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March 2023
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Confronting Food and Housing Insecurity

How community colleges meet the needs of their most vulnerable students

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Creating Equitable Classrooms

Protecting Jewish Students

Consortium Models College-to-Career Programs



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On the cover: Madisonville Community College student food bank in action



Together, we advance health care for everyone.

At UT Southwestern Medical Center, a diverse and inclusive environment is an organizational imperative. By working together, we leverage our collective power to catalyze advances in research, education, and patient care. We are proud to be recognized with the HEED Award for the fifth consecutive year and to be named a Diversity Champion for 2022.

Join our journey at utsouthwestern.edu/diversity.

“UT Southwestern stands on the side of those working to improve the world through affirmation of human dignity, kindness in our interactions with others, and respect for every individual in every encounter, every day.”

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.

President

UT Southwestern Medical Center

“The success of our missions for research, patient care, and educating the physicians, scientists, and health care professionals of tomorrow is ultimately fueled by expanding and appreciating diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Shawna Nesbitt, M.D.

Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

UT Southwestern Medical Center



UT Southwestern
Medical Center

SPECIAL REPORT

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in the Northeast U.S.



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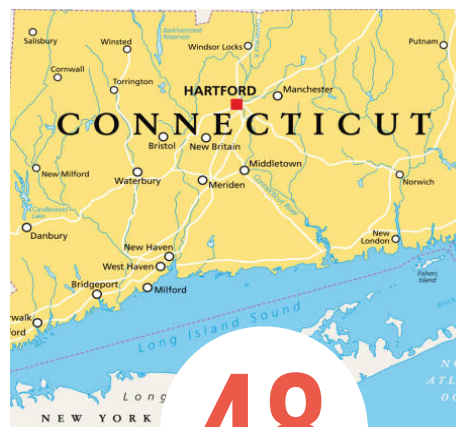
Community colleges are developing initiatives to address the increasing rate of student food and housing insecurity.



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IN BRIEF



Study Finds Campus Diversity Doesn't Necessarily Foster Belonging

Diversity on college campuses does not necessarily lead to more interactions between underrepresented students, according to a 2022 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

However, students of color and those from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds who do engage across social groups report a stronger sense of belonging and better academic performance.

Researchers asked 550 students at two U.S. universities to complete surveys eight times during a semester to detail their most meaningful interactions of the past 24 hours. Students noted the perceived gender, race, and social class of the other person involved in these interactions. At the end of the semester, participants completed a final survey about their feelings of belonging.

The research team used demographic data to calculate the rate at which interactions among different groups should naturally occur. For example, if the campus population of students of color is 43 percent, then a White student could expect to interact with people of color 43 percent of the time.

The results, however, showed 15 percent fewer cross-class interactions than expected, and 27 percent fewer cross-race engagements. Black, Native American, and Latino students reported interacting with a White or Asian student less than a third of the time — despite these groups making up 73 percent of the universities' student bodies.

Underrepresented students, including those with higher GPAs, who participated in cross-group activities gained the most benefits. They were also more likely to feel welcomed and at home at their universities. For White and Asian students, and those from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, diverse associations had little or no effect on their academic experience.

To help more students achieve the positive effects of cross-cultural interactions, researchers recommend that universities place diverse groups of students together whenever possible, such as in dorm room assignments and class projects. ●

INSIGHT Welcomes Richard A. Baker to Editorial Board

Richard Anthony Baker, JD, PhD, has established a career in diversity and equal opportunity that spans more than 20 years. Before assuming the role of executive director for institutional equity, EO/AA and Title IX coordinator for Rice University, Baker served in the equal opportunity offices at the University of Houston System and Texas Tech University System.

“We look forward to working with Richard Baker as an editorial board member for *INSIGHT Into Diversity*,” says Lenore Pearlstein, publisher. “His wide-ranging expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion and in higher education will be valuable as we continue to explore the intersection of these topics and help our audience build greater inclusiveness on their campuses and beyond.”

Baker is responsible for implementing Rice University’s anti-discrimination efforts, including Title IX compliance. He has provided



sexual misconduct prevention, anti-bias, and DEI training for thousands of employees and students, including nearly 4,000 police officers.

In addition to those responsibilities,

Baker is a founding board member for Etoile Academy Charter School and immediate past president of the board for the American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity), the oldest operating association of professionals in the equal opportunity field.

Baker has the distinction of being the first African American to obtain a doctorate of jurisprudence and graduate degrees in public administration (MPA) and higher education (PhD) from Texas Tech University.

The *INSIGHT Into Diversity* Editorial Board is composed of 19 accomplished individuals working in DEI who provide expertise and professional perspectives in higher education, business, advocacy, and private practice. ●

California Programs Helps Adult Learners Return, Complete College

A new program in California aims to support adult learners in their goals to return to college, complete their degrees, and attain better career opportunities. The California Reconnect campaign targets the estimated 4 million Californians between 25 and 54 years old who have earned college credits but have yet to obtain a degree.

The campaign, which launched in late 2022, is a collaborative effort between several nonprofit groups and foundations throughout the state, including California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy, InsideTrack, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, and ProjectAttain!.

Through the initiative, the groups will work with 30 colleges and universities,

particularly those in economically disadvantaged regions, to help guide adult learners through the re-enrollment process. Professional and career coaches will connect with the students to assist them in choosing the institution, program, and courses that align with their career goals and build on their prior credits. Students can also utilize financial and academic plans to effectively manage a return to school while balancing family and work obligations.

Along with its direct involvement in student success planning, California Reconnect aims to help participating institutions reduce or remove barriers for returning students, such as eliminating or discounting unpaid fees. ●

Spelman to Launch Documentary Filmmaking Program



Spelman College in Atlanta plans to build a new documentary media studies center, thanks to a \$1 million endowment from the Jonathan Logan Family Foundation.

Scheduled to open in fall 2024, the center will be housed at the college’s Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D., Center for Innovation & the Arts and will “serve as a learning hub for entrepreneurs and innovators,” according to a press statement.

The Documentary Production Lab, part of the center, will be named after Ayoka Chenzira, an endowed professor and division chair for the arts at Spelman. Chenzira is an Emmy-nominated director who has received accolades from the NAACP for her award-winning work across multiple genres. She is widely considered to be one of the first African American woman animators.

“The talented women of Spelman College have insights to share and important stories to tell, and documentary film is a powerful way to bring them to light,” says Jonathan Logan, president and CEO of the foundation.

As a result of the new center — the first academic facility to be built on campus in nearly 25 years — Spelman will become the only historically Black college or university to offer a bachelor’s degree in documentary filmmaking. ●

Paulette Patterson Dilworth Joins *INSIGHT* Editorial Board

INSIGHT Into Diversity welcomes Paulette Patterson Dilworth, PhD, vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), to its editorial board. Dilworth, who serves as president of the Alabama Association of Higher Education Diversity Officers, has more than 30 years of experience in higher education, diversity education, teaching, recruitment, retention, and training.

“We are thrilled that Paulette Patterson Dilworth has joined our editorial board,” says Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of *INSIGHT Into Diversity*. “We look forward to tapping into her deep reservoir of knowledge and experience as we continue to advance important conversations on current DEI best practices in higher education.”

Before joining UAB in 2016, Dilworth served as assistant vice president for access and community initiatives and faculty at Auburn University and as an associate professor of curriculum studies in the School of Education at Indiana University-Bloomington.

Prior to Indiana University, Dilworth worked at Emory University in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs as director of minority affairs and assistant director of

equal opportunity programs. She earned a PhD in educational studies from Emory.

Dilworth has served as the associate editor of *Theory and Research in Social Education* and has chaired the Research Focused on Social Studies Special Interest Group of the American Education Research Association and as the Equity Chair for Division B — Curriculum Studies. She is a past member of the Equity Council of the American Education Research Association and past vice president of the Indiana Council for the Social Studies.

She has been recognized with several awards, including the National Council for Social Studies Exemplary Research Award, the Kipchoge Kirkland Teaching for Social Justice Award and the Emory University Outstanding Contributions and Service to the University Award.

Dilworth is author or co-author of numerous research publications and has been involved as an editor, consultant, reviewer, and contributor in publishing projects. ●




NCORE

National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in Higher Education

NCORE is the leading national forum on inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and belonging in higher education and beyond.

