The Future of DEI Training

Will universities say goodbye to traditional diversity training and embrace the virtual reality revolution?

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- White enrollment at HBCUs is on the rise
- Public policy schools innovate for racial justice
Public administration – in many ways, it is the art and practice of making things work.

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It’s an understanding that the art and practice of making things work only happens when the door is open wide for everyone to participate and benefit.

It’s the same commitment that exists throughout the University of Kentucky - an Insight into Diversity Diversity Champion for four years running.
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Struggle with Accessibility Issues During Pandemic
By Lisa O’Malley

New Immigration Policies, Recruiting Strategies Offer Hope for International Enrollment
By Lisa O’Malley

Restoring Inmate Access to Pell Grants is an Important Step in Criminal Justice Reform
By Mariah Bohanon

HBCUs Are Becoming More Diverse — But Not Everyone Considers That a Good Thing
By Mariah Stewart

Special Report: Schools of Public Policy and Public Administration

In Brief: Schools of Public Policy and Public Administration Diversity and Inclusion News Roundup

Social Justice Education in Public Policy Schools is Crucial for the Nation’s Future
By Erik Cliburn and Mariah Bohanon

Renowned Public Policy Institute Uses Research to Advocate for LGBTQ Equality
By Lisa O’Malley and Mariah Bohanon

Virtual Reality Could Be the Future of DEI Training
By Erik Cliburn
Removing barriers to education.

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news.uga.edu/diversity
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Closing INSIGHT

50 Ohio University Finds Innovative Way to Celebrate MLK Day During COVID-19
The U.S. Army recently announced a new set of grooming standards that are designed to be more inclusive by offering soldiers some flexibility when it comes to hairstyles, makeup, and jewelry.

Beginning on February 25, women will be allowed to wear “non-extreme” lipstick, nail polish, and earrings. Men will be allowed to wear clear nail polish.

Women will also have more options when it comes to hairstyles, including highlights and ponytails as long as they “maintain a neat and professional appearance” and the ponytail “doesn’t impede the use of headgear or other equipment,” according to the Army News Service. They will also no longer have to abide by a minimum length requirement for hair.

Under the Army’s current grooming standards, soldiers are allowed to have braids, twists, locs, and cornrows, but there are restrictions on the size and spacing of those hairstyles. The new policy lifts those constraints.

“Our identity is important,” Sgt. Maj. Brian Sanders, senior enlisted leader of Army G-1’s uniform policy branch, said in a press release. “If we care about people first and the Soldier [sic] as a whole, we have to care about the many aspects of who they are as well. This is a small but significant change that positively impacts a considerable size of our force.”

In addition to the grooming policies, the Army also announced the removal of words such as “Mohawk, Fu Manchu, dreadlock, eccentric, and faddish,” from its grooming code, calling the phrases “potentially offensive and weaponized.”

“This is how we shift the culture and embrace forward thinking,” Sanders said. “It is time to dig deeper and use our lexicon and vocabulary to describe what is authorized and what does not conform to a professional military appearance, good order, and discipline.”

READ: Broke: The Racial Consequences of Underfunding Public Universities
University of California, Merced scholars Laura T. Hamilton and Kelly Nielsen explore how underrepresented students are negatively affected by a higher education system that increasingly targets them for recruitment while failing to provide the services they need to succeed. Hamilton and Nielsen focus specifically on campuses within their own university system to show how postsecondary education has evolved from relying on the tax dollars of the many to fund the education of an elite few to become the underfunded, yet more diverse — if not inclusive — institutions of today. Broke ends with a plea and proposed plan for breaking this cycle as well as a methodological appendix by the authors — both White — on how they approach the study of race. Published by University of Chicago Press

WATCH: Giving Voice
Giving Voice documents the experiences of thousands of high school students from diverse backgrounds as they audition for the annual August Wilson Monologue Competition, which celebrates Wilson’s 10-play American Century Cycle. The playwright behind Fences and Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, Wilson was revered for his ability to capture the Black American experience on stage. As Giving Voice reveals, his work continues to inspire and empower a new generation of underrepresented performers. Available on Netflix

LISTEN: Code Switch: A Decade of Watching Black People Die
The wildly popular podcast Code Switch — which centers on race, identity, and society — hit a milestone on June 1 when it reached the top spot on Apple’s podcast chart one day after airing the episode “A Decade of Watching Black People Die.” The 22-minute segment, released less than a week after the police killing of George Floyd, reflects on prior coverage of the murder of African Americans at the hands of law enforcement to illustrate how violence towards Black people has become normalized in the U.S. The episode’s historical significance also recently landed it the number two spot on Spotify’s hand-picked 2020 Podcast Hall of Fame list. Available on npr.org/podcasts and all major podcast apps
International Transgender Day of Visibility Will Be Held on March 31

March 31, 2021, will mark the 12th annual International Transgender Day of Visibility (TDoV). The event celebrates the resilience and success of transgender and gender nonconforming people and raises awareness of transgender rights.

TDoV was founded by activist Rachel Crandall in 2009. Crandall was inspired by the fact that there was no holiday in existence dedicated to honoring the achievements and contributions of transgender people. At the time, the only major transgender-centered commemoration was the Transgender Day of Remembrance, which mourns the victims of hate crimes and violence, according to Queerhombolt.org, an online resource for the LGBTQ community.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has limited in-person celebrations for TDoV 2021, some organizations and higher education institutions are working within the restrictions to shine a light on transgender rights. The University of California, Riverside, for example, is offering limited seating for an on-campus TDoV event featuring Ryan Cassata, transgender singer-songwriter and LGBTQ activist, as a guest speaker and performer.

Alphonso David, president of the LGBTQ advocacy group The Human Rights Campaign, encouraged others to use TDoV as an opportunity to learn from the pride and resilience of the transgender community. “As we celebrate [TDoV], we must never forget those who still feel invisible even in their own communities and who may live every day with fear of discrimination or violence, and we must resolve to fight for a world where every transgender and non-binary person is respected and protected,” David said in a 2020 statement.

INEQUITIES PERSIST IN COLLEGE APPLICATIONS DESPITE REDUCING ACT, SAT REQUIREMENTS

Recent data from the Common App shows overall college applicants have increased by 10 percent for 2021, with large, selective schools experiencing the highest increase.

Yet low-income and first-generation students still decreased in application submissions even as more schools reduced barriers such as standardized test requirements due to the coronavirus.

The Common App is a college admission platform for undergraduate applicants that allows them to apply to more than 900 member colleges and universities across the United States, Canada, China, Japan, and some European countries.

The platform released data last month that shows first-generation applicants declined by 3 percent and those who received a fee waiver declined by 2 percent. The numbers are actually an increase from the 7 percent declines each group previously had in December 2020.

Jenny Rickard, president and CEO of the Common App, said in a January 22 statement that she is “very concerned” about the decrease in underrepresented groups and believes the data signals the need for additional support.

“As our country nears the one-year mark in its fight against COVID-19, support for applicants disproportionately impacted by the pandemic will be necessary to prevent another year of the large and inequitable enrollment declines,” Rickard stated.

Popular colleges like Harvard University and state flagship institutions like the University of Virginia (UVA) in Charlottesville have seen a spike in college applications after suspending SAT and ACT test requirements. This is the first year UVA is not requiring standardized test scores. As a result, the school set a record for itself with 48,000 applications, marking a 15 percent increase from the year prior.

Similarly, Harvard University’s applicant pool reached a record of 57,000, which is up 42 percent from the previous school year. The University of California, Berkeley, which completely eliminated the use of standardized tests in its admission process, saw a 28 percent increase with 112,000 applicants.

“The pandemic has given huge — and in some places, decisive — momentum to a movement to reduce or even eliminate the use of admissions testing at highly competitive colleges and universities,” The Washington Post reports. “That, in turn, has lured more applicants to the upper tier of the market.”

Doctoral universities, which accrued the largest number of applications, experienced a 14 percent increase compared to 2019-2020. Applications to four-year colleges also increased relative to the previous academic year.

While applicants from China declined by 18 percent, other countries exhibited noteworthy growth, including India (+28 percent), Canada (+22 percent), Pakistan (+37 percent), the United Kingdom (+23 percent), and Brazil (+41 percent).
Penn State University’s Black Caucus Receives Support from President, Faculty Following Zoom-bombing Incident

After Black Caucus members experienced a Zoom-bombing last week, Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) officials, faculty, and university groups have been offering their support while condemning the hateful incident.

The Penn State Black Caucus was in the midst of a Zoom meeting last Wednesday when 51 uninvited users joined the room. The unidentified hijackers began shouting racial and homophobic slurs and shared obscene images.

University police announced they are investigating the hate speech involved in the Zoom-bombing and have partnered with multiple officials including the FBI, according to a statement issued on Wednesday.

President Eric Barron released a statement on Saturday directed to the Black Caucus members, saying the university “continues to stand in solidarity” and plans to “diligently pursue ways to find and hold accountable the perpetrators.”

Various faculty groups and university departments have also spoken out in condemnation of the incident, including the university’s faculty senate, faculty members from the African American Studies Department, and the heads of the College of Liberal Arts.

Penn State’s undergraduate student government announced Friday it plans to introduce a resolution formally condemning the act and will demand the university to provide adequate support to Black students.

Zoom-bombings are virtual hijackings of Zoom video meetings, usually carried out by groups of trolls and hackers who spread hate speech, lewd images, and other inflammatory material, with the ultimate intention of shutting meetings down. The attacks have been on the rise ever since the coronavirus pandemic forced events online.

Underrepresented groups, especially at colleges and universities, are a common target. Gonzaga University’s Black Student Union, San Diego State University’s Filipino American student organization, and California Polytechnic State University’s Chinese Student Association are just a few groups that have been victims of Zoom-bombings in the last year.

Virginia House Votes to Seek Reparations for Slavery from Colleges and Universities

A bill passed by the Virginia House of Delegates on February 4 aims to make five public colleges and universities in the state pay reparations to descendants of enslaved people who helped build and operate their campuses.

The bill, HB 1980, would require the institutions to work with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to identify “to the extent possible, all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property.”

The schools must then offer full four-year scholarships or community-based economic development programs to “individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty.” Individuals who are identified as eligible for reparations would be able to attend any of the five universities for free.

If passed by the Senate of Virginia, the initiative — titled “Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program” — will take effect in 2022.

The five schools identified in HB 1980 include the College of William and Mary, which was built in 1693 and is the second oldest higher education institution in the U.S. after Harvard University. The University of Virginia (UVA), founded in 1819 by slaveholder and founding father Thomas Jefferson, is also included in the bill. White supremacists marched on UVA’s campus during the deadly 2017 Unite the Right rally, and INSIGHT has previously reported on the university’s research on the lives of the 5,000 enslaved persons who lived and worked there before 1865. The other institutions included in HB 1980 are Longwood University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the Virginia Military Institute, which is the oldest public senior military college in the U.S. All three were founded in the late 1830s.

“This is an opportunity for these universities to give back,” Democratic Del. David Reid, a proponent of the legislation, told WTOP News. “They owe their foundational success to the enslaved laborers who helped build and run the institutions in their early days.”
The INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award, open to all colleges and universities across the U.S. and Canada, measures an institution’s level of achievement and intensity of commitment in regard to broadening diversity and inclusion on campus through initiatives, programs, and outreach; student recruitment, retention, and completion; and hiring practices for faculty and staff.

