll back the rights that this population has worked tirelessly to obtain.

In 2022 alone, more than 300 anti-LGBTQ bills have been introduced across nearly 30 states, according to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). While the bills vary in scope and focus, a vast majority target transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. Much of the legislation involves banning transgender girls from participating in youth sports and preventing trans students at public schools from using restrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their gender identity. As of publication, 20 states have passed or proposed laws that restrict access to gender-affirming medical services to minors, according to the bipartisan campaign Freedom for All Americans. Six include significant penalties for parents who help their children access this type of medical care.

The recent spate of legislation also takes aim at K-12 schools by seeking to curtail classroom discussion and instruction involving sexual orientation or gender identity, with Florida’s Parental Rights in Education law, or the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, as the most notable example. Similar measures, all of which use language advocating for “parental rights” or “curriculum transparency,” have been proposed in at least eight other states, including Arizona, New Hampshire, and South Carolina.

Although most of these bills are directed at K-12 students, the discriminatory message they are sending to the LGBTQ community is echoing throughout higher education as well.

“These proposals have implications no matter where you live,” Ellen Kahn, senior director of programs and partnerships at the HRC, recently told Politico. “You feel it. Just like a wildfire whose ash and smoke hits you from thousands of miles away.”

Kahn, who advises parents of LGBTQ teens on which colleges to consider, noted that safety has become a top consideration for many families of LGBTQ children, especially in the wake of bans on gender-affirming medical care.

Some in academia are taking notice of the effects that such legislation has on students interested in becoming teachers at a time when the education field is already facing major labor shortages.

“I’ve had a few LGBTQ students who say they are looking forward to being teachers but are worried about their status in the classroom and what kind of limitations the job may have for them,” says Terry Allison, PhD, an English professor at Indiana University South Bend (IUSB).

Allison, who served as chancellor of IUSB from 2013 to 2018, is also the executive director of the organization LGBTQ_
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Being LGBTQ on Campus

In May, the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law released a report detailing the experiences of LGBTQ students at colleges and universities across the U.S. The data, based on survey responses of more than 800 LGBTQ students, reveals how social and political forces can influence where a student chooses to attend school and how welcome they feel on campus.

Notably, 22 percent of LGBTQ survey takers said they chose to attend college in a different city or state to seek a more welcoming climate, compared with 5 percent of non-LGBTQ respondents. Nearly one-third of those who are LGBTQ also said they chose to attend college away from home to get away from their families, compared with 14 percent of non-LGBTQ students.

LGBTQ students were more likely to experience bullying, assault, and sexual harassment on campus and to struggle with mental health. The findings align with previous research showing this population is more vulnerable to such challenges and thus needs tailored campus support services to promote their academic and socioemotional well-being.

Presidents in Higher Education, which seeks to advance “education and advocacy regarding LGBTQ issues within the global academy and for the public at large,” according to its website. Allison says many of the group’s members, especially leaders of state colleges and universities, have shared their concerns about the recent wave of anti-LGBTQ laws. “Everybody is aware, and people are wondering what we’re really supposed to be teaching future teachers and how to support those that are already in the field,” he says.

It is an especially fraught topic because the implications of measures such as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill set a worrisome precedent for the future of higher education. “The concern is always that if they’re successful in a state like Florida at the K-12 level, are they going to turn to higher education next?” Allison says.

LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education plans to address the current “moral panic” over classroom discussions on sexuality, race, and gender during a panel event at its upcoming Leadership Institute in June, he says. The panel will bring teaching professionals from the K-12 sector together with higher education leaders — as well as a speaker from the nonprofit organization The Trevor Project — to collaborate on ways to fight back against censorship and ensure that students have access to age-appropriate learning materials about LGBTQ issues and other important topics.

The group also announced in late April that it will boycott states that have passed laws discriminating against LGBTQ individuals or prohibiting instruction on race, gender, or sexuality. As a result, states such as Florida and Texas will no longer be considered as sites for the organization’s meetings and events.

Several state governments — including those in California, New York, and Washington — have issued similar travel restrictions in recent years. In 2016, California banned nonessential travel for government employees to states with anti-LGBTQ laws. These prohibitions extend to faculty and staff at state university systems. In April of this year, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors also voted to suspend official travel to Texas and Florida due to their discriminatory laws.

Although some higher education leaders, especially those at state universities or religious institutions, may be limited in what they can publicly say in support of LGBTQ students and faculty, Allison believes that more organizations and officials will begin to take a stand.

In February, several major academic organizations jointly signed an open letter to state legislatures around the country calling on them to halt legislation that endangers LGBTQ youth. Among the signees were the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the National Association for College Admission Counseling, and the National Education Association.

“All students need to see their identities and experiences reflected in books and lessons, and anti-bullying programs must explicitly address anti-LGBTQ bias along with other bias-based bullying,” the letter reads. “The erasure of LGBTQ+ people from classroom discussions deprives all students of an inclusive and diverse education.”

Editor’s note: INSIGHT contacted more than a dozen higher education institutions in states where anti-LGBTQ bills have been passed to see how the legislation is affecting their campus communities, but none agreed to comment for this story.

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
The University of Kentucky is proud to welcome J’Lissabeth Faughn (she, her, hers) as the new director of the Office of LGBTQ* Resources within the Office for Student Success. An experienced leader with a passion for social justice and student development, Faughn brings a rich history of student advocacy from similar roles in California, Iowa, and Missouri.

As an advocate and educator, Faughn strives to help students connect to their campus and challenges them to succeed in all facets of their lives. Her leadership of the Office of LGBTQ* Resources will continue to build on the unit’s rich history of programming and services that contribute to UK being recognized as a top 30 institution in the country for LGBTQ* inclusion and safety.

Her goal: putting students first through creating opportunities for them to engage as their full and authentic selves.

At the University of Kentucky, we are creating spaces for inclusivity to thrive.

Learn more about UK Student Success and the Office of LGBTQ* Resources at studentsuccess.uky.edu
‘There is Solidarity Here’

A Q&A with LGBTQ College Presidents

By Mariah Stewart

While the number of openly LGBTQ faculty, staff, and administrators on college and university campuses has risen in recent years, this demographic remains vastly underrepresented at the highest levels of academic leadership. Today, fewer than 40 college presidents in the U.S. identify as LGBTQ, according to the national organization LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education.

Those who have assumed these roles stand as pioneers and role models in the fight for equal rights in education and the workplace. INSIGHT recently spoke with five current and former LGBTQ campus leaders regarding their path to the presidency, the rewards and challenges of being out in higher education, and their visions for the future.

Isiaah Crawford, PhD, became the first African American president of the University of Puget Sound, a private liberal arts school in Tacoma, Washington, in 2016. He is also a licensed clinical psychologist and serves as a professor of psychology at the university.

Raymond Crossman, PhD, was appointed president of Adler University in Chicago in 2003. In 2017, he became the first college president in the U.S. to publicly reveal that he is HIV-positive. Today, he is recognized as the longest serving openly LGBTQ college president in North America.

Erika Endrijonas, PhD, has served as president of Pasadena City College in California since 2019. She is also the chair of the California Community College Athletic Association Board and co-chair of the national LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education Board.