May 30 - June 3, 2023 | New Orleans



Scan to register now

NCORE is a program of the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies
at The University of Oklahoma OUTREACH



UNF Hosts Scholarship Luncheon, Receives Diversity Champion Award

Each February, the University of North Florida (UNF) honors the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a scholarship luncheon. In conjunction with the event, the institution was presented with its eighth *INSIGHT Into Diversity* Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award and its sixth Diversity Champion Award.

The honor is awarded annually to a select number of colleges and universities that go above and beyond to exemplify “unyielding commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout their campus communities, across academic programs, and at the highest administrative levels.” The recognition was presented to UNF by Lenore Pearlstein, co-publisher of *INSIGHT*.

The keynote speaker for the luncheon was Cheryl Brown Henderson, founding president of the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research, and owner of Brown & Associates, an educational consulting firm. She is one of three daughters of the late Oliver L. Brown, who is named in the influential *Brown v. the Board of Education* Supreme Court case.

Proceeds from the luncheon provide for annual scholarships awarded to undergraduate students. The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship serves to recognize the academic and service achievements of actively engaged students who best exemplify his teachings through service and action. ●



The University of North Florida (UNF) was presented with its eighth HEED Award and sixth Diversity Champion Award by Lenore Pearlstein, co-publisher of *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine. The honor was recognized during the school's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. scholarship luncheon. (shown left to right) Richmond Wynn, PhD, vice president and chief diversity officer for UNF; Lenore Pearlstein; and Cheryl Brown Henderson, keynote speaker and founder of the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research.

Dillard University Relaunches National Center for Black-Jewish Relations

To reduce animosity between members of African American and Jewish communities, Dillard University, a historically Black private university in New Orleans, announced the relaunch of the National Center for Black-Jewish Relations.

Rochelle Ford, PhD, Dillard's eighth president, announced plans for the center on January 17, citing a need due to the increased polarization in the country and growing distrust and animosity between Black and Jewish communities.

“Often the conflict is a result of a lack of knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of the alliances of the Black and Jewish communities during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, as well as the shared history of genocide and

social experiences,” Ford says.

She continues, “Instead of letting differences separate our communities, Dillard wants to reestablish bonds through conversations, education and learning that result most importantly in courageous actions to improve our society.”

The center was initially founded by Samuel DuBois Cook, PhD, the fourth president of Dillard University, and was under his leadership from 1989 until 1997. During this time, the center hosted national conferences and produced the book “Black-Jewish Relations: Dillard University Conference Papers.”

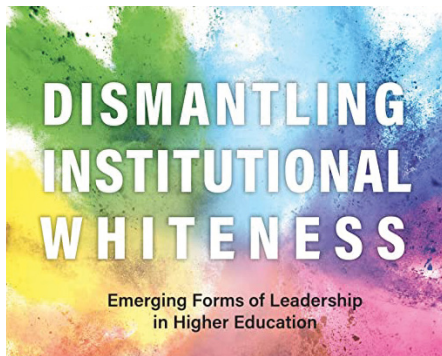
Cook, a friend and classmate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was greatly influenced by his Jewish professor and

mentor at The Ohio State University in 1949. Cook was also a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and was given the Alfred W. and Genevieve Weil Medallion Award by the Jewish Chautauqua Society for building harmonious relationships between the Black and Jewish communities.

The announcement has drawn the attention of Clarence Benjamin Jones, former lawyer, speechwriter, and friend of Martin Luther King Jr.

“This is exactly the kind of leadership that Dr. King would want a university, particularly a historically Black institution, to take. He would be so proud of what Dillard is doing,” Jones said in an interview with WWL-TV. ●

READ | WATCH | LISTEN



READ: 'Dismantling Institutional Whiteness: Emerging Forms of Leadership in Higher Education'

In "Dismantling Institutional Whiteness," editors M. Cristina Alcalde, PhD, and Mangala Subramaniam, PhD, investigate the reasons why women of color are underrepresented in higher education leadership roles. Featuring first-person narratives of women of color along with original research, the book asserts the importance of giving voice to leaders with intersectional identities who can champion lasting change at their institutions. Included throughout are suggestions for how college and university administrators can address inequities and help diversify higher education leadership. *Published by Purdue University Press*

WATCH: 'The 1619 Project'

More than three years after its initial publication in The New York Times Magazine, "The 1619 Project" continues to examine the impact of slavery and racism in the U.S. through this new six-part documentary series. The groundbreaking project takes new life in this visual format by spotlighting the personal story of its creator, Nikole Hannah-Jones, as she interviews historians, politicians, activists, and other cultural figures. Each episode focuses on a specific theme — capitalism, democracy, fear, justice, music, and race — that represents the experiences of African Americans throughout the nation's history. *Streaming on Hulu*



LISTEN: 'Real Talk: A Diversity in Higher Ed Podcast'

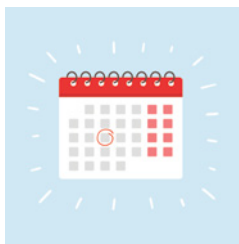
Hosted by KC Councilor, PhD, communication, media, and screen studies professor at Southern Connecticut State University, and Jamil Harp, community activist, this podcast series focuses on candid conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in higher education. Since its first season in 2020, more than 20

guests — scholars, activists, and other thought leaders — have joined the hosts for engaging discussions on how to improve DEI on college campuses. *Available on all major podcast apps*

OUR NEXT ISSUE

- Inspiring Programs in Business Awards
- Business Schools
- Advertising deadline: 3/8





Diversity Conference Calendar

**APR
18**



HACU 28TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CAPITOL FORUM ON HISPANIC HIGHER EDUCATION **Washington, D.C.**

Leaders of colleges and universities, public policymakers, key federal agency leaders, allied organizations, and corporate, community, and philanthropic representatives come together to win public- and private-sector support for Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Congressional meetings allow higher education leaders to speak with their representatives.

**MAY
30**



35TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RACE & ETHNICITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION **New Orleans, La.**

NCORE, a program of the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies at the University of Oklahoma OUTREACH, offers a national forum on inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and belonging in higher education and beyond.

**JUN
14**

THE BLACK BOYS & MEN SYMPOSIUM **Allendale, Mich.**

For this symposium, Grand Valley State University brings together youth service providers, K-12 educators, higher education faculty and staff, and community leaders. Featured keynote speakers are Michael Eric Dyson, PhD, and Jawanza Kunjufu, DBA.

**JUN
28**

NACE23 CONFERENCE + EXPO **Lake Buena Vista, Fla.**

At NACE23, college career services and corporate recruiting professionals can learn about leading practices and trends, engage with globally recognized subject matter experts, and network and connect with each other.

**JUN
21**

RISING BME SCHOLARS REGIONAL CAREER CONFERENCE **Minneapolis, Minn.**

The 2023 Rising BME Scholars Regional Career Conference is focused on colleges and universities located in the American Midwest, with priority given to applicants from universities in Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, and surrounding states.

**JUL
11**

NAHN 48TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE **Portland, Ore.**

The NAHN Annual Conference scientific program is designed around the theme *El Futuro de Nuestra Salud: Strategic & Sustainable Solutions for Transformative Health Equity & Inclusion in Nursing*.

WE'LL HELP YOU SPREAD THE WORD

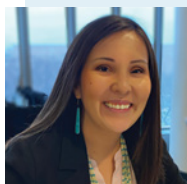
See our full 2023 Diversity Conference Calendar online and submit your diversity event at insightintodiversity.com/calendar



CALIFORNIA

Joseph Morales, PhD, has been named chief diversity officer at California State University, Chico. Morales previously served as assistant director for strategic initiatives and partnerships in the Office of Inclusive Excellence at the University of California, Irvine.

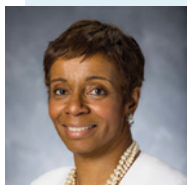
COLORADO



Patrese Atine, MA, has been appointed inaugural assistant vice president for Indigenous and Native American affairs at Colorado

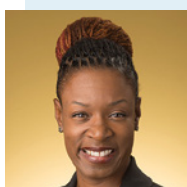
State University in Fort Collins. Atine previously served as director of congressional and federal relations at the American Indian Higher Education Consortium in Virginia.