Applications are comprehensive, covering all aspects of campus diversity and inclusion. One of the goals of the application process is to help institutions of higher education assess their diversity efforts in order to build on their success and improve where necessary. The HEED Award application is open to community colleges, baccalaureate-granting institutions, and graduate schools in the U.S. and Canada. The Health Professions HEED Award application is open to all accredited U.S. and Canadian health profession schools including, but not limited to, medical, dental, pharmacy, nursing, veterinary, and osteopathic medical schools. There is no fee to apply.
ARKANSAS
Johnny M. Moore, PhD, was selected as chancellor of Arkansas State University-Newport. Moore previously served as president of Pierpont Community and Technical College in Fairmont, West Virginia.

Lonnie Williams, EdD, has been appointed vice chancellor for diversity and community engagement at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. Williams was special assistant to the chancellor.

CALIFORNIA
Nicoli Richardson, JD, was selected as deputy coordinator for the Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Richardson previously served as a senior investigator for the university’s Office of Equity and Diversity.

COLORADO
Marielena DeSanctis, PhD, has been appointed president of the Community College of Denver. DeSanctis was provost and senior vice president of academic affairs and student services at Broward College in Florida.

CONNECTICUT
Otoniel “Tony” Reyes was selected chief of the Quinnipiac University Department of Public Safety in Hamden. Reyes previously served as chief of the New Haven Police Department.

FLORIDA
DeOnte Brown has been appointed director of the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement and assistant dean of undergraduate studies at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Brown was assistant dean of students at Clemson University in South Carolina.

Malou C. Harrison, PhD, was selected as provost of Miami Dade College (MDC). Harrison previously served as president of MDC North Campus.

GEORGIA
Raheem Beyah, PhD, was selected dean and Southern Company Chair for the College of Engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) in Atlanta. Beyah previously served as vice president for interdisciplinary research, executive director of the Online Master of Science in Cybersecurity program, and Motorola Foundation Professor for the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Georgia Tech.

MASSACHUSETTS
Katherine Hammer has been appointed vice president for finance at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Hammer was chief deputy CFO and policy and administration director for the City of Detroit in Michigan.

Dava Newman, PhD, was selected as the director of the MIT Media Lab in Cambridge. Newman previously served as the Apollo Program Professor in MIT’s Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics and a faculty member in the Harvard-MIT Program in Health Sciences and Technology.

MARYLAND
Karsonya “Kaye” Whitehead, PhD, will serve as the inaugural director of the Karson Institute for Race, Peace, and Social Justice at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore. Whitehead will continue her position as a professor of communications and African American studies at the university.

MICHIGAN
Linda S. Greene, JD, will serve as the inaugural dean of the Michigan State University College of Law in East Lansing. Greene was the Evjue-Bascom Professor of Law at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Law.

MISSISSIPPI
Eduardo Prieto has been appointed vice chancellor for enrollment management at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. Prieto was vice president for access and enrollment management at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina.
Kean University is recognized as one of the most diverse universities in the United States and a top performer for social mobility. Located 30 minutes outside New York City, Kean prides itself on its inclusive and welcoming learning environment. Kean is also taking important steps to build its faculty with researchers and scholars from all backgrounds.

President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., along with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, are proud to announce the Equity in Action Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship Program. This new postdoctoral fellowship, focused on advancing equity within our faculty, will have a balance of teaching, mentorships and professional development.

The University is also hiring more than 40 new tenure-track faculty members across a range of disciplines for the 2021-2022 academic year. Applicants from underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. For more information, visit kean.edu/employment.

“As Kean strives to become New Jersey’s next world-class research institution, our success will be defined by our ability to cultivate the next generation of academics and to promote inclusivity and equity for all.”

Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D.
Kean University President
**NEW DIRECTIONS**

**NEW JERSEY**  
Guillermo “Will” de Veyga, PhD, will serve as the inaugural vice president for strategic initiatives and university relations at William Paterson University in Wayne. De Veyga was chief of staff to the president at New Jersey City University.

**NEW YORK**  
Deborah Archer, JD, will serve as the first Black president of the American Civil Liberties Union in New York City. Archer previously served as a professor at the New York University School of Law as well as director of the school’s Civil Rights Clinic and co-faculty director of its Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law.

DeAnna R. Burt-Nanna, PhD, has been appointed president of Monroe Community College-SUNY in Rochester. Burt-Nanna was vice president of student and academic affairs for South Central College in North Mankato, Minnesota.

Brian Harper, MD, was selected as vice president for equity and inclusion at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT). Harper will continue to serve as an associate professor and chief medical officer for the institute.

**NORTH CAROLINA**  
Susan R. Wente, PhD, is the first woman to be named president of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem. Wente was provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

**PENNSYLVANIA**  
Wanda Heading-Grant, PhD, will serve as the inaugural vice provost for diversity, equity, and inclusion and chief diversity officer for Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Heading-Grant previously served as vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

**TENNESSEE**  
Ashley Brown has been named director of the Student Center for Social Justice and Identity at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Brown was assistant director of equity, diversity, and inclusion for university housing at Georgia State University in Atlanta.

**TEXAS**  
Loren James Blanchard, PhD, has been appointed president of the University of Houston-Downtown. Blanchard was executive vice chancellor for academic and student affairs for the California State University system in Long Beach.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
Sara Bleich, PhD, was selected as senior advisor for COVID-19 for the Office of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Bleich previously served as a professor of public health policy in the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Carol K. Pforzheimer Professor in Harvard’s Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

**SAM FULWOOD III** has been appointed dean of American University’s School of Communication. Fulwood was a senior fellow for Politics and Elections and vice president for Race and Ethnicity at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C.

**WEST VIRGINIA**  
Amelia Smith Rinehart, JD, was selected as dean of the West Virginia University College of Law in Morgantown. Rinehart previously served as associate dean for academic affairs at the University of Utah S.J. Quinney School of Law in Salt Lake City.
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Biden’s Education Department Expected to Prioritize Educational Equity

By Mariah Bohanon

Incoming Education Secretary
Miguel Cardona and his predecessor Betsy DeVos could not, in many ways, be more opposite. While DeVos comes from an extremely wealthy White family, Cardona was raised by middle class parents from Puerto Rico. DeVos is a staunch advocate for school choice, while Cardona attended public K-12 schools and colleges — including Central Connecticut State University, where he became the first college graduate in his family. Cardona spent decades as a teacher and principal, while one of the greatest criticisms against DeVos was that she had never worked in a classroom.

The stark contrast between Cardona and DeVos extends to their views on equal rights in schools, student debt, and many other pressing issues. Now, as President Joe Biden seeks to reverse or override national laws and guidelines put in place by his predecessor President Donald Trump, Cardona is faced with a similar goal within the U.S. Department of Education.

Biden has said that Cardona understands “that education isn’t just what we do, it’s who we are.” Critics of the new education secretary, however, have said that he is too inexperienced when it comes to politics, as his highest post has been serving as Education Commissioner for Connecticut — a role he’s held for less than two years.

Others have accused Cardona of being too diplomatic rather than taking a decisive stance on certain issues. During his Senate confirmation hearing on February 3, Cardona was asked if he supports allowing transgender students to play sports that align with their gender identity rather than assigned sex. He replied that he would “make sure we’re following the civil rights of all students.” Connecticut, however, does allow transgender students to play on sports teams that correspond with their gender. Biden’s strong stance on LGBTQ rights also indicates that Cardona will take steps to promote transgender equality, including when it comes to controversial issues such as school bathroom laws.

Much of the current conversation around education has focused on pandemic-related challenges. Cardona’s messages to the public have centered on this issue, especially as it affects K-12 students. He strongly supports reopening schools as quickly as possible in order to close the education gap that has primarily affected low-income students during the pandemic, which he has called an “education emergency.”

Improving educational equity overall is one of Cardona’s top concerns. As state education commissioner, he was “a fierce advocate for Connecticut’s most vulnerable children — those with disabilities, children in low-income families, and English language learners — as he pushed for schools to reopen,” according to NPR.

Experts say these priorities align with Biden’s mission to promote racial equity and is a signal that Cardona will focus on assessing higher education’s impact on social mobility. Jennifer Grodsky, vice president for federal relations at Boston University, told the university’s news service BU Today that the Biden administration will likely prioritize supporting historically Black colleges and universities as well as institutions that have large numbers of underserved students of color, such as community colleges. Biden may increase oversight of colleges and universities when it comes to equity in graduation rates and admissions policies as well as student debt-to-income ratios, according to Grodsky.

The student debt crisis is one of Biden and Cardona’s greatest challenges. There is increasing pressure on Biden to live up to his promises of loan forgiveness, but experts say that if the Education Department does decide to forgive a portion of federal education debt, it will take time to implement.

Cardona is expected to reverse DeVos’ Title IX guidelines for campus sexual assault. Her decision to reverse Obama-era guidelines that had increased colleges’ responsibility for addressing sexual violence was one of the most controversial actions during her tenure as secretary. Experts say Cardona will likely eradicate DeVos’ policies or enact new ones that restore certain rights for survivors and increase college accountability.

Cardona is also expected to improve educational equity for immigrants and undocumented students. Biden’s swift reversal of Trump-era regulations on the Muslim travel ban and other immigration issues is a sign that his administration will be more welcoming to international students. His support of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals — or DACA — program aligns with Cardona’s views on the importance of supporting English language learner students. Potential changes could include more aid to undocumented students and the colleges and universities that enroll them.

Cardona, whose first language is Spanish, has said that he empathizes with students from similar backgrounds because he “struggled with his own identity growing up,” according to NPR. However, he learned to embrace his Latinx heritage and now sees it as a strength when it comes to serving an increasingly multicultural country. Upon his nomination as Education Secretary, Cardona stated “I, being bilingual and bicultural, am as American as apple pie and rice and beans.”

Mariah Bohanon is the senior editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
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Higher Education Works with Limited Federal Relief to Help Students in Need

By Erik Cliburn

In early December 2020, the American Council on Education (ACE), in conjunction with more than 100 other higher education groups, penned a letter to majority and minority leaders in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives requesting at least $120 billion to support college and university students and campuses nationwide. In the letter, ACE President Ted Mitchell outlined how the pandemic has led to decreases in enrollment, significant revenue losses, and a massive financial burden on students, especially students of color and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“The current situation is unsustainable for an extended period, and at this point there are simply no other sufficient options for institutions beyond meaningful federal assistance,” Mitchell wrote. “That support is needed urgently.”

Ultimately, only one-sixth of the requested funding was approved by Congress when it passed the 2021 Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) on December 27.

Collectively, institutions of higher education across the country received $23 billion out of the nearly $82 billion set aside for education and childcare in CRRSAA. Colleges and universities are required to prioritize distribution of these funds to Pell Grant-eligible students and others with exceptional need, many of whom are from underserved communities that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

While the bill surpasses the stimulus relief afforded to higher education in April 2020’s Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act by nearly $10 billion, many college and university leaders say that struggling campuses and students require far more.