Richard Helldobler, PhD, was named president of William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey, in 2018. He previously served as interim president of Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago from 2016 to 2018.

Regina Stanback Stroud, PhD, was president of Skyline College in San Bruno, California, from 2011 to 2019. She is currently the CEO and founder of RSS Consulting, a professional development consulting company.

Editor’s note: The following responses have been edited for clarity and length.

Have you experienced any adversity as an administrator in higher education because of your LGBTQ identity, and if so, how did you overcome it?

Crawford: I am sure I have, and there is the intersectionality of me being a Black man as well. Early on, I made a promise to myself that I was never going to allow anyone to define me and determine my personal sense of value. It’s been hard sometimes, but I feel like I’ve held to that. I don’t focus on the negative, and that has served me well. I don’t turn a blind eye to it, but I don’t let it override my outlook and what I feel like I can achieve if I work hard.

Helldobler: I think the biggest challenge for me was when I was getting ready to interview for an ACE (American Council on Education) fellowship in 2005-2006. A director told me, “While it’s not impossible, it will be difficult for you to be a university president as an openly gay man because many boards of trustees won’t hire you.” At the time, Chuck Middleton at Roosevelt University was one of the only openly gay college presidents in the country. I quickly got to know him, and he was really a great mentor in terms of guiding me toward the path.

There are always job descriptions that people will forward you, and when you read the mission of the institution, you know they’re not going to hire you. I sort of stayed away from those and ended up in places that were very affirming and great at embracing not only my talents but who I am as a person.
Stroud: In the intersectionality of my race and my gender identity, my race is prominent. My gender identity and sexual orientation are not. Because of that, I know I have heterosexual privilege bestowed upon me by default. I met and married my wife later in life. Because I was a professional, well-resourced woman with many privileges — though racial privilege was not one of them — I had options and could choose not to put up with bigotry when it came to my LGBTQ identity.

[That is] very different from my experience as an African American woman. When I was at Peralta Community College District as the chancellor, I experienced unrelenting hostility and bigotry, with a particular force of anti-Black racism, particularly from the predominantly White faculty in collusion with faculty members on the board. Could it have been related to my queer status as well? I don't know. But I am an older Black woman from the segregated South. I have lived and loved in this skin for an awful long time, and I am crystal clear on what anti-Blackness and bigotry look like.

How has your LGBTQ identity helped you navigate as an administrator?

Crossman: We write about this in our upcoming book, *LGBTQ Leadership in Higher Education*, about if there is something different about how LGBTQ people lead. It’s what I call queer intuition. My experience of always scanning the environment to avoid danger or to find other queer people has led to me being very intuitive and always being interested in the minority viewpoint, dissenting opinions, or out-of-the-box solutions. That’s been an advantage for me as a leader.

In the gay world, we talk about how our fabulousness comes from the struggle of living in a heteronormative world, and the process of finding and loving ourselves leads to us reaching to be fabulous. That’s probably why I had the audacity to accept the presidency at the age of 38, when most presidents are much older. I also think that my willingness to show my mess, to show that I’m always working it out, comes from being gay. I’ve realized the power of vulnerable leadership, and it helps me be a better president when I show my process openly to stakeholders. I’ve come to vulnerable leadership because of being gay.

Helldobler: Us LGBTQIA+ folks don’t necessarily visually identify in the way that other marginalized populations do. We are sort of always self-identifying, and I think that when you do that, it gives you a better sense of how to read a room and how to position an argument that is affirmational rather than adversarial. It makes you a better listener and more intuitive. Those are skills that the LGBTQ population bring to any organization.

What should straight, cisgender campus leadership and boards of trustees know about their LGBTQ presidents, faculty, and staff?

Crawford: Most importantly, just remember that we’re not unicorns. We’re human beings that happen to be well prepared for these roles and committed to the missions that we have been asked to support. That is what we bring to our institutions. Also, be open and curious about us, and recognize that it’s an “us” and a “we” and never a “they” or the “other.”

Crossman: The boards of higher education seem to be understanding this more, but they need leaders to be diverse, as the communities in colleges and universities are. Boards need to think about that when they hire. In general, things are better for LGBTQ people than they were a decade ago, but they’re not good yet. It’s important that we don’t think that just because marriage equality passed and some other
freedoms have been realized that the human rights struggle is over, because it’s not, as we’re seeing in Florida and Texas and other places.

**Endrijonas:** Let’s not assume everybody’s heterosexual. A gay person doesn’t come out once in their lifetime; they spend a lifetime coming out.

**Helldobler:** It’s always great to say we’ve hired the first Black woman or the first Latino male, but symbolically, if you’re a White male and you present as one, even though you’re a member of the LGBTQ population, you bring a different skillset. That’s important for boards to understand. We are part of the conversation, but we’re often marginalized in the DEI space. My personal goal is to increase the number of LGBTQ leaders in higher education. I’m absolutely laser-focused on that, and I hope boards are paying attention.

**Stroud:** That we navigate heteronormative cultures every day, all day, and it can be exhausting. These positions are political — so often responsibilities involve spouses — and institutions need to be prepared to recognize families that show up in many forms. They need to know that talent, creativity, and professional expertise come in all forms of identity and intersectionality. They need to make themselves a lot smarter about how to be inclusive and non-judgmental.

**What advice would you give to LGBTQ individuals who aspire to become top administrators or presidents in higher education?**

**Crawford:** If you’re curious about it, explore it. Don’t be afraid of it. Higher education is ready for you, and there will be people to support you if you want to step into this world. It is very rewarding, and you have a contribution to make.

Mentorship is important, being able to talk with people who may sometimes see things in you that you don’t see in yourself. It can give you confidence that you might not have and push you a little bit to not be afraid.

**Endrijonas:** It’s possible, and you can do it. Look for a mentor. Look for organizations like [the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education] because we have mentoring available and we’re happy to help.

**Do you have any concerns for LGBTQ college presidents whose campuses are located in states that are passing anti-LGBTQ bills?**

**Crawford:** They are certainly on my mind, and I would want them to know that we are here to be supportive. The development of this legislation is troubling to many of us. We want to do what we can to continue to promote the human dignity of all citizens of this country. And we want to be supportive of not just the presidents but our colleagues at those institutions in whatever ways that we can. There is solidarity here.

**Crossman:** I don’t necessarily have concerns for a president, because they’re in a privileged position. People have gone after me as a leader even in a very blue state and city because I’m gay, but when you’re in a leadership position, you’re less vulnerable. What I am concerned about are the students, faculty, and staff who identify as LGBTQ in these states because of the damage that’s going to come from these changing laws and the narratives that are going to be promoted.

**Endrijonas:** I am concerned about people’s ability to feel safe and keep their jobs, and I’m concerned about students who don’t feel like they can be honest. I’m currently the chair of the California Community College Athletic Association Board, and so the issue of transgender athletes has come up. We have a policy, but we have to really watch what happens with the national scene. I have for many years as a feminist believed biology is not destiny, it’s all about social construction. But when we’re talking about transgender athletes, it’s a situation where we do have to have that conversation about biology, and it’s a hard one.