GEORGIA



Michelle Garfield Cook, PhD, has been named vice president for student affairs at the University of Georgia in Athens.

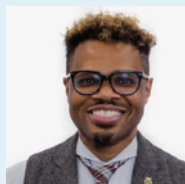
Cook previously served as senior vice president at the university.



Sonia Toson, JD, has been appointed vice president and chief diversity officer at Kennesaw State University in Atlanta. Toson was the

interim chief diversity officer and an associate professor of law at the university.

MASSACHUSETTS



Monroe France, MA, has been named inaugural vice provost for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice at Tufts

University in Medford. France previously served as senior associate vice president for global engagement and inclusive leadership at New York University.

MISSOURI



Nina Caldwell, EdD, has been appointed vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Maryville University

in St. Louis. Caldwell previously served as vice president for student life at the university.

NEW YORK



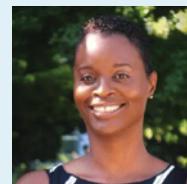
John B. King Jr., EdD, JD, has been named chancellor of The State University of New York System. King previously served

as president of the Education Trust in Washington, D.C.

PENNSYLVANIA

Ron Darbeau, PhD, has been named chancellor of Pennsylvania State University at Altoona. Darbeau previously served as vice president for faculty affairs and academic operations at Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania.

SOUTH CAROLINA



Felicia Benton-Johnson, EdD, has been named vice president for diversity and inclusive excellence at

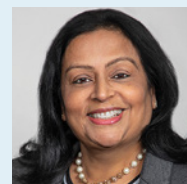
Clemson University. Benton-Johnson previously served as assistant dean and director of the Center for Engineering Education at Georgia Tech's College of Engineering in Atlanta.

TEXAS

Daniel J. Pack, PhD, has been named dean of the School of Engineering and Computer Science at Baylor University in Waco. Pack previously served as dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

WISCONSIN

Corey A. King, EdD, has been named chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. King previously served as vice chancellor for inclusivity and student affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.



Ritu Raju, PhD, has been named president of Gateway Technical College in Kenosha. Prior to this appointment,

Raju was vice president for academic affairs at Tarrant County College's Northeast Campus in Hurst, Texas.

Has your campus recently hired a new administrator?
***INSIGHT Into Diversity* wants to publish your news!**

Send your announcements to editor@insightintodiversity.com

Women Take Presidential Roles at Major Universities

Several universities have made history in the past few months by appointing women to lead their institutions for the first time, and other higher education institutions have recently announced similarly historic appointments.

Sally Kornbluth, PhD, became president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in January. Previously, she served as Duke University's provost.

Rochelle Ford, PhD, a Howard University graduate was sworn in

achieve the federal Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation.

Naydeen González-De Jesús, PhD, became president of San Antonio College in January. Previously, she served as executive vice president of student success at Milwaukee Area Technical College in Wisconsin.

Beginning Their Roles in July

Columbia University has announced Nemat "Minouche" Shafik, PhD,

Dartmouth College has named Sian Leah Beilock, PhD, as president. She is the first woman elected to the position in Dartmouth's more than 250-year history. Beilock is president of Barnard College.

Mount Holyoke College has announced Danielle Ren Holley, JD, as its new president. She will become the first Black woman to serve as the college's permanent president in its 186-year history. Since 2014, Holley has served as dean and professor of law at Howard



Clockwise from top left: Sally Kornbluth, Cynthia Teniente-Matson, Sian Leah Beilock, Ellen Granberg, Nemat "Minouche" Shafik, Danielle Ren Holley, Rochelle Ford

as the eighth president of Dillard University in February. She is the second African American female to serve as Dillard's president. Ford previously served as dean of Elon University's school of communications.

Cynthia Teniente-Matson, EdD, assumed her role as president of San José State University in January. Teniente-Matson previously served as president of Texas A&M University-San Antonio, where she led the school's effort to

as president. Shafik is a renowned economist whose work focuses on public policy and academia. She has served as president of the London School of Economics since 2017.

Ellen Granberg, PhD, is the first woman to hold the office of president in George Washington University's 200-year history. She is a sociology professor, provost, and senior vice president of academic affairs at Rochester Institute of Technology.

University School of Law.

Claudine Gay, PhD, will be the first person of color and the second woman to lead Harvard University since its founding in 1636. She currently serves as the Edgerley Family Dean of Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The University of Pennsylvania has appointed M. Elizabeth "Liz" Magill, JD, as the institution's ninth President. Magill serves as executive vice president provost at the University of Virginia. ●

Health Professions Students Grade Their Institutions on Climate Change Awareness

By Lisa O'Malley

More than 450 students at health professions schools around the world are measuring how effectively their institutions address climate change using the Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC).

Developed in 2019 by a group of students at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, the PHRC is an advocacy tool intended to increase the planetary health awareness and accountability of medical schools.

Planetary health, according to PHRC's creators, is defined as "a solutions-oriented, transdisciplinary field and social movement focused on analyzing and addressing the impacts of human disruptions to Earth's natural systems on human health and all life on Earth."

Students sign up to lead teams to evaluate their schools across five categories: curriculum, interdisciplinary research in health and environment, community outreach and advocacy, support for student-led initiatives, and campus sustainability. More than 80 institutions in seven countries participate in the project.

Isabel Waters, a final-year medical student at Trinity College Dublin and a co-director for PHRC, says it is imperative that future health professionals have the knowledge and resources to confront climate change.

All future health professionals are going to be facing patients that are suffering from the effects of climate change, and many already are, she says.

"From respiratory disease due to air pollution, infectious disease due to unclean water, dehydration and collapse due to heat stress, mental illness, and worsened livelihoods due to energy poverty, people are presenting to emergency departments with health issues directly related to the climate



Isabel Waters (bottom right), co-director of the Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC), and fellow students at Trinity College Dublin advocate for increased awareness of planetary health at medical schools. Students at more than 80 schools have used the PHRC to evaluate their institutions' efforts to educate on and mitigate climate change. (Photo courtesy of Isabel Waters)

crisis every day," says Waters. "Currently, this issue is underrepresented in health care curriculums. This needs to change urgently, so that health care professionals of the future are prepared to recognize, treat, and educate their patients."

The global health care industry is one of the largest contributors to the climate crisis, says Waters, because hospitals produce a significant amount of medical supply waste and often use anesthetic gases and other chemicals that can harm the environment.

"If [the industry] were a country, it would be the fifth-largest greenhouse gas emitter," she says. "The ironic thing is this is extremely harmful to the wider

patient population. This is something health professions students should be made aware of."

One of the benefits of using the report card is that institutions will be able to determine how they can implement more sustainable clinical practices.

"A huge proportion of [greenhouse] emissions come from purchasing equipment and medicines," Waters says. "There should be more opportunities and funding for initiatives to reduce the contribution of the health care system to the climate crisis. The place to begin is with our students." ●

11 Reasons Why

With each passing year, East Carolina University® grows more deeply committed to equity, diversity and inclusion as mission-critical to student access and success, serving the public and transforming our region.

Celebrating our 11th consecutive HEED Award, ECU proudly reflects upon some of our many points of pride.



#11 **Annual Diversity and Inclusion Awards** recognize faculty, staff and students with demonstrated significant achievements.

#10 ECU's **Purple Pantry** supports students with food insecurity.

#9 **Seven employee resource groups and 45 culturally based student groups** foster retention and connectedness to the university community.

#8 **Faculty Senate's strategic revamping of the faculty manual** embeds diversity, equity and inclusion in its policies and practices.

#7 **The Experience ECU program and the Emerging Scholars Symposium** diversify faculty and staff pipelines, emphasizing groups underrepresented in their field.

#6 **Dedicated spaces** promote inclusion with intercultural centers and an Indigenous space recognition and land acknowledgement.

#5 **First-generation student programming** includes information, resources and recognition.

#4 **Student learning** includes domestic and global course requirements for all undergraduate students.

#3 **The Partnerships for Diverse Graduate School Pathways program** develops interinstitutional collaborations that provide undergraduate students at partnering institutions pathways to ECU's graduate programs.

#2 **The Chancellor's Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)** engages with the community on advancing policies, practices and priorities to address disparities in race, diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice.