In the CRRSAA, public and nonprofit institutions received $20 billion to be used for student financial aid while for-profit colleges received $908 million. Nonprofit campuses were also awarded an additional $1.7 billion specifically for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), tribal colleges, and other minority-serving institutions.

Among the more innovative components of the CRRSAA is the elimination of $1.3 billion in debt across 44 HBCUs. The debt cancellation will allow these schools to invest “back into their students at a critical time when student assistance is needed most,” U.S. Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) told University Business magazine. The relief bill also increased Pell Grant eligibility by half a million students and simplified the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, from 108 to 36 questions.

As of late January 2021, many colleges and universities were still in the difficult process of deciding how to distribute their federal relief funding. Of the institutions that INSIGHT contacted for this story, many replied that they have yet to decide on a precise plan for apportioning their CRRSAA dollars.

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder), which received just over $28 million from the CRRSAA, plans to spend $9.4 million on emergency grants for incoming and current students, according to Deborah Méndez-Wilson, the university’s interim director of communications.

“We intend to assist as many as 4,600 students this semester, providing grants of up to $2,000 per student, depending on their unique circumstances and needs,” she says.

Since the start of the pandemic, CU Boulder has provided nearly $18 million in emergency financial aid to 7,892 students from a combination of federal, donor and campus funds, according to Méndez-Wilson. The university has an enrollment of 35,000.

Unfortunately, the CRRSAA excludes international and undocumented students from receiving financial assistance. However, CU Boulder will be using institutional funds to support those who fall into those categories, Méndez-Wilson says.

Unlike the CARES Act, higher education institutions can use CRRSAA funding to support student needs related to the cost of attendance as well as emergency expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as childcare and health care. At CU Boulder, low-income and disadvantaged students have sought assistance with educational, living, medical, and mental health expenses. According to Méndez-Wilson, the university received more than 2,000 applications within the first two weeks of January from those “who have been directly impacted by COVID-19.”

Erik Cliburn is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
The Medical University of South Carolina celebrates Women in History Month
August 2020 marked the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment, a law meant to grant women in the U.S. the right to vote nearly 150 years after the nation was founded. Despite this long overdue victory, many women — especially those of color — would remain disenfranchised due to voter suppression laws until the advent of the civil rights movement. As the push for women's rights evolved over the latter half of the 20th century, so too did their participation at the polls and in politics. Although efforts to block access to the ballot for underrepresented voters continue today in the form of voter ID laws and other targeted policies, women of all backgrounds have become a force strong enough to sway elections, lead Congress, and even serve as vice president of the United States.

A History of Women’s Voting Patterns and Rise to Political Office

The 1920s – 1950s
Despite the victory of the 19th Amendment, many women continued to abide by traditional gender roles that discouraged their participation in political life. In the first year in which they were eligible to cast a ballot in federal elections, only 36 percent did so, compared with 68 percent of men. By the 1940s, the gap had narrowed, with women hovering around 10 percentage points less likely to vote than men. For women of color and those who were low-income, however, disenfranchisement remained the norm.

Yet even with low voter turnout, women ascended to Congress in steady, if low, numbers. The first woman senator, Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas, was elected to office in 1932, and nearly 40 women were elected to the House and Senate between 1935 and 1955 alone. Patsy Mink of Hawaii became the first Asian American congresswoman when she was elected to the House in 1952.

The 1960s
The Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964 as well as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 eased, but did not eradicate, barriers to the polls for women of color. The women's rights movement began to shift perceptions of gender roles and emboldened women, especially younger generations, with a sense of duty when it came to civic participation. New groups such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) advocated for gender equality in politics and public life on a massive scale. By the 1966 midterms, men's dominance at the polls had become marginal, and by 1968 the U.S. had its first Black congresswoman, Rep. Shirley Anita Chisholm of New York.

The 1970s
Men and women turned out in equal numbers for a presidential election for the first time in 1976. One year later, 15 congresswomen created the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, a bipartisan group “intended to foster camaraderie among women legislators and bring a collective focus to women's issues, many of which their male counterparts had long ignored,” according to The Atlantic.

Today, the caucus has 177 members, both women and men.

A 1975 extension of the Voting Rights Act eased restrictions for women from Asian, Latinx, and other backgrounds by ending discrimination against “language minorities” and requiring voter registration materials be made available in languages other than English.

The 1980s
In the 1980 presidential election, the percentage of eligible women voters who cast a ballot was greater than that of eligible male voters for the first time in history — marking the beginning of a pattern that still holds true for every age group except those 65 and older. The election was also the first time that men and women showed a distinct division in their choice of candidate, as only 47 percent of women supported Republican candidate Ronald Reagan compared with 55 percent of men.

The decade marked the beginning of what the Brookings Institute calls “the gender realignment of American politics” as women began to increasingly skew left at the polls.

By 1984, the gender gap in African American voter turnout had become sizable, with Black women outnumbering Black men at the polls by 6 percentage points.

In 1989, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida became the first Latinx woman elected to the House of Representatives.

The 1990s
Women continued to outnumber men at the polls by 2 to 3 percent in both the 1992 and 1996 federal elections.

Dubbed “The Year of the Woman,”
The Anita Hill Hearings

One of the major issues that galvanized women candidates and voters in the lead-up to the 1992 election was President George H.W. Bush’s nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. In addition to extremely conservative stances on women’s issues such as abortion, Thomas had been accused of repeated sexual harassment by Anita Hill, who had worked for him during his time as assistant secretary of the U.S. Education Department’s Office of Civil Rights. “Broadcast into millions of homes, the spectacle of the all-male Senate Judiciary Committee offering Hill little sympathy, and at moments treating her with outright hostility, reinforced the perception that the experiences and perspectives of women received short shrift in the halls of Congress. It gave momentum to many candidates in the fall elections and contributed to a record number of women winning,” according to the website history.house.gov.

1992 saw more new women elected to Congress than in any previous decade. Subsequently, the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues succeeded in passing a series of landmark equal rights laws, including the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 and the Violence Against Women Act of 1994. The caucus also successfully advocated for revolutionary changes to federal health care policies and research, which until that point had largely been conducted by and for men.

The 2000s

The gender voting gap widened, with women outnumbering men in federal elections by 7.8 million in 2000, 8.8 million in 2004, and 10.7 million in 2008. Their high turnout and continued preference for Democratic candidates helped secure the historic election of President Barack Obama in 2008. Also in that year, Black women made history by having the highest voter turnout of all racial, ethnic, and gender groups, with nearly 70 percent casting a ballot.

November 2008 saw another historic first as the percent of eligible women voters ages 65 to 74 at the polls caught up to the number of men in their same age group for the first time. Women ages 75 and older, however, continued a longstanding pattern of being far less likely than their male counterparts to participate in elections.

The 2010s

State lawmakers across the country began issuing a series of voter restriction policies intended to disenfranchise people of color and underserved communities. By the end of the decade, 25 states passed new laws making it more difficult to vote. Despite these barriers, Black women showed up to the polls in higher percentages than women of every other race in 2012. By 2016, they outnumbered Black men voters by 9 percentage points.

The 2016 election revealed a sharp partisan divide based on age, education level, and ethnicity and race. While women overall were still more likely to vote Democratic, White women cast more ballots for Donald Trump than for Hillary Clinton by 2 percentage points. By contrast, nearly 70 percent of Latinx women and a dramatic 98 percent of Black women voted for Clinton, according to the Pew Research Center.

By the 2018 midterms, however, the percent of women who voted Democratic nearly doubled. A record number of 117 women were elected to the House and Senate, including the first Native American and first Muslim congresswomen. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, at 29 years old, became the youngest woman ever to serve in Congress. LGBTQ women also broke records in federal, state, and local elections across the U.S. As in 1992, these historic victories led 2018 to be dubbed “The Year of the Woman.”

2020

The gender gap in federal elections persisted, with 55 percent of women supporting President Joe Biden in the November federal election compared with 46 percent of men. Nearly 70 percent of Latinx women voters — a population disproportionately affected by the economic and caretaking burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic — voted for Biden. Surveys revealed that level of education, race and ethnicity, and age were stronger indicators of political preference than gender.

A record number of Republican women were elected to Congress in November, bringing their total number to 36. Even with significant gains for both parties, however, women still comprise only 27 percent of the House and Senate combined; women of color account for just 10 percent. Fewer than 1 in 3 state lawmakers are women, and only nine are governors.

Despite continued underrepresentation, women overcame a major barrier when Kamala Harris was elected vice president 100 years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment. She is the first woman, first African American, and first Asian American to serve in the nation’s second highest office.

Many experts partly attribute women’s political galvanization in 2018 to society’s complacency with sexual violence, as in 1992. This was evidenced by the 2017 resurgence of the #MeToo movement and historic women’s marches. In 2018 surveys and exit polls, women of all races were more likely to report that concerns about escalating racism influenced their decision to vote.

Mariah Bohanon is the senior editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Struggle with Accessibility Issues During Pandemic

By Lisa O’Malley

Nearly all college students have faced their fair share of difficulties during the coronavirus pandemic when it comes to keeping up academically. For the Deaf and hard of hearing (DHOH), however, something as simple as understanding a classroom lecture — whether online or in person — has become a considerable struggle.

“Trying to follow along with audio on videos and lectures has definitely been the biggest issue for me,” explains Abigail Toth, a freshman studying special education and Deaf education at Kent State University (KSU).

Toth has residual hearing; while she can make out some sounds, she still suffers from significant hearing loss. She says that she was fortunate to have found an online tool that can create captions in real time and that her university offers multiple resources for DHOH students. KSU’s Student Accessibility Services office provides her with notes, lectures, and PowerPoint presentations for her classes. While these services were offered even before the pandemic, Toth says they have been vital in helping her keep up online.

“Since I often miss parts and pieces of information through the audio [portions] of lectures and videos, having access to these resources makes it easier for me to stay on track academically,” she explains.

The switch to online education has been unpopular among college students overall. In an August survey by the Excellence in Virtual Education project, 65 percent said they disliked virtual classes. Yet DHOH students appear to have an even harder time adjusting to this format. Nearly 75 percent of Deaf college students consider online learning more difficult than traditional learning, according to a recent poll by the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes (NDC) at the University of Texas at Austin.

Some of those surveyed said they were denied ASL interpreters for virtual courses because their college or university has an exclusive contract with an interpretation service that does not offer remote services. Many reported being frustrated that professors tend to use more podcasts, audio files, and videos as teaching tools in online courses.

Nearly three quarters of students in the NDC survey indicated that the increased amount of reading and writing required for remote learning is one of their greatest challenges. Many people who are DHOH use American Sign Language (ASL), which has no written form. To read and write in English, they must mentally translate each word to the corresponding ASL sign — which can be especially difficult as the two languages have variations in vocabulary and grammar. Having extra reading and writing assignments, therefore, is often more laborious and time-consuming for these students.

Jasmine Hall is a senior at KSU who was born Deaf and whose first language is ASL. She tried to find a tutor who could help her keep up with the increased workload of written assignments during the pandemic.

“I was struggling to write everything in English because there are not great resources for [finding] English tutors online,” she says. Nor could she use in-person tutoring due to concerns about
possible COVID-19 exposure. And even if she had been able to find an in-person tutor, Hall says time limits made it hard for her to get the help she needed.