**Helldobler:** It’s hard to be in a marginalized population in these times. You have to make a decision about whether you’re going to stay and be a pioneer and fight the good fight or not. But I really believe in what Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, that the pendulum will always swing the other way. I believe it’s swinging in the wrong direction right now, but it will swing back the other way, and when it does, it almost never goes back to what it was before. I hope that they keep that thought in their minds, in their hearts, and in their souls as they’re doing this difficult work during this time.

Mariah Stewart is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
The University of Louisville is home to a community of diverse perspectives and backgrounds. Working together, we address global challenges and drive needed change to build a better world here and beyond.

Consistently named as a top university for supporting the LGBTQ community, including receiving a five-star rating from Campus Pride Index, UofL and its LGBT Center are committed to building a welcoming, LGBTQ+ friendly environment where students, faculty and staff are encouraged to be themselves and discover their path to success.

Take Shades, a student organization devoted to empowering LGBTQ+ students of color by providing support and public advocacy for members and allies in a world where race and sexuality intersect. Shades is just one of several groups and programs at the LGBT Center committed to celebrating and supporting Cardinal Community members of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions. By striving for inclusion, UofL is creating a dynamic Community of Care.

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Georgia State University Launches Student Success Institute to Help Colleges Increase Graduation Rates and Close Equity Gaps

By Mariah Stewart

Over the past decade, Georgia State University (GSU) has achieved the remarkable feat of increasing its graduation rate by more than 60 percent. It has also closed equity gaps, as Black, Latinx, and Pell Grant-eligible students are now graduating at the same or higher rates than the overall student body, according to Timothy Renick, PhD, executive director of GSU’s new National Institute for Student Success (NISS) and a professor of religious studies.

The university’s progress in this area is credited to several innovative strategies, including a data-driven approach to academic advising and other areas of student support. It launched the NISS in fall 2021 to help other colleges and universities analyze institutional barriers to graduation and eliminate disparities based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic levels.

“We can not only raise graduation rates, but we can disproportionately help students from underserved backgrounds,” Renick explains.

As one of the nation’s largest Minority-Serving Institutions, GSU has earned a reputation as a forerunner of innovation and equity in higher education because of its success in reversing declining completion rates. Renick, who has served as an administrator in enrollment and student success at the university since 2014, was named to Fortune magazine’s 2021 list of the World’s 50 Greatest Leaders.

In recent years, as news of its data-informed methods has spread, more than 500 colleges and universities have sought GSU’s assistance with closing achievement gaps and improving retention. On any given day, administrative teams from dozens of colleges would visit campus to learn about the university’s proactive support methods, such as microgrants for students in need, according to Renick.

“It got to be exhausting, because it turned out that we were spending seemingly as much time hosting other campuses as we were doing

The Services of The National Institute for Student Success

The National Institute for Student Success at Georgia State University provides the following services to colleges and universities seeking to improve completion rates and close equity gaps:

- An accelerator offering an open-access library and teaching/research portal that aggregates best practices, develops student success playbooks, offers webinars, and fuels innovation through experiences

- Diagnostic analysis, including an in-depth, team-based diagnostic process featuring surveys, data inquiries, and interviews between NISS specialists and institutional representatives, resulting in a customized Readiness Playbook

- Cohort coaching, with peer-to-peer NISS-facilitated learning opportunities (working sessions, discussions, and specialist support) for institutions at similar points of departure and facing similar challenges

- Individual consulting, or ongoing, personalized attention and customized program and process implementation assistance from NISS coaches based on an institution’s characteristics and challenges
For Those Who Inspire Change

TURN YOUR BIG IDEA INTO BIG IMPACT WITH A DRPH IN LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY, AND EQUITY FROM TULANE UNIVERSITY.
The future of our democracy depends upon our ability to create inclusive and equitable communities to which everyone is invited to contribute their ideas, gifts and enthusiasms.”

Valerie Smith, President of Swarthmore College

Marah Stewart is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity. Georgia State University is a 2012, 2014, and 2016–2021 recipient of the INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.
Of the many changes to the higher education landscape since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps one of the most surprising — and most controversial — is the drastic decline in popularity of standardized college entrance exams.

Prior to the pandemic, approximately 54 percent of the nation’s colleges required ACT or SAT scores for admission, according to data from the National Center for Fair and Open Testing. By the start of the spring 2022 semester, that figure had dropped to less than 25 percent.

While the use of standardized exams in college admissions had begun declining in recent years due to questions about their efficacy and fairness, most of the schools that eliminated them in 2020 did so because in-person tests were canceled to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Many pledged to continue going test-optional during the 2021-2022 admissions cycle to accommodate students already grappling with the challenges wrought by remote learning and upended academic schedules.

Now, higher education appears divided over whether these requirements should be reinstated. Advocates for eliminating the ACT and SAT have long argued that they are biased against underrepresented applicants, and many who support using these tests acknowledge that students from more privileged backgrounds have the upper hand when it comes to affording the time and money required for test prep courses and tutors. Yet others believe that standardized entrance exams actually support diversity in admissions and are more reliable in demonstrating academic potential than extracurricular activities, recommendation letters, and other factors that tend to benefit middle- and upper-income students.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) took this stance when it announced at the end of March 2022 that it was reinstating the SAT after going test-optional in July 2020. “Our research shows standardized tests help us better assess the academic preparedness of all applicants, and also help us identify socioeconomically disadvantaged students who lack access to advanced coursework or other enrichment opportunities that would otherwise demonstrate their readiness for MIT,” Stu Schmill, the dean of admissions and student financial services, wrote in a blog post on March 28. “We believe a requirement is more equitable and transparent than a test-optional policy.”

Schmill’s detailed post explaining MIT’s decision notes that his office has a dedicated research team who redoubled their efforts during the pandemic to understand how to best evaluate academic preparedness among applicants. Their research revealed that standardized testing, especially in math, significantly improves their ability to accurately predict a student’s chance of success. While exams other than the ACT and SAT do provide some indication of student success, these options are generally more socioeconomically restricted, Schmill writes. “[A]s a result, not having SAT/ACT scores to consider tends to raise socioeconomic barriers to demonstrating readiness for our education, relative to having them, given these other inequalities.”

Some experts have cautioned other colleges not to let MIT’s rationale — with its heavy emphasis on math and science education — influence their decision in regard to reinstating entrance exams across the board. Those who oppose such tests have long argued that they do not truly reflect a student’s ability to succeed across a variety of disciplines.

The California State University (CSU) system adopted this position when it announced in March 2022 that it would continue its COVID-era suspension of the ACT and SAT indefinitely. As CSU is the largest four-year public university system in the U.S. — with an enrollment of nearly 500,000 students — experts say its decision could hold major sway in how other institutions choose to proceed.

“This decision aligns with the California State University’s continued efforts to level the playing field and provide greater access to a high-quality college degree for students from all backgrounds,” CSU Chancellor Steve Relyea explained.
in a statement. “In essence, we are eliminating our reliance on a high-stress, high-stakes test that has shown negligible benefit and providing our applicants with greater opportunities to demonstrate their drive, talents, and potential for success.”