#1 ECU has been newly named a **Diversity Champion** joining an elite group of universities across the nation.



A Catalyst for Innovation: (dis)Ability Design Studio Debuts

By Nikki Brahm

A hands-free “wheelchair of the future.” A lightweight, comfortable, and collapsible personal aisle chair. Custom-made, 3D-printed wheelchair racing gloves. These are a few of the innovative designs developed by researchers for people with disabilities at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC).

To further develop creative projects such as these, a new lab centered on imagination and immersion is available on the UIUC campus. Dubbed the (dis)Ability Design Studio, the space empowers individuals who benefit from this unique thinking to become the driving voices behind these projects, giving them the capacity to design, engineer, research, and innovate, says Adam Bleakney, studio co-director, research affiliate, School of Art & Design lecturer, and head coach of the UIUC wheelchair track team.

The studio stands out as a model

of how research and innovation can intersect to leverage unique perspectives toward a shared goal, he says. It features soft lighting, pastel-colored art depicting nature, food and water bowls for service animals, a cuckoo clock that helps mark the passage of time for people who are visually impaired, and a conference table with wheelchairs and walkers with seats.

“If you spend all your life being excluded and being the odd one out, this is the space that welcomes you as an equal,” says Deana McDonagh, PhD, professor of industrial design, empathic design research strategist, and studio co-director.

McDonagh brought her vision of the studio to life after being recognized with the 2022 Beckman Institute Spirit and Vision Award, which came with \$150,000 in grant funding.

“I am creating a space where people with a different lived experience ...

stop being people that are studied, measured, researched — they become contributors to knowledge as equals,” McDonagh says.

PURE Inspiration

The momentum behind the (dis)Ability Design Studio comes from collaboration on the wheelchair of the future between McDonagh, Bleakney, and other researchers in the Human Performance and Mobility Maker Lab (HPML).

Known as PURE, the acronym for Personalized Unique Rolling Experience, the device operates like a Segway, where the user balances on a ball in the center of the chair, moving hands-free and laterally, Bleakney says. The researchers developed PURE over the last five years with grant funding from the National Science Foundation.

Bleakney says the goal behind PURE is to extend the experiences and capabilities in the lives of daily wheelchair users — allowing, for example, a person with paraplegia to do activities with unoccupied hands, such as crossing the street while holding the hand of a loved one.

In the (dis)Ability Design Studio, the concept of person-first design is prioritized — the user comes before the technology. As such, products designed for people with disabilities are developed by them, rather than by people without disabilities.

The studio works in collaboration with HPML within the university’s Division of Disability Resources & Education Services (DRES).

Whereas HPML is utilized for developing prototypes — housing 3D printers, sewing machines, drill presses, and glue — the studio is a space for brainstorming, collaborating, and outlining projects, and it serves as a pathway to bring ideas from DRES to a variety of interdisciplinary backgrounds, such as industrial design, business, and engineering.

“Every step of the way, from idea to development, through testing and validation, the driver is the user,” Bleakney says. ●

Above: Adam Bleakney and Deana McDonagh, PhD, are the (dis)Ability Design Studio co-directors at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The studio serves as a place for collaboration on inclusive innovations. (Photo courtesy of the Beckman Institute)

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Religious Diversity on Campus:

INSPIRES Index Helps Schools Assess Their Support

By Nikki Brahm

While conversations that touch on worldview identities — including secular, spiritual, and religious beliefs — are prickly subjects on college campuses, discussion of these topics is essential to promote religious diversity and affirm student self-identity.

Higher education institutions can assess how well they support students with varying worldview identities using the newly created Interfaith, Spiritual, Religious, and Secular Campus Climate Index (INSPIRES Index).

The index questions are based on students' input about what makes a university supportive and welcoming. The survey measures seven categories — religious accommodations, institutional behavior, efforts to reduce negative engagement, extracurricular engagement, space for support and expression, structural diversity, and academic engagement. Campuses are then given a one- to five-star rating.

Matthew Mayhew, PhD, co-principal investigator at INSPIRES and the William Ray and Marie Adamson Flesher Professor of Educational Administration at The Ohio State University (OSU), launched the program in collaboration with North Carolina State University. The project is funded by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, which support organizations and projects with religious purposes, among others.

The inaugural cohort of 185 colleges and universities completed the survey during the 2021-2022 academic year. Just over 60 additional institutions have been recruited for 2022-2023. In the first year, 92 percent of institutions received a three-star rating or lower, and 8 percent received four stars. No university has received five stars.

A variety of factors contribute to a

reluctance in discussing religious topics on campus, Mayhew says, including the ingrained concept of separation between church and state as well as the current political climate. For example, as critical race theory continues to be demonized, faculty are increasingly hesitant to introduce ways of thinking about religion as it interfaces with race.

In addition, instructors may be afraid that bringing religion into the classroom will lead to reprimands from their institutions, he says. Recently, an adjunct instructor filed a lawsuit against her former employer, Hamline University, after she was fired for showing classical work depicting Muhammad in her art history class.

Musbah Shaheen, a fourth-year PhD student, graduate research associate at OSU, and INSPIRES Index researcher, says that along with the undercurrent of tension between religion and politics, he attributes avoidance of religious dialogue to the notion that beliefs can be construed as subjective and not academic.

"We don't like to talk about it," Shaheen says. "It's kind of taboo. I call it the 'collective cringe' when you ask people to talk about religion."

Mayhew says these conversations are critical, however, so that students feel supported in finding and practicing a worldview identity, which gives them a sense of purpose and can provide meaning and guidance in one's career pursuits.

"Oftentimes, students turn to their religious, spiritual, and secular identities to make meaning of not only what's going on in the classroom and beyond the classroom, but to help support them through their college journeys," Mayhew says.

That holds true for Shaheen, whose



7 Ways Institutions Can Support Students' Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities

- Provide religious accommodations, including proper academic and residential dietary accommodations.
- Prioritize inclusive efforts and establish interfaith councils and committees, provide worldview training, and review institutional statements, goals, and policies.
- Establish campus policies and response protocols that minimize religious pressure and coercion, address religious bias and insensitivity, and promote productive worldview engagement.
- Encourage extracurricular engagement through interfaith encounters, dialogue, programming, service, and reflection.
- Create spaces for spiritual, religious, and secular expression and support, both on and off campus.
- Ensure structural diversity, including representation of people and events that reflect different worldview identities.
- Allow for academic interfaith engagement within school curriculum, classroom practices, and faculty behaviors that engage worldview diversity.

Information provided by the INSPIRES Index

dissertation focuses on individuals who identify as Muslim and queer and on the intersection of these identities, which he himself shares.

When Shaheen first entered college, he saw himself as an ex-Muslim. As he started going to meetings led by the university's Interfaith Council, he reclaimed his identity through open conversation and exploration and became a leader in the interfaith space.

Like those included in his research, Shaheen has faced many challenges with his identity, including receiving unwanted and unsolicited opinions from others about his beliefs as well as fear of rejection in the Muslim community.

However, Shaheen says, at college he no longer feels the need to pretend to be someone he's not, and if he hadn't gone to school, he doesn't know if he would have discovered his identity.

To create a more inclusive

environment, INSPIRES Index researchers recommend that universities provide adequate religious accommodations for students, including time off for religious holidays and taking fasting cycles into account when assigning coursework and scheduling exams.

Also, faculty are encouraged to be transparent with students on the first day of class if they lack expertise when it comes to providing religious accommodations. Although it still puts the onus on a student to tell their instructor what they need, supportive actions such as these can have an impact, Mayhew says.

Beyond the classroom, schools can bolster student support by providing training on spiritual, secular, and religious identities to academic advisers, health center staff, career counselors, residence life staff, mental

health and wellness counselors, and other student services staff.

INSPIRES researchers recommend universities establish a bias response team. They can also create a process for students to report incidents, notify students as soon as they occur, and track incidents by location.

Institutions can also positively encourage interfaith engagement in extracurricular activities, provide spaces for multifaith purposes, and foster active interfaith student organizations.

Incorporating religious studies and theology in coursework as well as offering majors in religious, interfaith, and theology studies are also proactive measures.