“Tutors had their time limits for every person, which wasn’t helpful because I need more than 30 minutes per session,” she says.

Eventually, Hall was able to receive assistance from a friend who is an English major. She knows that many other DHOH students, however, have not been so lucky.

When it comes to seated courses — or any form of in-person communication — a common hurdle for DHOH students is understanding people wearing face masks. These coverings prevent lipreading and can cause muffled speech as well as obscure facial expressions, which are necessary for accurately understanding ASL.

“Lipreading during the pandemic has been virtually impossible because of masks,” says Toth. During her on-campus marching band class, face masks make it more difficult to understand her instructor and fellow students, causing Toth to miss cues.

Samuel R. Atcherson, PhD, a professor and the director of audiology at the Rochester Institute of Technology, has been conducting research into the effectiveness of helping people communicate with transparent facial coverings since 2008. His work has been gaining more attention since the onset of the pandemic, he says.

“We ultimately hope that the use of transparent masks becomes more of the norm, not just for helping people who are [D]eaf and hard of hearing, but for all people,” he wrote in an email to INSIGHT, explaining that clear masks have the potential to prevent medical errors by improving communication among health care workers and with patients.

Atcherson, who is hard of hearing, has served as a consultant for the NDC over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. He recommends that faculty who want to improve accessibility for DHOH students start by ensuring their face and mouth are visible when communicating, if it’s safe to do so.

“However, I caution that not all [DHOH] people are great lip readers, so it should never be assumed that unobstructed view of the face works for everyone,” Atcherson wrote in the email.

For online lectures and videos, he advises reducing background noise as much as possible, speaking closely into the microphone, and using a room that does not cause echoes. He also points to captions as a vital resource and suggests that instructors make transcripts available after class.

Hall and Toth agree with these recommendations, and their personal advice for DHOH students is to communicate when they are feeling overwhelmed — not just to professors but to family, friends, and classmates. There is no shame in struggling or being unmotivated in school during this difficult period, Hall says.

“It is so important to remind ourselves right now that these are such unprecedented times,” Toth adds. “Masks and social distancing have such a damaging impact on communication. However, keeping in touch with friends and your peers is so important in keeping your mental health in check.”

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
The Financial Repercussions of International Enrollment Decline

The 43 percent drop in international enrollment for the fall 2020 semester was a significant setback for a higher education system already struggling with declining domestic enrollment and growing dropout rates amid the pandemic. Although international students account for less than 6 percent of the country’s student population, they pay a significant amount in tuition and fees and contribute a generous portion to most institutions’ bottom lines. Lacking this additional income, colleges and universities collectively lost around $3 billion in revenue last year, according to NAFSA.

The drop in international enrollment is not just dire for universities, but for the U.S. economy as a whole. Economic contributions by international students in 2019-2020 were down 4.4 percent from the previous year, resulting in a $1.8 billion loss, according to Rachel Banks, senior director of public policy and legislative strategy at NAFSA: Association of International Educators. This is the first time that the dollar amount has decreased since NAFSA began calculating the figure more than 20 years ago.

Within hours of taking office on January 20, President Joe Biden swiftly worked to undo some of the damage caused by the Trump administration’s foreign travel and immigration policies. Most notably, Biden signed an executive order to reverse a travel ban on visitors from several Muslim-majority countries and issued a memorandum to preserve the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

It was an uplifting moment for international students, college recruiters, and university leaders — all of whom have felt the detrimental effects of President Donald Trump’s policies and were eager for signs that Biden’s election might signal a reversal of the downward trend in international enrollment.

“Thriving nations in the international community, including the United States, depend on a pipeline of talent from around the world, and yet, recent trends indicate that the United States is losing this valuable academic resource,” says Rachel Banks, senior director of public policy and legislative strategy at NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

In addition to the executive actions Biden already issued on his first day in office, the president has since called for expanding visas for skilled workers and eliminating caps on the number of recent PhD graduates in STEM fields.

“Under a Biden administration, there is potential to return to or create new policies that welcome international students and scholars,” explains Banks.

A Downward Trend

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, foreign enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities had been stagnant or on the decline for several years in a row. As explained in the December 2019 issue of INSIGHT, the discussion around declining international enrollment “has focused in large part on the effects that the Trump administration’s anti-immigrant sentiment has had on international students. Visa processing delays and the racial profiling of STEM students and scholars, for example, have contributed to a significant drop in Chinese students, who account for nearly a third of international enrollment.”

Then, COVID-19 took its toll. Travel restrictions and campus closures upended study abroad programs around the world. In the U.S., the pandemic’s effects on international enrollment were exacerbated by political strife. Nearly 40 percent of prospective international students said they were considering alternate study destinations for the 2020-2021 academic year because of the political climate in the U.S., according to a survey by World Education Services (WES).

Global perceptions of the Trump administration’s response to the pandemic also caused foreign students to shy away. In August, 73 percent of student respondents in the WES survey reported extreme or moderate concern that they or their dependents would contract COVID-19 while in the U.S.

In all, international enrollment in American colleges and universities plunged a staggering 43 percent in fall 2020, according to the International Institute of Education.

Moving Forward

Despite the setbacks of COVID-19...
and the detrimental effects of the Trump administration’s foreign and immigration policies, optimistic colleges and universities have continued to recruit students from around the world. As with many other aspects of higher education during the pandemic, doing so has required continuous innovation and taking full advantage of online capabilities.

“Virtual campus tours and college fairs are happening in every corner of the country,” says Joann Ng Hartmann, senior director of International Enrollment Management-International Student and Scholar Services and Volunteer Engagement at NAFSA. College recruiters have also increased their social media presence as a means of garnering international student interest, according to Hartmann. For example, some schools have been hosting Facebook and Instagram Live events for foreign students who may be interested in learning more about studying abroad.

The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) is one institution taking a virtual approach.

“With the transition from in-person to online recruitment, we knew it was really important to remain creative in how we reach our prospective and admitted international students,” says Lynn Barnes Jr., senior vice provost for strategic enrollment at UTSA. Over the course of the pandemic, the university developed a variety of virtual opportunities for students to learn about UTSA, including information sessions, one-on-one meetings, and question and answer events.

“We also work with high school college counselors and participate in recruitment fairs to broaden our network of potential students,” says Barnes. “At the same time, we continue traditional forms of outreach through email correspondence and mass email campaigns to reach as many prospective students as possible.”

To widen its outreach, UTSA also worked with other colleges and universities to develop the Study Texas Virtual Fair, an online recruitment event that allowed students to gather information on more than 30 higher education institutions. Each school presented information on topics relevant to foreign students, such as scholarships and student life. More than 350 potential students from around the world participated in the event, which took place in November.

At Cornell University, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions has been hard at work creating new virtual recruiting opportunities with international students.

“We’ve increased our engagement in creative ways we never imagined, and the results have been extraordinary,” says Shawn L. Felton, senior director of undergraduate admissions at the university.

In May 2020, the office launched the “Virtual Visit” hub, where prospective students, families, and college counselors could have instant access to an array of virtual engagement opportunities and programming. Resources include pre-recorded information sessions and student panels, student blogs, virtual campus tours, online chat hours with admissions staff, and more.

Cornell also hosted live virtual information sessions for potential students last summer and fall. “We decided to focus the events in ways that would allow us to speak to the particular concerns that students in a given school, country, or region might have,” Felton says.

The programming included specialized sessions for students in different locations, including Asia, Africa, Europe, and Central and South America. The admissions team took special care in ensuring the events were scheduled according to each region’s time zone to guarantee maximum engagement.

The events proved to be a major success, with attendance numbering well above 1,000 students, Felton says.

In addition, Cornell undertook extensive planning and preparation to provide multiple options for foreign students over the course of the pandemic. International students who were unable to come to campus due to travel restrictions and visa delays
were given the option to study remotely through Cornell’s in-residence Study Away programs. Administered by the Office of Global Learning, Study Away allows foreign students to take Cornell classes remotely from a campus in their home country or region. The opportunity enables them to share in co-curricular activities with their classmates from afar while enjoying access to local higher education facilities and resources.

Because of the work of Felton and his team, enrollment projections for 2021 are optimistic. The university hopes to see a large percentage of students, especially international students, return to campus for in-person learning, he says.

Still, experts caution that universities alone cannot restore the nation’s previous popularity among foreign students and scholars and despite Biden’s preliminary victories in changing immigration guidelines, there are still challenges ahead. Undoing some of the Trump-era policies that discouraged or outright banned foreign students from the U.S. will likely require a lengthy bureaucratic process.

Furthermore, any immigration policies the Biden administration proposes will need to be “well-crafted and implemented” in order to regain the confidence of international students, Banks says.

“Only then,” she explains, “will we have a United States where these bright students are able to fully contribute to our campuses and communities.”

Lisa O’Malley is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
Restoring Inmate Access to Pell Grants is an Important Step in Criminal Justice Reform

By Mariah Bohanon

Prisoners across the U.S. have a greater chance of achieving a bright future thanks to a recent decision by Congress to reinstate inmate access to federal Pell Grants.

The decision, authorized on December 27, 2020, reverses a 26-year-old ban on federal student aid that was included in the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act for individuals who are incarcerated.

As a result of that ban, the number of college programs in U.S. prisons plummeted from an estimated 772 programs operating across nearly 1,300 facilities in the early 1990s to just eight programs by 1997, according to the Prison Policy Initiative (PPI), a bipartisan think tank.

Yet research has proven that granting prisoners access to higher education is one of the most effective methods for reducing crime. The positive outcomes of college prison programs include lowering recidivism rates, saving taxpayer dollars, and helping former convicts and their families escape the cycle of poverty.

“Allowing people in prison to access higher education is a critical step toward a more equitable society, especially for Black and Brown people who have historically been sentenced to prison at higher rates and trapped in cycles of incarceration,” Nicholas Turner, president and director of the Vera Institute for Justice (Vera), said in a statement.

Recidivism and Employment

Vera is among several criminal justice reform organizations that advocated for restoring Pell Grant access to prisoners, and its research has long shown the critical role that education plays in transforming opportunities for inmates and their communities. One of the strongest arguments made by Vera and other advocates is that education reduces the likelihood that an inmate will return to prison.

The majority, or 77 percent, of U.S. prisoners are rearrested within five years of release, according to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service. Nearly 57 percent of those arrests occur within the first year of release.

Participation in an education program while in prison, however, reduces recidivism by 43 percent and increases chances of employment by 13 percent, according to the RAND Corporation.

Education is one of the most powerful tools for reducing these high rates of recidivism by helping incarcerated individuals escape what PPI calls “perpetual labor market punishment.” This is the double disadvantage that many former inmates face when seeking employment because, in addition to having a criminal record, they lack education.

Less than 4 percent of prisoners have a college degree, according to a PPI study. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 40 percent do not possess a high school diploma.

Unsurprisingly, this population faces disproportionately high unemployment rates. One PPI study found that 27 percent of former inmates don’t have jobs. People of color who have the least education fare the worst; 60 percent of Black women who had no high school education were unemployed after serving time in prison compared with 25 percent of their White male counterparts.