In an interview with CBS affiliate KPIX, Kathryn Palmieri, CSU East Bay’s executive director of academic advising and career education, said that these exams simply do not measure what her school is looking for. They may be useful practice for students who aspire to rigorous postgraduate programs, such as law or medical school, but otherwise they serve as barriers — not gateways — to higher education.

“I do also recognize that private schools will have a different take on this, and smaller systems might choose something different, and that’s okay,” Palmieri said. “I think we are setting the bar for our students and for our communities, and I’m very proud of us. It’s a big, bold move for California.”

Eliminating exams means more options for holistic admissions, she adds. Prior to the pandemic, CSU primarily made admissions decisions based on entrance exam scores combined with high school GPAs. Now, without these tests, its Admissions Advisory Council is proposing that new eligibility criteria be instated for the first time since 1965, according to CalMatters, a nonprofit news agency. While the council has yet to submit official recommendations, the criteria is expected to largely reflect those adopted during the pandemic. These include a minimum 2.5 GPA and certain socioeconomic factors, including whether an applicant attended a low-income high school or is a first-generation student. The system has also started looking at whether a student had commitments in high school that may have detracted from academics, including job, volunteer, and family obligations.

Some CSU campuses and programs, especially those that receive more qualified applicants than they are able to accept, may institute additional criteria, according to officials. The university’s current admissions software is sophisticated enough for this process, CalMatters reports.

CSU’s decision makes California the first state in which no public university requires ACT or SAT scores. The state’s other major system, the University of California (UC), announced in November 2021 as part of a settlement of a 2019 lawsuit that it would not reinstate entrance exam scores. In that case, the plaintiffs — including underrepresented students, advocacy groups, and the Compton Unified School District — alleged that standardized exams are biased against applicants of color and those from low-income backgrounds.

“We reached a conclusive decision that there isn’t right now a test or an assessment that we feel comfortable using in our admissions process,” Cecilia Estolano, chair of the UC Board of Regents, said in a statement about the decision.

Unlike CSU, the UC system requires applicants to submit essays and written responses, and it typically hires hundreds of part-time readers every admissions cycle, according to CalMatters. Its
most populous campus, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), spent $400,000 to $500,000 employing readers to review the 150,000 applications it received for fall 2022 — the greatest number of any school nationwide, the news agency reports.

Other prestigious colleges across the country are facing a similar surge in demand. The Common Application, or Common App, which is used by more than 900 higher education institutions, has found that selective institutions have seen a spike in interest since suspending entrance exam requirements, even as college enrollment overall has declined. Much of the increase is from historically underrepresented students, who are less likely to submit test scores when given the option, according to CommonApp.org.

While some of these institutions, like UCLA, rely on seasonal admissions employees, others are expanding or simply putting in more hours to handle the rise in demand. Cornell University experienced a 31 percent increase in applications after eliminating entrance exams. Many staff members worked additional hours to ensure the school could adequately review all of its new applications, said Shawn Felton, executive director of undergraduate admissions, in the June 2021 issue of INSIGHT.

Emory University has seen a 20 percent rise in applicants. Each application gets reviewed by two admissions officers, and those deemed too close to call are discussed by a larger committee, according to a recent PBS News report. Rather than considering test scores, admissions officers are looking at the whole context of the student, including assessing what opportunities were available to them during high school, according to Director of Admissions Mark Butt. As a result, diversity at the university is up, with 33 percent of students enrolled this spring coming from historically underrepresented backgrounds, reports PBS News.

As with many schools across the U.S., Emory is currently assessing how its test-optional policies are playing out in the classroom by tracking how students who were admitted without exam scores are faring academically. In the meantime, it plans to forgo the ACT and SAT requirement for at least one more year, but whether it — or most of America’s colleges and universities — will permanently eliminate these tests remains far from certain.

Mariah Bohanon is the managing editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.

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**EQUITY IN ACTION**

**University of Massachusetts Amherst**

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- Events & Conferences
- Workshops and trainings for students, faculty, and staff such as our LGBTQIA+ Out & Proud: Career Insights event

Isenberg School of Management
Diversity and Inclusion
More transgender individuals are out on college campuses today than ever before, but many still experience harassment and discrimination, according to a 2019 report from the American Psychological Association.

Furthermore, violence against this population is at an all-time high, with last year being the deadliest on record for transgender and gender nonconforming people in the U.S., according to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

“This horrific violence is fueled by racism, toxic masculinity, misogyny, and transphobia,” Tori Cooper, director of community engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative at the HRC Foundation, said in a November 2021 press release. “We need everyone to join us in empowering transgender leaders, building safer, stronger communities, and reducing stigma.”

A recent wave of anti-LGBTQ state legislation, including bans on transgender athletes and gender-affirming health care for young people, compounds these issues.

U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health Rachel Levine, the highest-ranking federal transgender official, recently condemned such laws at the Out for Health Conference at Texas Christian University School of Medicine in April. “The language of medicine and science is being used to drive people to suicide,” she warned.

Faced with these challenges, some colleges and universities have begun engaging transgender-specific training to cultivate welcoming and safe environments on campus and in their communities.

Many institutions address these issues through Safe Zone programs, which train LGBTQ allies on college campuses. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill LGBTQ Center, for example, recently hosted a transgender-focused Safe Zone training in April. The event was designed to make the “[u]niversity community a safer and more supportive place for all Carolina students, faculty, and staff members by creating a network of allies who have basic knowledge about transgender and nonbinary communities,” according to the center’s website.

Other colleges have developed their own transgender-specific training. This spring, Purdue University’s LGBTQ Center offered Trans Inclusion Training workshops via Zoom. Participants explored transgender identities and terminology, discussed relevant laws and policies that protect transgender and gender nonconforming people in higher education settings, and developed skills to support all LGBTQ individuals, according to Purdue’s website.

The University of Maryland recently launched a series of online training videos that can be accessed anytime via its YouTube channel and website. Topics include pronouns, trans-inclusive language, and race and intersectionality. The series was created as part of the university’s #TransTerps campaign, which aims to “improve campus climate for trans people by identifying, disseminating, and implementing good practices for trans inclusion.”

Some higher education institutions are working to spread these lessons beyond campus. The Southern Oregon University Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies program (SOU GSWS) offers Trans and Queer Training (TQT) for businesses, health care facilities, social service and nonprofit organizations, and K-12 schools as well as other colleges and universities across the U.S. The coaching includes information on affirming language, nonbinary genders, disability, and more.

The program launched in 2018 under the helm of Carey Jean Sojka, PhD, an assistant professor of GSWS at SOU. “I had personally been doing trainings prior to this, and the need for more education was apparent — both in general and in our region particularly,” she wrote in a recent email to INSIGHT. TQT tailors its training to each organization and places “a big emphasis on combining this education with the needs of the organization.”

Approximately 139,000 students at U.S. colleges and universities identify as transgender, Reuters reports.
(through training) with structural changes within the organization (such as policy changes, creating programs to support trans and queer leadership, and others),” according to Sojka.