To learn more about the INSPIRES Index and for additional recommendations on how campuses can support religious, spiritual, and secular diversity, visit inspiresindex.org. ●

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Equity in the Classroom Leads to Greater Student Success

By Nikki Brahm

Creating equity in the classroom requires that educators anticipate individual student needs, consider the delivery and presentation of their content, assign coursework that has real-world meaning, and prioritize skills development — efforts that result in greater student success, according to experts and research.

“Inclusive teaching really requires proactive change from instructors,” says Alex Lange, PhD, assistant professor and coordinator of the Higher Education Leadership Specialization program at Colorado State University. “I always tell folks that to do this work well, to do it right, it’s going to require some change to our normal standards, practices, and procedures.”

A recent report by the Student Experience Project (SEP), “Increasing Equity in College Student Experience: Findings from a National Collaborative,” affirms that equitable content, methodologies, and policies have a positive effect on student success.

The SEP, a collaborative of national university leaders, faculty, researchers, and organizations focused on creating more equitable college learning environments, brought nearly 300 STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) faculty members from six public research universities together to establish equity-focused practices within their classrooms.

Participants took part in SEP workshops, reworked course syllabuses,



Alex Lange



Instructors should be mindful of ways to give students an equitable education, as studies find that equitable content, methodologies, and policies have a positive effect on student success. (Photo courtesy of Glendale Community College)

reviewed evidence-based resources to establish new classroom strategies, engaged with faculty to learn and collaborate on best approaches, and shared rewarding processes across the SEP network.

In the first two years, more than 10 percent of students reported increased motivation, belonging, identity, safety, and trust, with the greatest impact reported by those from structurally disadvantaged backgrounds.

To create an equitable classroom, it’s important that instructors anticipate student needs, including disabilities and unpredictable life crises, rather than wait for students to disclose them.

While formal mechanisms for the disclosure of a disability may exist within a student services office,

Lange says, students may not know these resources are available or feel comfortable notifying an instructor. To address this, Lange preempts notification from students and provides campus disability resources within syllabuses. They also incorporate inclusive practices in their teaching, such as video captioning.

To address unpredictable life experiences, Lange uses a mixture of structure and flexibility within course policies. They outline the class syllabus and a weekly plan, but also provide procedures to follow in the case of complications, including a formal course of action to follow if students need to request an extension on an assignment.

Grading practices are another area to consider in achieving equity, says

Lange, who prioritizes a student’s educational growth with extended feedback. For example, they don’t grade a student’s writing on each assignment; rather, Lange assesses the improvement of writing skills over time.

It’s also important to model equity in course content, they say. To make content accessible to all different kinds of learners, Lange presents information in a variety of modalities — academic articles, book chapters, podcasts, and YouTube videos.

Equitable content also means coursework that features underrepresented groups, so students of all backgrounds can relate to the material, Lange says.

Fernando Reimers, EdD, Ford Foundation Professor of the Practice of International Education at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, wants students to see themselves as leaders of a global movement to advance education,

so he introduces them to people in these roles who represent a full range of backgrounds — including their own. For example, he invited a young Hispanic entrepreneur to speak about the company he launched that offers online Advanced Placement courses.

In addition to providing varied and compelling content, instructors can prioritize teaching methods that are highly engaging to achieve greater equity.

Michael Ritterbrown, EdD, vice president of instructional services at Glendale Community College, contends



Fernando Reimers



Michael Ritterbrown

that the classic model of lecture and discussion is often an ineffective teaching practice. He encourages more active classrooms focused on contextualized, project-based, and problem-based learning experiences.

These kinds of teaching practices have been found to reduce gaps in test scores among underrepresented STEM major students by 33 percent, according to the article “Active Learning Narrows Achievement Gaps for Underrepresented Students in Undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.” Published in 2020 by researchers at the University of Washington in Seattle, the study compares the performance of students in active-learning environments to traditional lecture-style classrooms.

“What we know is that if we engage our students fully, they will learn, and we won’t just cover material, and they won’t just be able to regurgitate

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Building equity in the classroom benefits students as well as instructors. Teachers who champion equity develop greater motivation for excellence and stronger relationships with students. (Photo courtesy of Glendale Community College)

answers to us on the test, that they will genuinely learn,” says Ritterbrown.

Materials that emphasize the real-world application of an educational topic and provide meaning to students motivate them to learn, Reimers says, and assigning tangible, challenging work helps them build skills and confidence.

For example, he assigned a group project on how to sustain educational opportunity during the pandemic by working with educational, municipal, and other government authorities. Their work was published as a book, making it impactful beyond their studies and more meaningful to the students.

“It’s about helping the students rise up to their better selves,” Reimers says.

Improving the student experience also benefits teachers. The SEP found that when instructors engaged in building more equitable classrooms, they also developed an increased sense of belonging at their universities, greater motivation for teaching excellence, and new and stronger relationships with students and others at their school.

Instead of seeing themselves as content communicators, teachers’ identities shifted; they were more likely to see themselves as agents of change and equitable success, says Mary Murphy, PhD, Herman B. Wells Endowed Professor at Indiana University Bloomington and founder of the Equity Accelerator, an SEP learning partner organization.

She encourages colleges and universities to support their faculty in the drive to create more equitable learning environments.

“Believe in the faculty’s ability to rise to this challenge,” Murphy says. “See them as a partner in equitable student success. Their success is inextricably linked to their students’ success.” ●

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Protecting Jewish Students Amid Rising Antisemitism

By Nancy Fowler

An increase in antisemitism has university administrators ramping up their efforts to safeguard Jewish students.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the ADL (formerly the Anti-Defamation League) and Jewish campus organization Hillel International documented 244 antisemitic incidents — a nearly 35 percent increase from the year before and a staggering 804 percent rise from seven years ago.

“The situation is not good, and it’s getting worse, fast,” says Mark Rotenberg, Hillel’s vice president of university initiatives.



Mark Rotenberg

Antisemitism Takes Many Forms

Name-calling (in person and online), vandalism, and, less frequently, physical assaults, are all examples of antisemitism, says Rotenberg. One reason for the increase of incidents is a national culture of growing hostility toward all marginalized populations and another is the social isolation created by COVID-19, he says. The pandemic left students with fewer opportunities to interact face to face with people who are different from themselves. Over social media, students are less likely to engage in discussion and more likely to attack one another, he says.

The current political environment, along with the rise of right-wing extremist groups, has also led to the increase in hostility. Other factors include mounting anti-Israeli sentiment

and anti-Zionism, defined by the ADL as opposing the right of Jewish people to an Israeli homeland. According to the ADL, criticism of Israel crosses over into antisemitism when all Jewish people are held accountable for the actions of the state.

Ian Katsnelson, a 2022 graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), finds this type of antisemitism especially disturbing.

During his time at UIUC, he endured numerous slurs and saw more than one swastika defacing campus buildings, Katsnelson says.

But he was even more troubled by what he calls “modern antisemitism.”

Katsnelson recalls a proposed UIUC student government resolution supporting Black Lives Matter, which included urging the university to divest from companies who do business with the Israeli government. Even though Katsnelson wanted to stand behind the Black Lives Matter proposal, the language around Israel led him to reject the resolution.

“When Jewish students across the country have to decide between our identity and our desire to support domestic civil rights and progressive ideals, we’re put into a ‘Sophie’s Choice’ situation,” Katsnelson says.

For Jewish students to feel a sense of belonging on campus, Katsnelson believes administrators must fully embrace their right to feel safe from all forms of antisemitism.

‘Opportunities for Learning’

Helping universities meet this benchmark is a goal of Hillel’s Campus Climate Initiative. The program provides data-mining tools to determine the scope of the problem, training opportunities, and action planning, such as an annual meeting at which university administrators can learn from one another.

Applications for universities to enroll in the next cohort open in March and run through May. The basic

In 2020-2021:

15% of Jewish college students hid their Jewish identity.

12% said they were blamed for actions of the Israeli government.

32% personally experienced antisemitism directed at them on campus or by a member of the campus community.

31% witnessed antisemitic activity on campus that was not directed at them.

Nearly 50% want changes in how antisemitism is addressed on campus.

Sources: ADL and Hillel International



Students participate in a Shabbaton — a weekend experience with various programs and activities — sponsored by Hillel for Utah. (Photo courtesy of Hillel)

program is free for participants.