In a 2019 report, Vera estimated that 463,000 state and federal prisoners would be eligible for the Pell Grant program. If half of those individuals were to take advantage of the opportunity, their employment rates could rise by nearly 10 percent, it predicted. Combined wages earned by all formerly incarcerated workers would increase by $45.3 million within the first year of release and, perhaps most staggering, the reduction in recidivism would save the government $365.8 million in incarceration costs annually.

A Second Chance

The main argument against restoring Pell Grant access for people behind bars is that doing so takes funds away from students in need. President Joe Biden, who was a leading proponent of the 1994 crime bill while in the Senate, has since stated that he regrets having taken this stance, as have other supporters of the bill. Mounting research on the benefits of prison education programs led to increased pressure from both sides of the aisle to reverse the order, and in 2015 then-President Barack Obama restored partial access to federal aid for inmates through the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative.

The initiative granted 67 institutions of higher education the ability to enroll incarcerated students using Pell Grant funding on a trial basis. The program, which is capped at 12,000 students annually, has been met with high demand from prisoners and colleges alike. As of spring 2019, it had enrolled nearly 17,000 students and awarded more than 4,500 postsecondary certificates and
degrees. Most of those who enrolled went on to get bachelor’s degrees after first earning certificates and associate degrees, according to Vera.

The program’s popularity led then-Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to expand its reach to an additional 67 higher education institutions in 2020. More than 180 colleges applied for the opportunity.

**Going Forward**

An estimated 64 percent of state and federal prisoners now qualify for Pell Grant funding based on household income requirements. While there is no information available on the number who intend to enroll, several prison education programs are already in the works.

Pitzer College, the University of California, Irvine, and California State University, Sacramento all recently announced plans to launch degree programs in partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

In some states, plans to create expansive prison education programs could be bolstered by the restoration of Pell Grant access. South Carolina already intended to begin offering incarcerated people free access to college courses starting in 2021 through a partnership with Claflin University, a historically Black institution. In Wisconsin, the president of the state university system has been pushing to completely transform one of the state prisons into a college for inmates through a plan known as the UW System Prison Education Initiative. It remains to be seen if these potential programs will be affected or if other states will follow suit now that federal aid is available.

Proponents say the restoration of Pell Grants for prisoners could be a boon to colleges and universities that have suffered declining enrollment in recent years, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other experts have expressed concern that cash-strapped institutions could use the reinstatement of Pell Grants as an opportunity to enroll prisoners in low-quality education programs that don’t truly prepare them for employment or further education upon release.

In a series of guidelines for colleges and corrections departments, Vera cautions that establishing a prison education program is a “significant undertaking that will profoundly affect the lives of students, faculty, and staff” and that such an endeavor takes “time, patience, creativity, and tenacity.” Higher education administrators should recognize that unique factors such as inmate restrictions on internet access and technology may pose significant hurdles. They will need to work closely with corrections staff in ensuring that the education delivered is of the highest possible quality. Perhaps most importantly, the best prison education programs consistently go beyond helping inmates prepare for future careers to affirming their human dignity.

Mariah Bohanon is the senior editor of *INSIGHT Into Diversity*.
Recently, a White student who was accepted to Spelman College — among the nation’s most prominent historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) — sparked a heated online debate after posting about her acceptance on Instagram. The student, who has not been publicly identified but goes by the Instagram handle @_camillarose, uploaded a photo of herself wearing a Spelman shirt and expressed her excitement in a caption:

“Transferring to a Historically Black College or University has been my dream for almost two years now,” the now-deleted post read. “I could never have genuinely imagined I’d be transferring to the #1 HBCU in the country, Spelman College. The home of Black girl magic. I feel beyond grateful for every facet of my journey & for this IMMENSE privilege. ... I understand the privilege I hold as a White woman in America, and I choose to wake up every day using this privilege to create a more equitable and healed world.”

The post quickly went viral, with thousands on social media posting comments either in favor of or against @_camillarose’s reasons for attending an HBCU. Many criticized the post for what they saw as a fetishization of the Black HBCU experience. Some argued that the very act of a White student attending an HBCU rather than a predominantly White institution (PWI) is an invasion of a sacred space for African Americans.

“She took a spot in a Black space that was meant for a BLACK WOMAN. I don’t care how else you slice it and dice it, that’s what she did and I am NOT OK WITH IT,” a Twitter user with the handle @Tsmallsmakeup1 wrote. “ALLL [sic] these PWIs, but she CHOSE to colonize an HBCU. And not for a superior education, but for ‘an experience.’”

Twitter user @jadedoddm, a current Spelman student, took the opposite view. She pointed out that the college is named after a White woman abolitionist, Laura Spelman Rockefeller, and argued that excluding non-Black students promotes divisiveness.

“We’re promoting segregation by shunning her. Why promote segregation after our hard fight for equality? As long as she’s treating Spelman like a school and not a black woman museum, I don’t c [sic] the problem,” @jadedoddm tweeted.

The debate sparked by @_camillarose is just one example of an issue that has become increasingly contentious as White enrollment at HBCUs continues to grow. As of 2018, nearly a quarter
of HBCU students were not Black, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Many of these institutions have made the controversial push to increase racial diversity in an effort to secure more funding. Some HBCU recruiters say the move is necessary because White middle- and upper-class students are more likely to be able to afford full tuition rather than requiring the scholarships and grants needed by many Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

HBCUs have been plagued by low enrollment numbers in recent years and insufficient government support. In Maryland, for example, a coalition of HBCUs filed an ongoing federal lawsuit in 2006 arguing that their institutions receive inequitable funding compared with PWIs. One of those institutions, Morgan State University, has managed to grow enrollment in recent years by recruiting more Latinx, White, and international students, according to a 2019 article in The Washington Post.

For public HBCUs, recruiting non-Black students is necessary to maintain accreditation and receive government funding. In order to meet racial diversity standards, they recruit at predominantly White and Latinx high schools and, therefore, tend to have larger numbers of non-Black students compared with private HBCUs, according to another article in the Post.

Of course, attracting non-Black students to historically Black institutions is not just a financial matter. As with many PWIs, HBCUs tend to value diversity for its educational and social benefits and recognize that exposing students to different sociocultural identities is necessary to prepare them to succeed in an increasingly multicultural world.

Still, there are those who say that enrolling non-Black students violates the mission of HBCUs and their special role as safe spaces for African American students. DJ Envy, the host of the nationally syndicated radio show The Breakfast Club, which often tackles racial issues, told listeners during a January 2021 episode that he “never understood why students that weren’t Black went to HBCUs.”

An alum of Hampton University, DJ Envy said that he went to an HBCU because he was offered more financial aid than at other schools and that he liked the idea of being in a space where he could be unapologetically Black and not have to worry about racism.

Milverton Saint, a popular African American blogger, argues that the history of White colonization and gentrification illustrates why these institutions should be preserved for Black students.

“There isn’t a single example in the entirety of human history of one white person coming into a Black space and allowing it to remain a Black space. Countries, neighborhoods, schools, etc,” Saint recently tweeted. “A white person who claims to be an ally and understands history should understand that and choose to protect...
Black spaces from the outside. Not insert themselves.”

Yet some White students have defended their place at historically Black institutions by arguing that their decision to attend an HBCU is based on allyship and a desire to strengthen their ability to combat racism.

In a 2018 documentary by Vice News, White sociology major Tiago Rachelson explained that he chose to study at Morehouse College — a historically Black men’s college — because of its “brotherhood component.” His desire to attend Morehouse was so strong that he did not even apply to other schools.

“I know college is really about getting an education, but here you can get an education academically as well as an education through life,” Rachelson told Vice.

When asked by a Black classmate if he feels like he belongs at Morehouse, Rachelson stated “I feel like I belong here if I’m putting in the work. It’s that simple.”

Joshua Packwood, who rejected a full-ride scholarship to Columbia University in favor of Morehouse, became the first White valedictorian of an HBCU when he graduated in 2008. He has expressed a similar view as Rachelson to the media. “For me, being the only one or one of few [White students] was actually the key part to why I wanted that experience, because I just thought that would be so transformative in how I would think,” Packwood told CNN in 2016.

Research has found that HBCUs can help enhance White students’ critical consciousness by providing courses, workshops, and group experiences that explore White race, privilege, and oppression. Yet other studies have found that attending college in a predominantly Black environment has substantial benefits for African Americans. Black graduates of HBCUs experience greater social mobility and have healthier lifestyles later in adulthood than those who attended PWIs, among other positive outcomes.

Andrew Arroyo, EdD, interim assistant vice provost for academic programs and policy and associate professor of Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), has written extensively on the topic of White student and faculty presence at HBCUs. Arroyo, who is White, served as a professor at two different HBCUs prior to his current position at VCU. His research has focused in this area, and he now has a daughter who attends an historically Black college.

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Being a part of an HBCU community as a White person requires “ensuring that your White privilege is checked,” Arroyo says. “Your first stance is always going to be to listen, and you’re going to spend far more time listening than talking.”

Andrew Arroyo

Andrew Arroyo admits he entered his faculty positions at HBCUs “with certain paradigms” of a White savior complex, but through time learned to self-check his intentions and motivations. He recommends that all students, regardless of racial or ethnic background, base their choice of college on their individual needs and goals — not solely on whether a school is an HBCU.

“The one thing that I would say to White students is don’t take HBCUs off your list. It’s not necessarily that they have to go out and seek an HBCU, but they need to recognize that some of the best programs out there are at HBCUs, and they are some of the most affordable institutions,” Arroyo says.

The backlash to @_camillarose largely echoed this sentiment, with many on social media pointing out that her post made it appear as if her desire to attend Spelman was based solely on the fact that it is an HBCU rather than on its prestigious academic reputation. She subsequently posted two lengthy apologies, stating in one that her “wanting to go to an HBCU is not something appropriate for me to center around myself, my experience, my wants, my needs. … [M]e wanting to go to an HBCU is not a character/personal development camp.”

Mariah Stewart is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
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Virtual Reality Could Be the Future of DEI Training

By Erik Cliburn

With technology becoming ever more integrated into education and business, a virtual reality (VR) technology boom is anticipated over the next several years. VR’s current $3 billion global market is expected to spike to $57.6 billion by 2027, according to a 2019 report by research and consulting firm Fortune Business Insights. That 1,860 percent increase does not even account for the COVID-19 pandemic, which will undoubtedly result in even more companies and consumers adopting VR as an essential tool, according to Forbes magazine.

Although this technology has traditionally been associated with video games and entertainment, it might just be the future of education and workforce training — including in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

At California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), experts are exploring how VR can combat sexual harassment and violence as well as promote LGBTQ inclusion. In December 2020, the university received a $45,000 grant from the Public Interest Technology University Network to support a group of interdisciplinary faculty members and students in researching how VR can improve training in these areas.

The funding will be used to develop screenplays that portray scenarios of discrimination, harassment, and bias, explains James Werner, EdD, a project lead and associate professor of media arts. The screenplays will have branching narratives, or differing storylines, that are driven by users’ actions and their responses to different situations. Because training is done individually rather than in a group setting or class and is interactive versus passive watching of video sessions, the situation at hand feels more personal.