Testimonials on SOU’s website highlight TQT’s impact. “Carey Sojka trained over 275 of our clinical staff on how we can create a more welcoming environment for our LGBTQ+ patients and employees at La Clinica,” states Jessica Wakefield, Learning and Development Manager of La Clinica, a health care facility focused on accessible care. “The discussions and revelations that occurred during and following training were incredible.”

SOU also launched the nation’s first transgender studies program in 2018. Offered as an academic certificate, it focuses on “social change and social justice for trans lives, addressing inequities, inequalities, empowerment, and resilience,” according to the SOU website.

Independent consulting businesses are also offering coaching for colleges and universities. The Transgender Training Institute (TTI) provides customized services that include professional and personal development, curricula, webinars, in-person sessions, and workshops for trainers and facilitators. It has worked with institutions such as Duke University and the State University of New York College at Cortland (SUNY Cortland).

In March 2020, SUNY Cortland had TTI participate in its second annual TransAction conference, a one-day event dedicated to exploring gender identity. Attendees listened to presentations about life experiences and received focused coaching on microaggressions and understanding nonbinary individuals. Faculty, students, and staff participated in both workshops.

Erin Morris, PhD, SUNY Cortland assistant professor of sports management, says the microaggression training created a lively discussion and, based on post-event survey results, had a significant impact on the participants. “It allowed a space for faculty, staff, and students to learn more about what microaggressions are and why they are important to address,” Morris wrote in an email to INSIGHT: “This is especially important as we have an increasing number of students who identify as trans and nonbinary on our campus.”

In February of this year, St. John’s University (SJU), a Catholic institution in New York City, offered TTI training after a campus climate assessment revealed that students felt university leadership had failed to clearly communicate its support of the LGBTQ+ community.

Many of the survey participants believed SJU could not be welcoming to LGBTQ+ individuals because of its Catholic mission, according to a 2021 report on the assessment. Some said they were hesitant to engage in support of the LGBTQ+ community out of concern of possible backlash from the school.

To remedy this problem, members of the campus community received 10 hours of training over the course of two days. The event was titled, “Creating Spaces for Transgender and Nonbinary College Students.” Trainers held five two-hour sessions for students, faculty, and staff at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels.

Having this level of support at religious universities — and in higher education more broadly — indicates that some campus leaders are trying to heed the advice of experts who say that allyship training is crucial for building inclusive communities. LGBTQ+ advocates promote this type of training as a vital building block for forging positive relationships with the transgender and nonbinary community.

“Learning to be an ally to the transgender people in your life, or to transgender people overall, is an ongoing process,” states the National Center for Transgender Equality. “One of the most important parts of being an ally to transgender people is learning what it means to be transgender.”

Mariah Stewart is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
SPECIAL REPORT: Performing and Fine Arts Schools

Colleges of fine arts have long been plagued by the same diversity, equity, and inclusion challenges that characterize higher education more broadly. However, with the arts playing a major role in the rise of social justice and anti-racism movements in recent years, these schools have begun to recognize the influence they possess in shaping public awareness and attitudes.

As a result, many fine arts schools and related organizations are now working to improve racial and ethnic representation, provide platforms for marginalized students and faculty to share their stories, and ensure that the arts are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Many of these efforts are aimed outward with the intention of making various disciplines — theater, music, fashion, and more — more equitable. Some are working to combat long-established racist tropes, appropriation, and tokenism within creative works and industries.

In this special section, INSIGHT highlights the various organizations, institutions, and programs working to advance social justice ideals within higher education and society at large by supporting students, faculty, creators, and audiences of all backgrounds.

University of Michigan Initiative Seeks to Improve Racial Equity in Classical Music

In an effort to improve racial equity in the field of classical music, the Michigan Orchestra Repertoire for Equity (MORE), an initiative by the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance (U-M SMTD), is commissioning 10 orchestral works from Black composers over the next decade. Since its launch in 2020, the initiative has added two compositions to the repertoire, the first of which was recorded in 2021 and performed in April 2022.

MORE’s inaugural release, “Tethered Voices,” was composed by U-M alum James Lee III and based on a poem about the racial justice movement following the murder of George Floyd. Kalena Bovell, the poem’s author, told The Michigan Daily that Lee’s work captured her expressions of frustration and anger surrounding the racism that Black communities face in the U.S.

“It’s a really powerful piece,” Bovell said of the composition. “Musically, when you take the words away, there’s such a darkness and depth to it. I think [Lee] really was able to pull out the emotions that I was feeling when I wrote those words.”

The second work commissioned by the MORE initiative, entitled “Tales: A Folklore Symphony,” was composed by U-M SMTD graduate Carlos Simon and performed in January 2022 by the University Symphony Orchestra. The 20-minute piece is based on Black American and African folk tales.

MORE’s third composition was written by renowned composer Nkeiru Okoye and based on the writings of Maya Angelou. It is set to premiere during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Kenneth Kiesler, U-M SMTD professor and MORE founder, told The Michigan Daily that he hopes the project will promote diversity among audiences and creators of this genre. “Classical music has an accurate reputation at times for being elitist and serving a very narrow audience,” Kiesler said. “I think this is a shame, because I know that this music is the greatest expression of the human spirit and that people from all kinds of backgrounds have important stories to share.”

Employment in the Arts

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts 14 percent growth in employment for professional artists — those who create art for sale and exhibition — between 2020 and 2030. For professionals in the performing arts, an increase in internet-only content and streaming sources is expected to contribute to similar levels of growth.

### Art and Design Faculty by Race and Ethnicity

- American Indian/Alaska Native = 0.3%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander = 0.3%
- Black = 3.9%
- Hispanic/Latinx = 4.9%
- Asian = 7.1%
- Other/Unknown = 7.6%
- White = 75.9%

Source: National Association of Schools of Art and Design/Higher Education Arts Data Services 2020-2021 Data Summaries
“Black, indigenous, and people of color have been drastically underrepresented in interior design, and they still are. NYSID is working to right historical wrongs from within our sphere of influence: interior design education.”

David Sprouls  
President, NYSID

The New York School of Interior Design offers multiple diversity scholarships and access to support, mentorship, and initiatives, like our Pre-College program scholarships, which are aimed at educating and encouraging high school students from traditionally underrepresented communities in interior design to enter the field. Know a future designer?

- 3 undergraduate programs  
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- Pre-College program
A virtual symposium series launched this year at the University of Arizona College of Fine Arts (UArizona CFA) seeks to highlight photography from Asia and the ways in which this art has shaped culture and history across the continent.

The series began in February with the three-day “Photography and Korea: History and Practice” symposium that featured panel discussions and keynote speakers, including curators from the Seoul Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. In April, it continued with “Photography and Taiwan: History and Practice,” which also held roundtables and special sessions with artists, curators, scholars, and museum directors who are experts in Taiwanese photography. Both symposiums included dialogue on the history of photographic practices in each country as well as the effects of colonialism, postcolonialism, gender issues, and national identity on Korean and Taiwanese photography movements.

The series was organized by Jeehey Kim, an assistant professor of art history at UArizona CFA, who was inspired to create the symposiums as a means of promoting content and resources on Asian photography to the campus community, according to a university news release.