“We need to enlist the help of higher ed administration,” Rotenberg says. “This cannot be a situation where Jewish students are on their own having to solve these problems.”

UIUC is one of 40 institutions participating in the Hillel initiative. Like many others, UIUC sees combating antisemitism as part of its overall mission to provide an inclusive experience for all marginalized students.

One strategy is to streamline the process of reporting antisemitic incidents. Through a new office called Campus Belonging, and in cooperation with the campus Hillel office and other local Jewish organizations and institutions, UIUC encourages students to report them using an online system. The goal is for students to receive a response within 72 hours, says Sean Garrick, vice chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

“We don’t hold it up to be a yardstick to prove if there is bias,” Garrick says. “We take the report as it’s given.”

The DEI office refers incidents such as assault

or vandalism to campus or local police. For actions that don’t involve possible crimes or violations of school policy, the university reaches out to all parties. Garrick says on several occasions DEI staff have helped students accused of antisemitism understand why their comments or actions were hurtful and threatening.

“Especially on a college campus with young people involved, we want to create opportunities for learning,” Garrick says.

Holding events is another way to create educational possibilities. UIUC has twice invited two scholars and writers, one Israeli, the other Palestinian, to discuss their differences and similarities in a public forum. Listening to these exchanges, students as well as faculty can observe productive debate.

“Universities are where we go to create the world as we would like it to be,” Garrick says. “The only way for us to do that is if everyone feels fully invited.”

For more information on the Hillel Campus Climate cohort, visit hillel.org/campus-climate-initiative. ●



Sean Garrick



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University Consortium Creates Models for Career Readiness Programs

By Janet Edwards

Bridging the Gap from Education

to Employment (BGEE), an initiative to reimagine career readiness programs for students, launched three years ago and involved design teams from seven universities. A variety of programs developed through this umbrella project now serve as models for other higher education institutions seeking ways to support the successful transition of students from college to the workforce.

The University Innovation Alliance (UIA), a national consortium of 15 public research universities working to increase the number and diversity of college graduates, developed the BGEE initiative. Participating schools share data, create scalable initiatives, and hold each other accountable for the success of their students, particularly regarding opportunities for low-income and first-generation students.

“We’re like a multicampus laboratory for student success innovation,” says Bridget Burns, PhD, UIA chief executive officer. “We go out and raise money from funders to help our campuses once they have identified a shared problem or a goal they want to work on together.”

UIA seeded the BGEE program with \$2.4 million from Strada Education Network, a nonprofit organization focused on philanthropy and research involving pathways from education to employment.

Most students come to college to get a job, and it’s the responsibility of colleges and universities to equip them with the knowledge and tools to realize that goal, says Burns.



Bridget Burns



The University of California, Riverside (UCR) Career Readiness Assessment Team (CREATE), shown holding a brainstorming session, was developed to envision model programs that help students transition from college to careers. UCR developed two ongoing programs through the initiative that serve as models for other colleges and universities. (Photo courtesy of UCR)

“If we really want higher education to drive social mobility and be the gateway out of poverty that we believe it is, we need to take very seriously this work and not just leave it at the feet of career services,” she says.

UIA schools recognized the need to create new programs focused on the transition from college to career and took a leading role in that effort, says Burns.

UIA taught design thinking skills to teams at each of the seven participating schools to help them develop and pilot innovative career readiness programs. The groups consulted with campus career services professionals and outside employers, and collectively interviewed 600 students.

Participating campuses included Oregon State University; University of California, Riverside (UCR); The

Ohio State University; Arizona State University; University of Central Florida; Purdue University; and Georgia State University (GSU). Each institution developed a distinct program.

University of California, Riverside

UCR developed two initiatives: the BGEE Summer Bridge Experience and the faculty-focused Ask Me Anything program.

To envision these, UCR created the Career Readiness Assessment Team (CREATE). Led by Career Center Director Sean Gil, the group is composed of associate deans, faculty members, the vice provost of undergraduate education, and career center managers.

After meeting with students, some ideal parameters emerged, Gil says. Students indicated they preferred to



The UCR CREATE team uses Post-it notes as part of a four-day process to develop college-to-career programs. The group developed two successful initiatives: the BGEE Summer Bridge Experience and the faculty-focused Ask Me Anything program. (Photo courtesy of UCR)

be hired in a group rather than intern independently, and they expressed a desire to work with classmates across majors.

“We asked if they would appreciate earning academic credit [during an internship] and getting paid at the same time,” Gil says. “They said that seemed impossible, but yes, that would be amazing.”

Students also wanted faculty to take the lead on sharing important career advice. Ultimately, a five-week summer internship program was developed and a separate networking program involving faculty was held during the academic year.

The BGEE Summer Bridge Experience — which began virtually in 2020 due to COVID-19 and is now hybrid — targets low-income, first-generation students with no prior internship or career-related experience. When the program began, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), already a UCR partner organization, employed a cohort of eight students from multiple disciplines as interns. They were tasked with developing a plan to reduce food waste in Riverside.

As part of the internship, the EPA



Sean Gil

invited national researchers to speak with students, and the organization identified mentors for the interns. They also made introductions to city and county officials they worked with and invited students to participate as guests in a virtual conference. During the final week, students gained additional real-world experience by presenting their project to EPA leaders, administrators, and academic representatives.

The summer program has continued to evolve, and new employers have joined the ranks, including Apple Inc. and the Greater Riverside Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which invited its members to submit applications to the program.

Apple paid for students to enroll in the Swift Coding course offered by The Ohio State University and for subsequent assessments and certificates for those who successfully completed the training.

In a collaboration with Apple, students used design thinking to create app prototypes for three nonprofit organizations. The 18 students involved were from various majors, including computer science, creative writing, psychology, and biochemistry. The

employers later asked if they could hire the students as interns to build the apps, says Gil.

UCR can provide that opportunity utilizing university funds as well as state and federal grants, he says. Gil plans to hire two graduate students to coordinate the effort and hopes to expand the program to a dozen employers and 50 students.

Adding to the program’s growth, in summer 2023, UCR will allow students enrolled in more than eight academic credits to register for additional credits at no cost, making the academic credit option more appealing. Until now, they paid tuition per credit in the summer, and most BGEE interns opted out.

“Now our students can get academic credit for the program, and get paid, and gain work experience, and work with mentors — all things they told us would be amazing, so we’re delivering on amazing,” Gil says.

UCR launched its second BGEE program in fall 2021 to address student requests for career advice from faculty.

The four-pronged initiative involves faculty speaking with students about their career journey and, in a second session, how to network within their profession; panel discussions with industry experts; and career center



Ramona Simien, director of employee relations at Georgia State University (GSU), meets with students on campus. Simien directed GSU's project for the Bridging the Gap from Education to Employment program, developed in partnership with the UIA. (Photo courtesy of GSU)

presentations in the classroom, during which students meet the career counselor that supports their particular college.

"In the first fall, we [engaged] seven faculty and over 2,200 students in one quarter," says Gil.

CREATE, which acts as an advisory board, still meets monthly to talk about the BGEE projects and to envision new ones, Gil says. Forming this group and learning to use the design thinking process to study other campus issues has been "game changing" for the Career Center, he says.

Georgia State University

GSU's BGEE pilot project focused on modernizing the process of employment interviewing and recruiting. The summer program engaged 16 undergraduate student interns who developed ideas and ultimately presented them to recruiters and hiring managers.

The eight-week initiative launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, so it was entirely virtual.

"The program benefited our students when everything else seemed to be crashing," says Ramona Simien, director of employer relations. "They got to [network] with professionals even when things were shutting down."

Students worked in small groups and used design thinking to brainstorm ways to streamline the hiring process. Their ideas involved storytelling; gamification to help students learn about various stages of hiring, including resumes and interviews; updated language and terminology to help navigate generational divides between students and hiring managers; and interviewing approaches that emphasize more visual elements.

Simien says the students learned competitive job skills like design thinking, critical thinking, and team building. While her department does

not have the resources to continue the project, it could be expanded on other campuses as an in-person program with enough funding to allow for a longer duration and a full-time coordinator, she says.

Sharing the Playbook

UIA has developed a model for higher education institutions interested in creating their own equitable career readiness programs and offers a BGEE playbook that was downloaded from their website 2,000 times in the first two weeks after it was posted.