“I think there are a lot of those uncomfortable situations or those situations that are difficult to role play and talk through. With [VR], people can actually be immersed in these real-life, realistic situations and essentially be able to become comfortable with the uncomfortable to the point where they can interact, engage, and intervene,” says Christine Hackman, PhD, associate professor of public health at Cal Poly and a project lead.

In an immersive experience that gives users a safe space to make mistakes, the intended messages may resonate more with trainees than in traditional sexual harassment and DEI trainings, she says.

Research has long shown that conventional trainings, which often include role play scenarios, tend to be ineffective. While participants “are easily taught to respond correctly to a questionnaire about bias,” they often forget the lessons learned within a matter of days, according to a 2016 article in the Harvard Business Review. Traditional training also has the potential to do more harm than good. Negative outcomes can include defensive reactions from White participants, a sense of resentment among coworkers of different sociocultural identities, and the reinforcement of gender and racial stereotypes.

“The biggest fear people have [when it comes to DEI training], particularly White people, is making a mistake and appearing racist,” says Coleen Carrigan, PhD, a project lead and Cal Poly associate professor of anthropology. “VR allows people to have some privacy to work on these real-life scenarios and work through what it can feel like to try to interrupt some violence that is happening in spaces that are supposed to be safe for our students.”

The researchers are working with Cal Poly Safer, an on-campus resource for addressing sexual harassment and assault, to gather data and explore how current training on these topics can be improved. They are also partnering with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of the Central Coast and the San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Department to determine the content for the training screenplays.

Thanks to advancements in the VR field and its rapidly growing popularity, the training modules developed by Cal Poly researchers will be accessible on most smartphones, according to Werner.

“Virtual reality traditionally has been very difficult for people to access because it takes a big computer rig and you have to go to a place, sit down, and have someone facilitate the experience,” he says. “Now, we’re in a place where we can compress it into an app and send it out to reach millions of people.”

If the project is successful, the modules will likely be adopted for use by Cal Poly and its community partners, according to the researchers. They hope to promote VR training’s appeal so that it will eventually be used at higher education institutions and organizations across the country.

Many experts have predicted that VR will be the future of DEI training because it is engaging and personalized.
What Does Virtual Reality Training Look Like?

Virtual reality (VR) can take different forms, from smartphone apps that allow you to engage with a virtual environment in the palm of your hand to fully immersive experiences using headsets, hand controllers, and other high-tech equipment.

Equal Reality, a company specializing in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training via VR, offers clients different options when it comes to formats and DEI focus areas. Their website also offers a demo of their Everyday Inclusion training package, which was developed in partnership with Cornell University. While the training is designed to be used with more immersive VR technology, users can complete the demo using their computer.

The training allows users to experience common workplace scenarios from different perspectives. In one scenario, the user assumes the role of Tamara, a Black woman employee who overhears a group of coworkers accusing their employer of choosing a “diversity hire” rather than promoting qualified internal employees to the position. The user is also asked to represent the team on their company’s diversity committee. Users then participate in the same meeting as Victor the boss, who is White and male.

The user is given several options for how to react to coworkers when they exhibit bias and discrimination and uses their mouse to click on coworkers when they exhibit biased behavior. At the end of each session, a virtual host tallies the number of times the user recognized biased behavior and asks them to reflect on their experiences through a series of questions. Users can retake the sessions and choose different reactions to see how their choices affect each situation.

Not all VR workplace training takes this same approach, however. DDI, a leadership consultant company, created a DEI program that allows the user to maintain their sociocultural identity, but flips the typical power structure of the workplace. In a 2019 article in Fortune magazine, Brian Ritchey, a White male chief operating officer and vice president of Ritchey Metals, shared his experience with the DDI training. His session included experiencing what it was like to be the only person of his sociocultural identity in a workplace meeting and to be repeatedly interrupted by coworkers while attempting to read a script provided by DDI.

In addition to participating in a virtual boardroom meeting, the DDI program had Ritchey confront a set of challenging situations that included being told he was “too sensitive” when experiencing bias. “It’s really what it’s like to feel excluded at work,” Mina Sipe, a senior innovation consultant at DDI Labs who developed the simulation, told Fortune.

and has measurable results, according to a study by Future Workplace, a human resources advisory firm. Some companies, such as tech firms Equal Reality and VR Perspectives, already offer workshops and training packages to help employers teach about unconscious bias, issues of inclusion for people with disabilities, and more.

Equal Reality counts Amazon, Google, the New York City Department of Education and J.P. Morgan among its clientele. In one Equal Reality case study, 97 percent of users said they found VR training more engaging than traditional techniques. Another study claims that VR training is effective at building empathy, as 99 percent of users “understood and felt what it was like to be treated disrespectfully,” according to the company’s website.

VR Perspectives’ training focuses on non-confrontational methods to help users identify unconscious bias. Rather than telling the user how to react in certain scenarios, it shows “how bias looks, feels, [and] how to identify it and address it with appropriate behavior,” its website states.

One of VR Perspectives’ newest clients is the Farmer School of Business (FSB) at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Gillian Oakenfull, PhD, the faculty director of diversity and inclusion and an FSB professor, used a $50,000 grant to implement VR training as part of the school’s fast-growing DEI program, Beyond Ready CQ. The school has partnered with VR Perspectives to develop and license DEI training simulations that take place in a virtual educational environment and to use the company’s existing workplace simulations.

Beyond Ready CQ assesses business students’ cultural intelligence — or CQ — and tracks their growth throughout their college career, Oakenfull says.

In partnership with VR Perspectives, FSB will implement simulations that allow students to “walk a mile” in the shoes of someone of a different race, gender, age, and ability level, she explains. The training is meant to help users develop empathy and track biases within simulated workplace and educational environments. Users can also be placed into a bystander scenario in which the situation unfolds based on their actions. FSB conducts a survey after each training to gauge the user’s experience and what they learned by confronting the world from another person’s viewpoint.
“We’re using VR for perspective taking,” Oakenfull says. “It’s very difficult for somebody to understand what the experience is for somebody [else]. By putting it into VR, by making it personal and by making it private, I can walk in their shoes.”

Since FSB’s student population is largely composed of White men, it is especially important to broaden their worldview and provide DEI education that inspires true allyship for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, Oakenfull says.

In recent weeks, FSB has also partnered with Equal Reality, the company that initially piqued Oakenfull’s interest in VR DEI training, she says. FSB and Equal Reality will work together to develop VR and two-dimensional DEI training specifically aimed at higher education.

Beyond the inherent incentive of developing cultural intelligence and empathy, FSB students will be able to add credentials earned from participating in Beyond Ready CQ’s VR training to their résumés. The training will also be available to community members and business leaders who wish to improve their cultural intelligence; they too will be able to add this innovative experience to their résumés.

Unlike the VR that is being developed at Cal Poly, FSB’s training modules will be computer generated and require a physical space. The school hopes to begin sessions in spring or fall 2021, when COVID-19 restrictions lift to make in-person training viable, according to Oakenfall. It will be available to more than 1,400 undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty members.

Erik Cliburn is a senior staff writer for INSIGHT Into Diversity.
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Four years under the Trump administration has demonstrated how speedily and drastically policy can change — and the real-life effects these changes can have on our communities. From restrictive immigration laws and an anti-affirmative action agenda to completely repealing protections for LGBTQ individuals, the Trump presidency was marked by the loss of civil rights for many Americans.

With the election of President Joe Biden comes hope for improvement. His measures in reversing the Muslim travel ban and ensuring LGBTQ rights have already shown the possibilities this administration will have in enacting change for the better.

Of course, Biden and his team will still need the expertise and advocacy of public policy scholar and educators to guide them going forward. The professionals leading the way at public policy schools and programs must raise their voices and continue to champion causes that promote public good, especially as we still contend with racial unrest, a global pandemic, and economic hardships abound.

In this issue of INSIGHT, we highlight the ways in which public policy experts and higher education programs are responding to the election of Biden and to the numerous crises affecting our country. While public policy work is never-ending, there is time to celebrate and look forward to the possibilities for unity and healing that the future has in store.
Robert Hampshire, an associate professor of public policy at the University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, or the Ford School, was recently appointed by the Biden administration to serve as principal deputy assistant secretary for research and technology at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

In his new position, Hampshire is responsible for research, development, and technology for the DOT University Transportation Center program. The program includes 40 colleges and universities that work together to advance research on the “safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly transportation of people and goods,” according to the department’s website. Hampshire’s position also includes oversight of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, and the Transportation Safety Institute.

Hampshire’s unique background in researching issues of equity, technology, and public policy as they relate to transportation will be a valuable addition to the DOT, Jim Sayer, director of the University of Michigan’s Transportation Research Institute, said in a news release. “[Hampshire] understands that communities with inadequate access to transportation results in negative impacts on peoples’ lives in terms of employment, their access to medical care and healthy foods, and overall quality of life,” Sayer said.

Hampshire has spearheaded multiple projects that address social inequities related to issues of accessible transportation. In June 2020, he secured a National Science Foundation (NSF) RAPID grant to address hunger caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding allowed him to identify geographical areas most affected by food insecurity and transportation barriers, assist a Detroit pilot program in delivering school lunches to vulnerable families, and develop a website and database that compiles COVID-19-related food insecurity data, according to an article on the Ford School News website.

Hunger during the pandemic is closely related to transportation and public policy issues because many underserved families have to rely primarily on public transit to buy food, Hampshire told the news service. “Low-income households have fewer options to secure food and other basic supplies without being exposed to the coronavirus. The reasons for food insecurity may vary — from students dependent on school lunch to seniors without smartphones or internet access to order delivery or use online payment systems,” he said.

The NSF has supported Hampshire in researching how driverless vehicles and other innovative forms of transportation can address societal inequities. Additionally, he recently secured a grant from the New Venture Fund to identify constraints faced by people of color in the field of public interest technology, a relatively new discipline focused on the study and development of technology that advances social justice and the common good. From 2009 to 2012, Hampshire was the program chair of the Minority Issues Forum at the Institute for Operations Research and Management Science, and in 2017 he organized the 23rd annual Conference for African American Researchers in the Mathematical Sciences.

“The Ford School community is very proud of [Hampshire] and the values and skills he’s bringing to his important new role with the Biden administration,” Michael Barr, dean of the Ford School, said in a news release. “Robert’s expertise and his deep commitment to equity, access, and justice will improve transportation policy for all Americans.”

Systemic racism may be an embedded element of city infrastructure, according to a recent study published in the Journal of Construction and Engineering Management. The paper’s research discovered that restrictive infrastructure within lower-income and underrepresented communities is associated with reduced access to transportation and as a result, lower socioeconomic well-being.
Georgetown and Howard Universities Form Partnership Focused on Public Policy

On February 1, leaders at the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy and Howard University signed a memorandum of understanding to work together in furthering collaborative programs and research between their two institutions.

“This agreement deepens the relationship between Howard and Georgetown, two preeminent institutions committed to service and scholarship in the name of improving our local and global communities,” Howard University Provost and Chief Academic Officer Anthony Wutoh said in a press release.

Most notably, the joint agreement launched the Howard Scholar at McCourt program. This offers full-tuition scholarships for Howard students and graduates who are accepted into one of the McCourt School’s graduate degree programs specializing in public policy, data science for public policy, policy management, or international development policy.