“When I was in graduate school as a doctoral student, it was necessary for me to have knowledge of Ansel Adams, Walker Evans, and those canonical American photographers,” Kim said in the release. “But it was totally fine for me not to know the Japanese and Korean photographers of the same period.”

Kim plans to continue the series with events centered on “potential themes such as photography and archipelago or the tie between photography and militarism,” the release states.

To learn more, visit asianphotography.art.arizona.edu.
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Despite gradual improvements in recent years, the theater industry is still severely lacking in racial and ethnic representation, both professionally and at the collegiate level. Nearly 63 percent of dramatic arts degrees awarded in the U.S. are earned by White students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In New York City, the epicenter of the nation’s theater industry, nearly 60 percent of actors cast in professional productions are White, reports the Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC). Behind the curtain, this demographic accounts for close to 80 percent of writers, directors, and designers in the city’s theaters.

“Broadway tried to diversify its stages by using more inclusive casting in chorus roles, but still centered and elevated White stories and White leading characters,” explains the AAPAC’s 2018-2019 Visibility Report.

“There is a rising tension within the industry between just being represented and being truly ‘seen.’ Being seen means telling our stories.”

In an effort to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in this industry, some colleges and universities have begun developing courses, fellowships, and other endeavors to ensure that a wider range of people are represented both onstage and off.

In North Carolina, the Greater Greensboro Theater Consortium hosted the inaugural Amplify Black Voices Festival in April 2022 to promote more diversity in local theater. The consortium is composed of eight higher education institutions, including Bennett College, Elon University, and the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG). The festival featured four student-produced plays focused on Black stories and experiences, three of which were written by local playwrights.

“It’s about coming together to think about how we center the stories of the Black experience, pay attention to our students’ desire to be heard, and really home in on Black Lives Matter,” Natalie Sowell, director of UNCG’s School of Theatre, said in a news release.

Other colleges are teaming up with industry professionals to address this issue. In 2021, the Columbia University School of the Arts’ Theatre Management and Producing program partnered with Broadway producers Stephen Byrd and Alia Jones-Harvey to create the Front Row Productions Fellowship to encourage diverse professionals to pursue behind-the-scenes work. The fellowship offers access to university courses and resources, guidance from a network of mentors, opportunities to develop business and entrepreneurial skills, and support in producing a new play or
musical to those underrepresented in the field.

Improving representation among producers is crucial to advancing overall DEI efforts within the industry, Byrd and Jones-Harvey said in a joint statement.

“The lead producers, at the helm of every Broadway show, determine how diverse and inclusive it will be,” they explained. “As two in the shockingly small club of only five Black lead producers in the history of Broadway, our mandate has been to create opportunity for people of color on and off the stage. … We believe that establishing this pipeline is vital for the inclusive Broadway we imagine.”

At some institutions, faculty members are engaging with this topic in the classroom. At Harvard University, a new course titled “Broadway Bodies, or Representation on the Great White Way” examines cultural identity and representation in the theater industry. Students are required to analyze more than a dozen notable productions, including “Hamilton” and “West Side Story,” and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, gender, and disability play in casting.

“We want and deserve to see people like us represented truthfully and fairly,” Derek Miller, the professor of humanities who teaches the course, told The Harvard Gazette. “[W]e want and deserve to see people like us succeed in the arts and in other realms. And we need to see people who are not like us in those same ways so that we can better understand each other and live together in a multiracial and multicultural society.”

While some college and university-led initiatives are moving in the right direction to make the dramatic arts more representative, there is still a long way to go. Support and encouragement from nationwide organizations such as the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) is key to promoting equity at the institutional level. The ATHE’s annual conference in July, titled “Rehearsing the Possible: Practicing Reparative Creativity,” will primarily focus on what colleges can do to promote social justice, create more representation, and dismantle structural racism. One scheduled event includes the “Casting for Liberation” forum, which will invite members to discuss issues surrounding appropriation and representation in casting.

ATHE also plans to release its first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan in the near future that will outline new goals for enacting anti-racist and equity-based practices.

“As an organization we plan to move forward by reimagining racial justice within our organization, institutions and activities; modeling a path forward with our actions, not just our words,” reads an ATHE news release about its DEI goals. “Theatre and performance have the power to change the world; we have a responsibility to use that power.”

Erik Cliburn is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
The Art of Inclusion: Performing and Fine Arts Schools Bring People with Disabilities to the Forefront

By Lisa O’Malley
Participation in the arts can be an empowering means of expression for many people, but it is a world that has not always been welcoming to those who are marginalized, including individuals with disabilities.

Traditionally, this demographic has faced numerous barriers in the arts. Research has shown that people with disabilities are underrepresented as both subjects and creators across a range of artistic disciplines. Furthermore, studios, museums, and other cultural venues often lack appropriate accommodations for visitors and participants with disabilities, making it difficult for them to attend classes, plays, festivals, and more.

At some schools of fine arts, however, faculty and students are working to undo this culture of exclusion by adopting innovative practices and programming that welcome creators, subjects, and audiences with disabilities.

“The arts are quintessentially about the human experience, and everyone should have the opportunity to experience them,” wrote Jill Bradbury, PhD, chair for the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) Department for Performing Arts at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), in a recent email to INSIGHT.

The NTID has long been renowned for making theater more accessible to performers and attendees who are Deaf and hard of hearing (DHOH). Its Robert F. Panara Theatre, built in 1974, was designed using unique design elements to enhance accessibility for people with disabilities. These include the following:

- A higher-than-average rake, or theater stage, allowing better visual access for seats in the back
- Unique seating arrangements that help eliminate poor sightlines
- Sets and costumes that are designed to provide sightlines and a clear background for actors using American Sign Language (ASL)
- A visual communication system backstage for stage and technical crew
- Open captioning at all performances

Protactile and close vision interpreting are two types of communication systems used among people who are DHOH or Blind. Protactile communication entails the use of touch as a way to convey meaning and gain understanding of the surrounding environment. Deaf individuals who have residual vision sometimes use close vision interpreting, in which a sign language interpreter positions themselves closer and modifies their signing to account for any vision impairments. Both of these services were offered for “In the Heights,” and it was also the first production at RIT to be audio-described, Bradbury says.

Across the country, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) School of the Arts and Architecture is also working to support people with disabilities who have a love for the performing arts. The school’s
Dancing Disability Lab allows dancers with a myriad of physical and mental disabilities to find community and develop their skills.

The lab offers participants the opportunity to engage in both choreographed and improvisational movement that seeks “to expand and deepen action languages while they consider how we represent, view, transform, and challenge ideas about the body and personhood,” according to a UCLA news release. Dancers from around the world who identify as having a disability are invited to apply for this unique opportunity, which runs for one week annually. In addition to practicing and performing, participants attend seminars on the history of disability in dance and engage in discussions about disability justice.

“People need to know we exist,” Vanessa Cruz, a former participant who has arthrogryposis and scoliosis, stated in the release. “Dance is the perfect platform to allow our humanity to come through. People are either inspired by me or they feel sorry for me because that’s how the media has shaped our identity, but dance can change that.”