"I don't think that we've solved and perfected career readiness at our campuses but ... we've documented everything so that [other schools] can go faster and be able to go farther because of our work," says Burns.

To learn more and download the playbook, visit college2career.theuia.org. ●



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Community College Collaborations Result in Model Programs

More than 1,000 community colleges serve seven million students, accounting for 33 percent of the nation's undergraduate students overall. In these pages, we explore how community colleges are striving to meet student needs and expectations by collaborating with state governments, nonprofit organizations, and each other.

Read about Wyoming schools that are building a faculty network to advance excellence in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programs and a comprehensive resource hub for student parents developed by Santa Fe Community College.

Our cover story showcases food and housing initiatives developed by community colleges to address the basic needs of their most at-risk students. Their efforts range from establishing on-campus food pantries to providing housing arrangements with outside agencies and offering social services to help students navigate governmental resources like SNAP, the federal assistance program.

Colleges and Universities in the Northeast U.S.

In this special section, we also zoom in on model programs being implemented by schools in the Northeast region of the country. In Connecticut, a statewide initiative aims to create greater financial aid opportunities for low-income students; at the University of Pennsylvania, researchers launched a new health care initiative that engages students and faculty across disciplines and is designed to reduce disparities and discrimination for the LGBTQ+ community; and Ivy League schools are ramping up efforts to attract students from rural America.

The overarching theme that emerged in our reporting on community colleges and universities in the Northeast is collaboration. It's clear these schools are widening their circles of expertise, identifying financial and operational support within surrounding areas, and pursuing government funding to create stronger and more innovative programs designed to meet the educational, personal, and professional needs of their students.

Community College Prioritizes Support for Student Parents

With a \$1.74 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) Foundation in New Mexico is creating a Student Parent Resource Hub to expand its support systems for students who are pregnant or have young children.

Through the hub, SFCC will gather data to track the effectiveness of the home visitation model administered by the New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department, a program provided free to families of all income levels that are expecting a child or have children under 5 years old. Educators from the department meet regularly with parents either in-home or virtually to discuss health and nutrition tips for children, finding child care, preparing for college, and self-care.

SFCC's Student Parent Resource Hub

will also work to improve the education-to-employment pipeline for early childhood education teachers.

Several existing programs, resources, and initiatives offered by SFCC already support parents on campus and in the surrounding community. One such effort is Kids Campus, part of the college's Early Childhood Center of Excellence (ECCOE) which offers year-round childcare and bilingual education to the children of students, faculty, staff, and community members. As part of its academic mission, the ECCOE also creates opportunities for student parents to earn degrees and certifications in early childhood education through programs such as the APRENDE Early Childhood Teacher Apprenticeship Program, which provides stipends and hands-on training.

SFCC also operates financial support



programs such as the Student Parent Success Program, which provides those eligible with up to \$750 per semester along with individual coaching and mentorship. Additionally, the Student Parent Advisory Group hosts monthly meetings to gain input and help create new campus programs, resources, and opportunities. Participants receive \$350 per semester for their work in the group. ●

Northeast Ivy League Schools Reach Out to Rural Students

Along with their overarching goals of improving racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity, several Ivy League institutions have ramped up their efforts to recruit and support students from rural communities, especially those outside the Northeast region where they are located. The leaders of these programs cite the need to further expand geographic diversity within their student populations.

By leveraging relatively new holistic admissions processes, these schools are prioritizing the enrollment of students from a wide range of backgrounds, including those from low-income families and geographically isolated communities, while also making admissions and financial aid information clearer and readily available.

Yale University has been more intentional about enrolling rural and small-town students over the past several years. In 2017, virtual tours and information sessions were developed to make details about Yale and its enrollment process more accessible. Additionally, the school revived its Student Ambassadors program, which taps current students from rural areas to connect with high schoolers in their hometowns to help share information about campus life and financial aid. These initiatives feed into the Rural Students Alliance at Yale, a campus organization that encourages rural learners to form communities and share their experiences through various events.

“Geographic diversity is a complex topic, but one way to think of it is not just admitting students from all 50 states, but from diverse communities within and across those states,” Corinne Smith, Yale’s associate director of undergraduate admissions, told the *Yale Daily News*.

Other Ivy League schools, including Brown University and Columbia University, have implemented similar outreach programs. Brown, for example, launched a pilot program in 2019 that paid for high school students from rural areas around the country to travel to Providence, Rhode Island, and stay at the university to learn about its programs. In recent years, Columbia’s Teachers College created the Rural Education and Healthcare Coalition, which aims to support rural students attending the school while also studying the intersectionality of rural identities in education and health care. ●



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2.5

YEARS

11

COURSES

31

CREDITS



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62%

**Percent of students employed
either full or part time**

Source: NCES (2022). IPEDS 2020 IPEDS
Completions Survey [AACC analysis]

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS
ENROLLED FOR CREDIT**

44% White
27% Hispanic
12% Black
7% Asian/Pacific Islander
1% Native American

Source: NCES (2022). IPEDS Fall 2020
Enrollment Survey [AACC analysis]

**Fast Facts
Community
Colleges**

27 YEARS OLD

**The average age of
community college students**

Source: NCES (2021). IPEDS Fall 2019
Enrollment by age Survey [AACC analysis]

DIVERSE LEARNERS

29% first-generation students
15% single parents
20% students with disabilities
8% non-U.S. citizens
4% military veterans

Source: NCES (2022). 2017-18 National
Postsecondary Student Aid Study Administrative
Collection (NPSAS:18 AC) [AACC analysis]

2.2 MILLION

**Decline in community college
students from 2010 to 2020**

Source: National Student Clearinghouse



Collaborations Between Community College and Employers Benefit Workforce

Businesses seeking to hire recent college graduates expect a high level of expertise and skill. To meet workforce demand and increase job opportunities, partnerships between community colleges and employers are essential, yet these collaborations can fall short.

In a recent Harvard Business School study, “The Partnership Imperative: Community Colleges, Employers, and America’s Chronic Skills Gap,” 80 percent of educators surveyed agreed with the statement “My college is producing the work-ready graduates that employers need,” while just 62 percent of employers affirmed that statement.

Harvard researchers partnered with the American Association of Community Colleges for the study and surveyed community colleges across the country as well as businesses of various sizes, industries, and regions.

Twenty-eight percent of employers gave themselves an A grade on their level of collaboration with community colleges, compared to 7 percent of educators.

When it comes to students securing jobs following graduation, educators reported that 11 percent of local employers set hiring targets and 10 percent offered job guarantees to students who complete a particular program.

The report provides solutions that address the disparate perceptions between employers and their community college partners to foster better hiring results.

First, to help students graduate with stronger skill sets, community colleges and employers can co-create programs and develop curriculum, and they can design classroom projects offering real-world experiences that meet industry needs.

Also, colleges and employers can build collaborations that directly result in jobs by creating hiring commitments, dedicating staff time toward strengthening school and employer relationships, and redesigning processes for hiring community college graduates.

Finally, the report recommends that schools and employers make decisions based on current trends and statistics. To help in that endeavor, local data on talent supply and demand should be collected and shared so that collaborative strategies that address these issues can be implemented. ●



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University, Community Colleges Partner for More Inclusive STEM Education

By Erik Cliburn

The University of Wyoming (UW) and five community colleges in the state are building a faculty network to share best practices and make science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education more inclusive.

The partnership program is made possible through a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Inclusive Excellence 3 (IE3) grant. The grant will provide \$8 million over six years to allow the institutions to develop learning communities through long-term partnerships.

Faculty across participating institutions will create multidisciplinary networks to share best practices in inclusive STEM education. These relationships will also be cultivated through various projects and initiatives. The goal of the program is to make STEM education more accessible and inclusive for underrepresented students, especially those from rural backgrounds.

IE3 will also help expand research and educational capacity at two-year institutions, which generally serve more diverse populations such as student parents, adult learners, and racially underrepresented students. Participating institutions include UW, Northwest College (NWC), Eastern Wyoming College, Western Wyoming Community College, Laramie County Community College, and Casper College.