As Howard is one of the nation’s most preeminent historically Black universities, its partnership with the McCourt School will have the added benefit of diversifying the field of public policy and administration.

“The McCourt School aspires to be the most inclusive top public policy program in the world,” Maria Cancian, the school’s dean, said in the release. “The creation of the Howard Scholar at McCourt program will help us deliver on our commitment to broadening the diversity of perspective and life experience at McCourt.”

Along with the new scholarship program, the collaborative agreement is meant to encourage joint research efforts between McCourt School and Howard faculty. Howard researchers will have access to Georgetown’s Research Data Center at McCourt’s Massive Data Institute. Access to the lab, which is a joint project by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Massive Data Institute, requires researchers to undergo security clearance, even after research projects are approved, in order to work on restricted data sets.

Other potential collaborations between the two Washington D.C.-based institutions include joint coursework, seminars, and conferences, according to the press release.

ASU RELEASES FOUNDATIONAL STUDY ON HOUSING SOLUTIONS FOR AUTISTIC ADULTS

The Arizona State University (ASU) Morrison Institute for Public Policy published a report in January that is expected to be a pivotal resource on housing solutions for adults with Autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Morrison Institute for Public Policy is a research center within ASU’s Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions.

The report, titled “A Place in the World: Fueling Housing and Community Options for Adults with Autism and Other Neurodiversities,” provides common terminology and principles that can serve as standard guidelines for the housing industry, parents, researchers, and policymakers when it comes to this particular aspect of housing access.

According to the report, housing shortages for adults with Autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities are a nationwide problem. As a result, these individuals are often forced to be institutionalized in mental health hospitals. Many live with family members — often older parents who may not be adequate caretakers — which robs them of their independence as well as prevents them from getting more adequate daily assistance. The report notes that this is a significant public policy challenge that must be addressed if the U.S. is to support this vulnerable population, especially as an estimated 50,000 young people with Autism graduate high school — effectively entering adulthood — each year.

The university partnered with Autism advocate and marketing experts Denise Resnik, an ASU alum, to create the study. Resnik is CEO of First Place AZ, a nonprofit that supports housing and development for Autistic adults. She is also is co-founder and board member emeritus of the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center, a nonprofit dedicated to autism research, education, and community outreach.
Social Justice Education in Public Policy Schools is Crucial for the Nation’s Future

By Erik Cliburn and Mariah Bohanon

After watching in horror the murder of George Floyd by police officers last May, Rajade Berry-James, PhD, promised her two teenage daughters that she would do everything in her power to make the United States a better, more equitable place for them to live.

As an educator in public policy, Berry-James knows that she is in a unique position to make such change possible. She is an associate professor in the North Carolina State University School of Public and International Affairs (NC State SPIA) and a member of the Executive Council of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), which oversees and accredits public policy schools on a global scale. Much of her career has been dedicated to ensuring that her students — the nation’s future civic leaders and policymakers — understand racial and social justice issues.

With the unjust death of Floyd so fresh on everyone’s minds, it is imperative that public policy educators seize the current moment to break down institutional barriers and address long overdue reforms, says Berry-James.

“Going forward, our curricula changes must advance our understanding of social equity and social justice, develop culturally competent professionals, and address critical issues in the public sector,” she says. “Our students must be trained to identify problems as well as develop strategies to critically analyze oppression.”

Brandi Blessett, PhD, is director of the Master of Public Administration program and an associate professor at the University of Cincinnati (UC) as well as a fellow member of the NASPAA Executive Council. As institutions and businesses issued messages of solidarity with the Black community after Floyd’s murder and repeated police violence against African Americans, she shared in Berry-James’ desire to see real change.

“One of the things that really frustrated me over the summer was that lots of institutions felt the need to respond in the moment with a statement,” Blessett says. “[Some of] those statements were superficial in the fact that they were not associated with resources and/or an action plan to actually manifest the things they professed in response to valuing Black lives.”

Berry-James, Blessett, and fellow members of NASPAA decided that it was time to take concrete action to lead the field of public policy education toward becoming a more socially aware, progressive discipline.

NASPAA, having 317 member institutions across 25 countries, realized that it had a responsibility toward its members, students, and the public to achieve this goal. One of its first steps was forming the NASPAA Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which was created in direct response “to the killing of George Floyd and a desire for NASPAA to move toward intentional actions to become a model for member institutions in the fight against anti-Black racism, discrimination, and inequity,” the association’s website states.

The task force was composed of six members of NASPAA’s Diversity and Social Equity Committee and six members of the Executive Council. The group spent several months developing a report on the association’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and proposing a comprehensive framework and action plan. Released in September, the report is meant to hold NASPAA

Black Representation in Public Policy Education

While a 2018-2019 Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) study of 30 U.S. degree programs found that more Asian American, Latinx, and international enrollment students are pursuing public administration careers, Black student enrollment actually decreased by 0.1 percent from the previous academic year. African American men had the steepest decline, at 8.6 percent. By contrast, Latinx men had the highest growth in enrollment, at 11.5 percent.

Black faculty, at 9 percent, are the second largest racial group in the public policy educator workforce after White faculty, at 72 percent.
accountable for committing to its professed DEI principles while also providing an example for its member institutions, explains Laura Bloomberg, PhD, NASPAA President and dean of the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

The report states that the association “has publicly committed to do all in [its] power” to, among other goals, dismantle systemic racism, advance policy solutions to stop police brutality against Black people, and create a “new, inclusive civic square consistent with our public service values.” Some of the task force’s specific recommendations include developing DEI training for NASPAA executives and member schools and supporting minority-serving institutions through concrete actions such as expanding membership and accreditation for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Of course, NASPAA’s DEI report also addresses diversity among administrators, faculty, and students. The association identifies assessment and evaluation of diversity within member schools as one target area for improvement. It also states a commitment to seeking funding for the recruitment and support of underrepresented students in public policy graduate programs.

Another mission NASPAA pledges to uphold is to “provide transformative and inclusive education.” The task force has recommended, for example, that the association’s accreditation process emphasize equity in curricula and cultural competence in student learning outcomes.

Bloomberg, who lives in Minneapolis just three miles from where Floyd was killed, says public policy schools and programs striving to meet these standards can begin by evaluating their own internal commitment to DEI. An easy first step is having professors examine the diversity of their course readings. As it stands, the vast majority of assigned reading in the public policy and administration discipline is written by White men, she says.

“We should all take a critical look at what we are asking students to read in terms of literature in our field and how homogeneous or heterogeneous is the
authorship. That’s something that every class instructor could do right now,” says Bloomberg.

Blesset says that a key element for furthering these new DEI goals, for both NASPAA and its member schools, is funding. Real change requires investment in actions such as providing DEI training for faculty and administrators, bringing in diverse guest speakers, and diversifying curriculums, she says.

It is possible for schools to achieve this level of transformation if they approach public policy education through a social justice lens, according to Blesset. The master’s program that she directs at UC is rooted “in understanding the ways in which systemic oppression has manifested itself through our public institutions and the way administrators respond to vulnerable communities,” she says.

“You can’t be a public service professional and not have the history and context of how we got to this state and the role of institutions and government in creating differential opportunities for people who are not White, not male, not heterosexual, and not able-bodied,” says Blesset. “Those differentials matter, and students need to be prepared to deal with that.”

Public administration programs that have not prioritized DEI education in the past but are seeking to transform may need to evaluate which of their course offerings take priority, Bloomberg says. It might be necessary to replace some classes in order to ensure that social justice is a key component of students’ education.

Berry-James says NC State SPIA has been increasing its focus on DEI for the past decade. When she first joined the school in 2010 as the director of the graduate program, she added four new courses focused on cultural awareness and social justice. Advancing student understanding of these issues is a continual process and one that requires diligence on the part of administrators and faculty.

“The future of public administration cannot be like the history of the United States,” she says. “We must develop an anti-racist curriculum, one that describes social injustice, explores social inequity, and explains administrative failures.”

Erik Cliburn is a senior staff writer for and Mariah Bohanon is the senior editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity.
Renowned Public Policy Institute Uses Research to Advocate for LGBTQ Equality

By Lisa O’Malley and Mariah Bohanon
Protecting the rights of LGBTQ Americans is one of the greatest public policy challenges of the 21st century. While countless advocates and researchers struggle to develop and enact policies to ensure equality and promote the well-being of this population, anti-LGBTQ activists and politicians still hold positions of power across the U.S. These individuals have the ability to easily strip away hard-won rights, as is evidenced, for example, by President Donald Trump’s decision to ban transgender Americans from serving in the armed forces. In total, Trump and his administration issued more than 180 anti-LGBTQ statements and actions during his four years in office, according to the advocacy group GLAAD.

By stark contrast, The Washington Post has described President Joe Biden’s “ambitious LGBT agenda” as a sign that he “may be the most pro-equality president in history.” Within days of assuming the presidency, Biden reversed the transgender military ban and issued an executive order protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination in education, health care, and the workplace. Additional orders restoring and promoting LGBTQ civil rights soon followed.

The swiftness with which politicians can harm or help an underserved population perfectly demonstrates just how powerful public policy can be in ensuring civil rights and equality. Creating these protections, however, wouldn’t be possible without the work of scholar advocates and the higher education institutions and organizations support them.

Among the most prestigious and influential of these organizations is the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law. Founded in 2001, the institute is a public policy think tank that specializes in independent research and has played a pivotal role in advancing knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ issues. Its major achievements include conducting the first data-backed estimate on the LGBTQ population in the U.S. in 2011. The institute found that 9 million Americans identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Prior to the release of the report, the most up-to-date estimates on the size of this population were based on studies conducted by noted researcher Alfred Kinsey in 1948.

The Williams Institute doesn’t stop with collecting research; it also works diligently to ensure the information is received by the people who have the greatest influence on public policy. The institute sends its important findings to “policymakers, judges, the media, and other stakeholders to ensure that decisions impacting the lives of millions of LGBT people and families are based on data and facts,” its website states.

In 2018, for example, Williams Institute scholars released a report that estimated nearly 700,000 U.S. adults have undergone conversion therapy, mostly as minors. The practice, which aims to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity, has been outlawed in multiple states and cities for its extremely harmful effects on mental health. The report was included in a presentation to the United Nations Human Rights Council, with a U.N. Independent Expert calling for a ban on the practice.

Also in 2018, the institute conducted a study on police relations with the LGBTQ community in Jacksonville, Florida after four transgender women became the victims of gun violence. Advocates accused law enforcement of mishandling the cases, including misgendering the victims. Using information from the Williams Institute, 

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Among the recent advancements for LGBTQ rights and representation enacted by the Biden administration is the appointment of several LGBTQ individuals to high-level positions, including:

- **Pete Buttigieg**
  U.S. Transportation Secretary
- **Rachel Levine**
  U.S. Assistant Secretary of Health
- **Carlos Elizondo**
  White House Social Secretary
- **Karine Jean-Pierre**
  Deputy White House Press Secretary

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The Williams Institute’s report on Black LGBTQ adults studied several aspects of personal well-being, including mental, physical, and economic health as well as social and cultural experiences. The results show that these adults fare worse than straight and cisgender African Americans when it comes to employment, income level, food security, and health care access.