At other institutions, students are working to expand accessibility in the world of fashion design. Alyssa Chavez, a student at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM) in Los Angeles, used her own experience living with multiple disabilities — including chronic active Epstein–Barr syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome, epilepsy, and a brain tumor — to influence the fall 2022 menswear collection she created as part of an advanced study program at the school. The collection features three looks: one for patients who are undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments, the second for those using wheelchairs or prosthetics, and the third for those who have visual disabilities. Each design features elements meant to “facilitate effortless dressing,” including magnets, Velcro, buckles, and magnetic zippers, Chavez explained in a FIDM news release.

She named the collection CHA, which stands for Confidence, Hope, and Adaptive.

“Fashion brands never address customers’ disabilities,” she stated in the release. “And if they do, it is more of tokenism, not something reflected in the clothing. This brand, CHA, I’m creating, is adopted on the idea of living your best life despite your disability.”

At the University of Florida (UF) School of Art and Art History, this concept is being introduced in the classroom thanks to MFA student and instructor Angela DeCarlis.

When DeCarlis, who uses they/them pronouns, began working as a figure model in Boston in 2018, they noticed the majority of art class models were White, cisgender, thin, and had no visible disabilities. The experience made them interested in learning more about “who is represented and who felt comfortable getting up on the model stand for artists,” they say.

That same year, DeCarlis launched the first Figure on Diversity workshop at Leslie University in Massachusetts.
by inviting individuals who are underrepresented in the arts due to their race, gender, body type, visible disabilities, and more to participate as models. Though they originally intended this to be a one-off event, DeCarlis has since held multiple workshops, both at UF and online, with participants from around the globe.

Being able to see oneself represented in art has been an extremely powerful experience for many of the models, according to DeCarlis. One participant who has scoliosis said that "she didn't think that art modeling could be for her because she was made to understand her body as anatomically incorrect and therefore not valuable to an artist’s education," DeCarlis says.

“I think that artists in large part are responsible for the generation of what we conceive of as beautiful in a really important way.”

Angela DeCarlis

Figure on Diversity has expanded beyond the workshops to include BustEd, a collaboration with sculptor Morgan Yacoe, a research coordinator in the UF Center for Arts in Medicine. Yacoe and DeCarlis are working together to create a new series of sculptural portrait busts that can be used as reference materials in art education. Busts are typically based on ancient Greco-Roman statuary that is “very Eurocentric, very male, and very hyper-idealized,” DeCarlis explains. The BustEd project seeks to remedy this lack of diversity by featuring busts of people with marginalized identities, including disabilities.

“I think that artists in large part are responsible for the generation of what we conceive of as beautiful in a really important way,” DeCarlis says. “I think that there’s a lot of conversation around representation in media and in magazines and in commercials and how that impacts us as a society. But ultimately, artists and creators, people who work with bodies in their education, are also largely responsible for that cultural understanding.”

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
The University of Southern California School of the Dramatic Arts’ (USC SDA) production of “In the Red and Brown Water,” a play based on Afro-Caribbean folktales and Yoruba mythology, was staged with the help of a cultural consultant who specializes in African spirituality and cosmolgy.

Colleges of Fine and Performing Arts Look to Embrace DEI on a Deeper Level

By Mariah Bohanon
At the University of Southern California

School of Dramatic Arts (USC SDA), faculty and students recently took an innovative approach to producing the highly acclaimed play “In the Red and Brown Water,” which draws on Afro-Caribbean folktales and Yoruba mythology.

To ensure that everyone involved understood the background, traditions, and symbolism presented in the production, the school recruited a cultural consultant who specializes in African spirituality and cosmology to teach students about “the needs and the world of these people in our play,” says director Anita Dashiell-Sparks, the George Burns Professor of Theatre and the associate dean of equity, diversity, and inclusion. “We had the chance to really go deep into a whole other world and culture — other ways of being, seeing, thinking, feeling, and communicating.”

Every member of the play’s creative team participated in learning about the cultures that inspired the piece and then integrated these ideas into each aspect of the production, from set design to makeup and wardrobe.

This in-depth presentation is just one way that USC SDA has worked to broaden its teachings in recent years, as it is in the midst of implementing a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategic plan that includes analyzing and expanding curriculum to decolonize the theatrical canon. Other steps include instituting mandatory DEI training for all faculty and staff, introducing inclusive casting practices, and boosting diverse recruitment efforts.

A growing number of colleges that specialize in the arts have also begun implementing similar plans. At many, such work was already in its early stages when the racial justice movement of 2020 propelled student and employee demand for faster progress and greater depth.

“Change for many of us can be challenging, but we can look at these changes as an opportunity to innovate and expand and find ways to answer the question of what does theater and arts education really need right now in the 21st century,” says Dashiell-Sparks, who has served in her inaugural associate dean role for five years. “That’s very different than maybe what it used to be in the past, and we have an opportunity to really be leaders in forging this evolution in the arts.”

At USC SDA, students have been excited about getting to study works by playwrights and artists who deviate from the heteronormative, Eurocentric perspective that has traditionally dominated the curriculum, she says. They are expanding their skillsets by learning new methodologies and approaches to acting, design, and storytelling practices.

“They have been really curious to go into things they don’t know, that they’ve never experienced before, and that they feel challenges them to use all of the different aspects of themselves,” Dashiell-Sparks explains.

The dramatic arts coincide well with DEI goals because the field aspires to build empathy by understanding and authentically sharing others’ stories, she adds.

The nearby ArtCenter College of Design (ArtCenter) also empowers students to use their creative talents to address DEI issues. Like USC SDA, it is highly selective and accepts students who have demonstrated outstanding artistic abilities.

“All of our students are exemplary artists and designers, and what we’re doing is helping them understand the different applications for their work,” says Aaron Bruce, PhD, vice president and chief diversity officer. “We talk about how [to] channel your creative energy to create change in the world, and we create spaces for students to talk about that and participate in projects.”

The college’s extensive DEI action plan includes a focus on community outreach, and ArtCenter students regularly work with local municipalities and organizations to solve problems related to social justice. One recent project paired design and advertising students with researchers from the Cedars-Sinai Research Center for Health Equity to promote outdoor exercise for underserved families in Los Angeles.

ArtCenter has also expanded outreach by offering free online learning opportunities to individuals who may not have access to arts education. When the pandemic forced the school to temporarily close its several campuses and gallery locations, the college accelerated these efforts, Bruce says. In fall 2020, it launched Dx3: Dialogues in Diversity and Design, an ongoing virtual speaker series that highlights the experiences of underrepresented alums. Other online offerings have included Zoom workshops and YouTube videos on topics such as designing cars and sneakers.

“A lot of this is about serving students whose high school or middle school may not have a strong art design program, and really just creating pathways to the creative economy, which is a huge barrier for a lot of children and young people in low-income communities,” Bruce explains. The college also plans to use upcoming online events, including a series of workshops on Black girls in film, to
connect with students at historically Black colleges and universities, according to Bruce. Diverse student recruitment is a goal of both ArtCenter’s DEI plan and the college’s overarching strategic plan, which includes a focus on creating “more affordable pathways through ArtCenter for transfer students” and “develop[ing] new culturally responsive courses and workshops that support the representation, cultural perspectives, and contributions of historically underserved communities.”

Across the country, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro College of Visual and Performing Arts (UNCG CVPA) is centered on boosting diverse faculty recruitment to better align with its multicultural student body.

Though people of color compose nearly half of the university’s enrollment, less than 15 percent of UNCG CVPA faculty were racially or ethnically underrepresented as of 2019, according to Bruce D. McClung, PhD, the college’s dean. When UNCG CVPA instituted a new strategic plan in 2020, it included diversity as one of four main objectives and set a goal to have 25 percent of its faculty be people of color by 2025.

The college, which was established in 2016, began revamping its hiring processes. Its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee — composed of faculty, staff, and students — started reviewing all job vacancies for inclusive language. It instituted a policy requiring every faculty search committee member to undergo DEI training. Other newly enacted rules include requiring job notices to be reposted if their applicant pools are not sufficiently diverse.

Thus far, UNCG CVPA has been successful in raising the percentage of faculty of color from 14.6 to 17.8, according to McClung. The number of staff members of color has risen from 0 to 13 percent.

“We really want to have a faculty and staff that represent who our student body is, so a lot of what we’re doing is motivated by the students we serve,” he says.

Increasing student success is another objective of the college’s strategic plan, which includes the specific goal of “conduct[ing] a comprehensive review of the CPVA curricula to include titles and scope of courses, identification of efficiencies and deficiencies, with a focus on equity and inclusion to ensure global relevance and cutting-edge course offerings.”

“We’ve been hard at work decolonizing the curriculum or decentering Whiteness,” explains McClung. For example, the college recently revamped its art history course sequence, which used to consist of three separate courses on European, American, and global art. “It was kind of your typical ‘great White men’ narrative of art history,” he says. “Instead, the faculty have redone it so that all three courses are about cross-cultural intersections and perspectives, so they’re not isolating European and American art history from the rest of the world, but rather focusing on global connections from the very beginning.”

Much of this work is motivated by student feedback, McClung adds. “The students very much want the curriculum to reflect the world in which we’re living, and oftentimes curricula lag years behind,” he says. “I think they’re very energized by the changes they see our faculty making.”

Student demand and engagement have been integral to the DEI work being carried out at the Arizona State University Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts (ASU HIDA). With more than 5,000 students, it is the largest comprehensive design and arts school in the U.S.

The institute created the Culture and Access department in November 2019 to “build a culture of empathy and equity across all units” and “dismantle systems of oppression that affect the recruitment and retention of marginalized students, faculty, and

USC SDA students based the makeup and wardrobe design of “In the Red and Brown Water” on traditional African customs and symbolism.
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We are committed to providing learning environments and communities within which all can succeed. AICAD proudly supports BIPOC identifying students, faculty, and staff in their growth and development in the higher education field with opportunities such as:

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• **AICAD Academic Leadership Institute:** A development program for BIPOC faculty and staff who are emerging as academic leaders and would like to consider pursuing roles such as Dean, Provost, VP and President. ALI supports participants through small group mentorship with current academic leaders, and seminars focused on the realities of academic administration and leadership, particularly as it intersects with BIPOC identity of leaders.

Find out more about these programs and other ways we are developing the future of art and design at [aicad.org](http://aicad.org)
staff,” according to its website. Since its establishment, the department has worked with a nonprofit called Race Forward on efforts such as an institute-wide DEI assessment.

“We’ve heard from our students a lot that they want representation. They want instructors who look like them,” says Melita Belgrave, PhD, associate dean for Culture and Access and an associate professor of music therapy. “So we’re exploring that, but we’re also looking into the [reasons] why we maybe don’t have more faculty who look like our students. What are the hiring policies? What are the retention policies that keep people here?”

Belgrave credits ASU HIDA’s students for propelling these efforts forward, especially in the wake of the racial justice movement of 2020. Different schools and departments have also created their own working groups where students, faculty, and staff collaborate on specific DEI concerns.

“It can’t just be faculty deciding what we think students need for equity,” Belgrave says. It has been inspiring to see students and faculty alike use their innovative problem-solving abilities to address DEI issues and promote a more equitable, inclusive campus. “Artists are creative people, and having equity conversations with a creative lens seems to me to go hand in hand.”

“A lot of this is about serving students whose high school or middle school may not have a strong art design program, and really just creating pathways to the creative economy, which is a huge barrier for a lot of children and young people in low-income communities.”

Aaron Bruce

Mariah Bohanon is the managing editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro is a 2013 and 2018-2021 recipient of the INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.
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Higher Education Groups and University Leaders Work to Counter Campus Anti-Semitism

In recent years, anti-Semitic incidents have become increasingly common on college campuses across the country. In an effort to address this problem, Hillel International, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the American Council on Education recently invited administrators from more than 40 higher education institutions to attend the University Presidents Summit on Campus Antisemitism.

“Our institutions espouse higher values: learning, critical thinking, and empathy,” New York University President Andrew Hamilton stated during the event. “Anti-Semitism stems from the opposite of these values, and it is our duty to confront it.”

The summit was held at the Center for Jewish History in New York City on April 11 and 12. Participants learned how to best respond to anti-Semitic incidents within the context of their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts and how to combat bigotry, harassment, and discrimination on campus. Numerous experts, diversity officers, campus leaders, and public officials served as speakers, including U.S. Reps. Grace Meng (D-NY) and Lee Zeldin (D-NY), AJC CEO David Harris, and Hillel International President and CEO Adam Lehman.

University administrators were tasked with adopting the “Three As,” which refers to awareness, allyship, and action, as ways to oppose anti-Jewish sentiments and hate crimes. This approach involves incorporating anti-Semitism awareness into campus DEI missions, establishing committees to address incidents, bolstering bias reporting policies, and more.

“University leaders are our most important allies in confronting anti-Semitism on campus,” Lehman told The Jerusalem Post. “[W]e look forward to working even more closely with them to ensure Jewish students, like students of all other backgrounds and faiths, are able to pursue education free of fear and intimidation.”

Top: Adam Lehman, Hillel International president and CEO, speaks at the University Presidents Summit on Campus Antisemitism in New York City in April. Center: Melanie Maron Pell (right), chief field operations officer for the American Jewish Committee, interviews U.S. Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY) during the summit. Bottom: (Left to right) Hillel international officials Skip Vichness, chair of the board of directors, Deborah Kallick, vice chair of the board, and Mark Rotenberg, vice president of university initiatives and legal affairs. Photos courtesy Hillel International.
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We celebrate the student-led Vibrancy Theater company whose mission is to uplift and broadcast Black, Indigenous, and People of Color at Ohio University and beyond. Launched in 2020, Vibrancy Theater produces live performances that promote BIPOC playwrights, actors, designers, stage managers, and directors in order to support students of color and black students with authentic outlets for creative expression.

Learn more: vibrancytheater.com

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Every day, we strive to embody a vision for equity, diversity and inclusion that recognizes all members of our University community. We broaden our collective understanding of our world by highlighting diverse identities, cultures, experiences and perspectives, in and through the arts.

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