Additional key findings include:
• 1.2 million Black LGBTQ adults live in the U.S.
• 36 percent are raising children
• 79 percent report facing verbal insults or abuse
• 60 percent report being threatened with violence
• 26 percent have been diagnosed with depression
• 56 percent of Black LGBTQ households are low-income

Institute’s report, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office established LGBTQ-focused training, an outreach group, and new guidelines on how to refer to transgender individuals.

Recently, institute scholars have released major findings on the ways in which LGBTQ people of color continue to suffer under inadequate public health, housing, and similar policies. A January 2021 Williams Institute report on Black LGBTQ adults in the U.S. shows that these individuals experience higher levels of economic insecurity and greater health disparities compared with straight and cisgender African Americans.

Researchers concluded that existing public resources for the Black LGBTQ population are insufficient and that better government and community support is necessary for protecting their mental health and personal safety.

“The notable disparities in economic security and health outcomes indicate a critical need for policies and service interventions that address the unique needs of Black LGBTQ adults,” Soon Kyu Choi, lead author of the report and project manager at the Williams Institute, said in a press release.

Lisa O’Mally is the assistant editor of INSIGHT Into Diversity. Mariah Bohanon is the senior editor of INSIGHT.
COMMITTED TO INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Clemson University has been a top-ranked public university by *U.S. News & World Report* for 13 consecutive years. The University has been classified as a Carnegie R1 research university that creates economic opportunities. Faculty, staff and students contribute to Clemson’s national reputation as a great place to study, live and work, and the University invites others to learn more about career opportunities at clemson.edu/careers. To promote inclusive excellence, the University’s Men of Color National Summit works to increase the number of African American and Hispanic males who finish high school and complete college.

CLEMSON LEADING THE WAY

- **Call Me MISTER®** increases the pool of available teachers from a broader, more diverse background.
- **The Charles H. Houston Center for the Study of the Black Experience in Education** examines issues that impact the educational experiences of African Americans.
- **Clemson Career Workshop** supports college readiness of high-achieving students from diverse populations.
- **Emerging Scholars** helps establish a college-going culture among students from the state’s economically disadvantaged areas.
- **The Erwin Center Summer Scholars Program** gives students from HBCUs and other universities an opportunity to engage with marketing, advertising and communication professionals.
- **The Harvey and Lucinda Gantt Multicultural Center** supports and advocates for all Clemson students’ needs while providing diverse and experiential learning opportunities.
- **PEER/WISE** provides collaborative experiences for underrepresented students and women in science and engineering.
- **Tiger Alliance** mentors and prepares African American and Hispanic high school males for college entrance and success.

The summit is open to high school and college students, community leaders and professionals.

SAVE THE DATE
Men of Color National Summit
November 4-5, 2021
Chief, Division of Transplantation and Advanced Hepatobiliary Surgery, Department of Surgery

The Department of Surgery at the University of Utah is actively recruiting qualified applicants for the position of Chief, Division of Transplantation and Advanced Hepatobiliary Surgery, Department of Surgery. Qualified candidates will also be considered for Executive Medical Director for the Solid Organ Transplantation Service Line.

Description:
The Division of Transplantation and Advanced Hepatobiliary Surgery is one of nine divisions within the Department of Surgery at the University of Utah. The Chief oversees a highly cohesive faculty of abdominal transplant surgeons and advanced practice clinicians who are dedicated to high quality, value-driven patient care, education, and innovation & discovery through basic science, clinical, and/or health services research. The division faculty are also instrumental in caring for patients with benign and malignant hepatic and biliary disease in conjunction with the University of Utah/Huntsman Cancer Institute, a NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Requirements:
- Recognized academic transplant surgeon qualified for, or at the rank of, Associate Professor or Professor
- Strong leadership abilities and management experience in multidisciplinary environments, and ability to influence and motivate faculty and support a culture of collaboration, quality, and efficiency
- Demonstrated commitment to fostering the growth of others through a collaborative mind-set, and aptitude to motivate others through inspiration, effective communication and good listening skills that result in a strong level of trust and guidance.
- Strong commitment to the educational excellence and advancement of faculty, trainees, students, and advanced practice clinicians (APCs).

Candidates will have demonstrated effective leadership experience as well as a commitment to excellence in all three traditional academic missions of clinical practice, education, and research. The candidate must have the ability to work cooperatively and collegially within a diverse environment, and lead by example. The candidate must also have the ability to work across departments with specialties in Internal Medicine, Radiology, Anesthesia and others involved in the care of abdominal transplantation and advanced hepatobiliary disease.

The Chief will work closely with the Chair of Surgery and other department leadership to promote a collaborative environment that enhances clinical growth and excellence along with academic development consistent with Department and Institutional missions. The selected candidate will be a strategic leader who will promote a strong culture of institutional stewardship throughout the University of Utah Health Care system.

Education/Qualifications:
Prospective candidates must have an MD degree and will be Board Certified in General Surgery and completed a fellowship in abdominal solid organ transplantation. Additional instruction in advanced leadership or management training (e.g. ACS Physician Executives or Physician in Management series) is highly preferred.

The University of Utah Health Sciences Center is a patient focused center distinguished by collaboration, excellence, leadership, and respect. The University of Utah HSC values candidates who are committed to fostering and furthering the culture of compassion, collaboration, innovation, accountability, diversity, integrity, quality, and trust that is integral to the mission of the University of Utah Health Sciences Center.

Interested applicants must apply at:
http://utah.peopleadmin.com/postings/108118

For further information contact:
Robert Glasgow, MD
Robert.Glasgow@hsc.utah.edu

The University of Utah Health Sciences Center is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer and does not discriminate based upon race, national origin, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, status as a person with a disability, genetic information, or Protected Veteran status. Individuals from historically underrepresented groups, such as minorities, women, qualified persons with disabilities and protected veterans are encouraged to apply. Veterans’ preference is extended to qualified applicants, upon request and consistent with University policy and Utah state law. Upon request, reasonable accommodations in the application process will be provided to individuals with disabilities. To inquire about the University’s nondiscrimination or affirmative action policies or to request disability accommodation, please contact: Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 201 S. Presidents Circle, Rm 135, (801) 581-8365.

The University of Utah values candidates who have experience working in settings with students from diverse backgrounds, and possess a strong commitment to improving access to higher education for historically underrepresented students.
Vascular Surgeon

The Division of Vascular Surgery at the University of Utah is seeking applications for a full-time board-eligible/certified vascular surgeon beginning in September 2021. Appointment will be at an Assistant/Associate Professor level in either a Clinical or Tenure Track commensurate with the candidate’s experience. The Division of Vascular Surgery is among 9 clinical Divisions in the University of Utah Department of Surgery. The Division currently includes 5 faculty members that provide care at our University hospital and affiliated Primary Children’s hospital and Huntsman Cancer Institute to patients throughout the intermountain west. This tertiary academic medical center provides care to patients in Utah and five surrounding states in a referral area encompassing more than 10 percent of the continental US.

The target candidate will have experience in all aspects of vascular surgery, including both open and endovascular surgery. Clinical time will be spent primarily at the University medical center along with satellite hospitals and clinics. In addition to providing patient care, the successful candidate will be involved in the teaching of vascular surgery fellows, residents, and medical students. The Division has a competitive 2-year Vascular Surgery Fellowship (5+2) with one trainee selected per year.

The target candidate will have a passion for research and academic vascular surgery. The Division has a solid infrastructure for undertaking clinical trials, health services/outcomes research, and translational investigation. The infrastructure includes two full-time research coordinators, along with access to research databases and statistical support. We actively participate in a number of industry-sponsored clinical trials, and maintain a strong working relationship with the major device companies. The Division also participates in multiple Vascular Quality Initiative procedure registries.

Interested applicants must apply at:
http://utah.peopleadmin.com/postings/109004

Prospective applicants should email or fax a letter of interest and curriculum vitae to:
Benjamin S. Brooke, MD, PhD
Associate Professor & Chief
Division of Vascular Surgery
Benjamin.Brooke@hsc.utah.edu
Fax: 801-581-3433

The University of Utah Health (U of U Health) is a patient-focused center distinguished by collaboration, excellence, leadership, and respect. The U of U Health values candidates who are committed to fostering and furthering the culture of compassion, collaboration, innovation, accountability, diversity, integrity, quality, and trust that is integral to our mission.

The University of Utah is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer and does not discriminate based upon race, national origin, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, status as a person with a disability, genetic information, or Protected Veteran status. Individuals from historically underrepresented groups, such as minorities, women, qualified persons with disabilities and protected veterans are encouraged to apply. Veterans’ preference is extended to qualified applicants, upon request and consistent with University policy and Utah state law. Upon request, reasonable accommodations in the application process will be provided to individuals with disabilities. To inquire about the University’s nondiscrimination or affirmative action policies or to request disability accommodation, please contact: Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 201 S. Presidents Circle, Rm 135, (801) 581-8365.

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Ohio University Finds Innovative Way to Celebrate MLK Day During COVID-19

Ohio University (OHIO) celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 18, 2021, with a unique twist on the day’s traditional events to allow for social distancing due to COVID-19 restrictions. “This year’s MLK celebration looks different than in years past, but we remain unwavering in our dedication to honor Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy of service and action,” Gigi Secuban, EdD, OHIO vice president of diversity and inclusion, stated.

Members of the university and local community were able to safely gather together at a large drive-in celebration at OHIO’s Peden Stadium. The event featured OHIO alumnus and Emmy-nominated CBS News journalist Jericka Duncan as a speaker and included a free brunch that participants could enjoy from their vehicles. Duncan’s speech and student song and dance performances were aired on the stadium big screen. Like at a drive-in movie theater, attendees could listen to the event through their car radios. It was also available on Facebook Live.

“Today, we renew our resolve to act together as one community, to create an anti-racist, inclusive and equitable OHIO and Athens community in which all can be safe, grow, thrive and realize their potential,” Secuban announced during the event.

The university hosted other virtual and socially distanced events throughout the course of the week. Students and alumni of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, a historically Black fraternity, held a silent march. Other programs included a trivia night and workshops that focused on self-care, activism, community, and the arts.
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.

The Urban and Public Affairs department within the College of Arts and Sciences is a dynamic, interdisciplinary department that highlights ideas and issues faced by urban communities through social science fields including public administration, urban planning and sustainability. With the urban-focused Master of Public Administration and concentrations in urban governance, nonprofit management and diversity management and leadership, students are set up for success in public and nonprofit sectors. By using content that centers on the metropolitan location UofL calls home, the program encourages diversity and inclusiveness in its curriculum and outside the classroom engagement.

louisville.edu/artsandsciences

INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICY WITH AN URBAN APPROACH

PROUD TO BE A 2020 DIVERSITY CHAMPION.
The Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University expanded its footprint this year, establishing a teaching site in the heart of the nation’s capital. Offering a Master of International Policy, students at the DC teaching site can further their careers in the fields of international affairs, diplomacy and national security. Texas A&M is making the noble calling of public service achievable beyond Texas. The Bush School in DC is located less than two blocks from the White House and Black Lives Matter Plaza.