“These learning communities will be implemented, facilitated, and assessed based upon best practices,” says Rachel Watson, EdD, director of UW’s Science Initiative Learning Actively Mentoring

program and leader of Wyoming’s IE3 program. “We predict that these learning communities will enhance social networks, decrease feelings of isolation, and decrease implicit bias.”

The IE3 initiative will function similarly to a pilot program instituted by UW and NWC in July 2022. Through that program, educators shared ideas and explored ways to ensure inclusiveness in pedagogy and research. The

problems if we do not have all diverse identities, disciplines, and ideas around the table.”

A transdisciplinary approach to STEM education has proven beneficial to NWC students, particularly rural students, because it introduces them to career paths and fields of study they are unaware of or consider unattainable, says Eric Atkinson, PhD, biological sciences

“Nurturing transdisciplinary scholarship is perhaps the most powerful thing that we can do to support diversity, equity, and inclusion goals within higher education.”

Rachel Watson, EdD

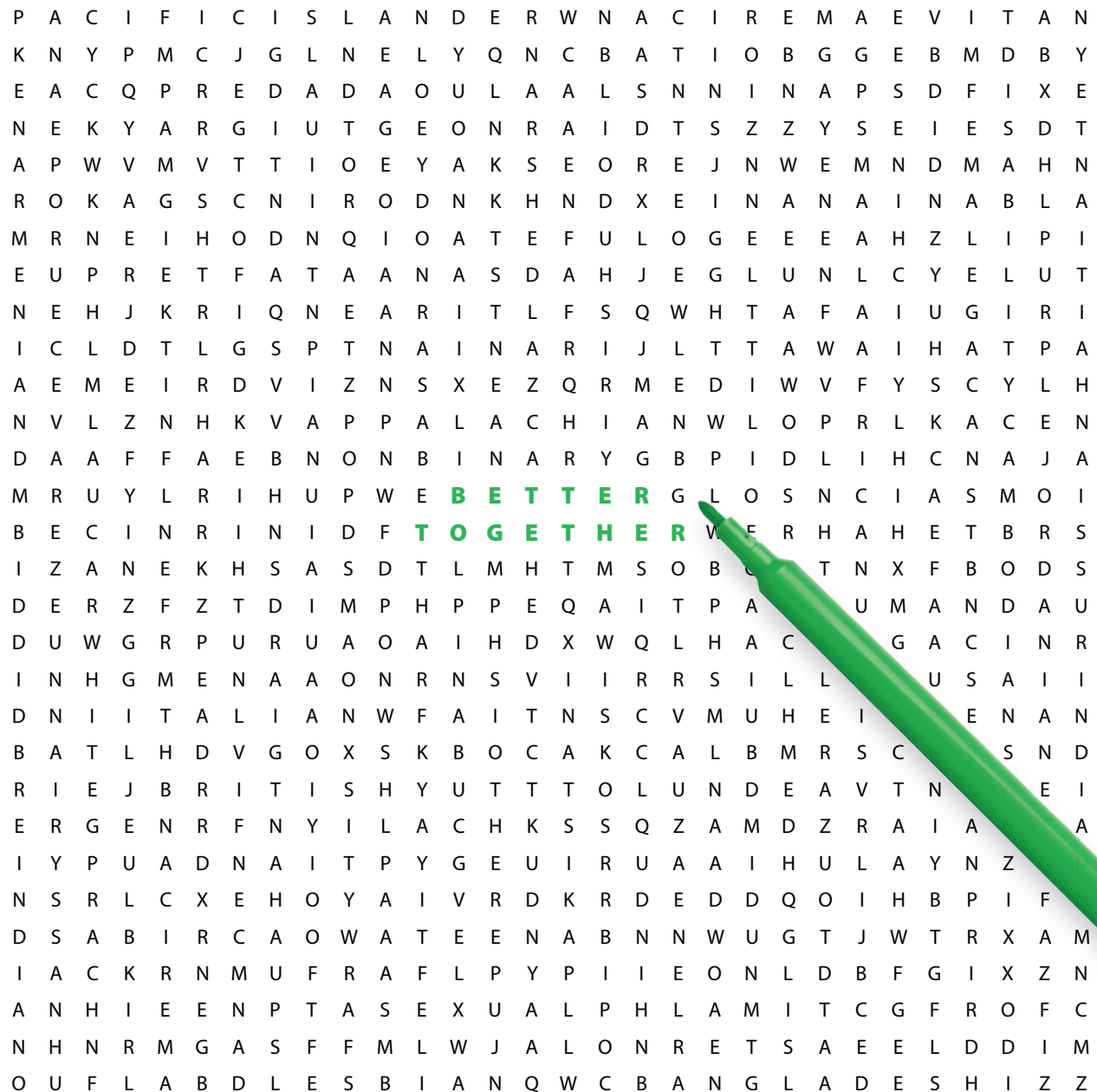
training focused heavily on promoting transdisciplinary research methods by utilizing experts from differing academic backgrounds and seeking input from community stakeholders.

“Nurturing transdisciplinary scholarship is perhaps the most powerful thing that we can do to support diversity, equity, and inclusion goals within higher education across the state of Wyoming,” says Watson. “Transdisciplinarity gains its research power by inviting scholars of diverse backgrounds — from math and science to agriculture and art — and from all walks of life to come together to solve the world’s problems. It acknowledges that we will not progress on these

associate professor at NWC.

“The analyses have shown that when students have this inclusive view toward their academics, they’re much more successful, and it becomes much more holistic; they internalize it and understand concepts much better,” he says.

As part of the UW-NWC pilot program, educators from both schools met for a daylong retreat to discuss institutional barriers and how they limit inclusion in STEM education. Similarly, the IE3 program will feature a Learner Showcase at NWC during the spring semester that will highlight diverse research and provide opportunities for educators to discuss inclusion in research. ●



Adult	Ashkenazi	Brazilian	Disability	Greek	Italian	Muslim	Red
African	Asian	British	Dutch	Haitian	Jewish	Native American	Romanian
Alaska Native	Assyrian	Buddhist	Egyptian	Han	Jordanian	Non-Binary	Russian
Albanian	Atheist	Cambodian	Elderly	Hindu	Latino	Old	Straight
Algerian	Bangladeshi	Canadian	European	Hispanic	Lesbian	Other	Teen
American	Big	Child	Female	Indian	LGBTQIA	Pacific Islander	Trans
Angolan	BIPOC	Chilean	French	Indonesian	Little	Pakistani	White
Appalachian	Bisexual	Chinese	Frisian	Iranian	Male	Palestinian	Young
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Community Colleges Help Vulnerable Students Access Food and Housing

By Erik Cliburn and Nikki Brahm

Approximately 29 percent

of community college students say they've experienced food insecurity, while 14 percent report housing insecurity — and for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds, the challenges are even greater, according to a 2022 survey* by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE).

It's well documented that such challenges affect a student's ability to succeed in their educational goals as well as professionally and personally. In response, many community colleges have created programs to meet the needs of their most vulnerable students.

Often, low income is the root cause of basic needs insecurity, and community colleges enroll a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The National Center for Education Statistics finds that 37 percent of them have a family income of less than \$20,000, and that number rises to 47 percent when

Opposite: Phoenix College in Arizona recently opened Bumstead's Resource Room in partnership with Whataburger to give students access to shelf-stable foods and other essential items. **Above:** Diana Martinez and Aristotle Mosier, program specialist and manager, respectively, of PC's student life and leadership department, celebrate the grand opening of Bumstead's Resource Room. (Photos courtesy of Phoenix College)

accounting for nondependent students.

CCCSE survey data also finds that racially and ethnically underrepresented students are more likely to face food and housing insecurities. Non-White students experienced food insecurity at a rate between 6 and 20 percentage points higher than their White peers, according to the survey. Asian students had the same rate of housing insecurity as White respondents, while all other underrepresented groups had between 6 and 16 percent higher rates.

Students contending with food and housing insecurity are more likely to lack other necessities as well, says Julia Stidham, coordinator of student support and social work at Sinclair College in Dayton, Ohio.

“Often when students are struggling with food, there’s more to the picture,” she says. “That can be struggling to pay for bills, transportation, or housing.”

Due to the broad reach of the issue, it is important for communities and institutions to approach basic needs insecurity through a holistic lens, Stidham says.

Through state, nonprofit, business, and higher education collaborations, community colleges engage in initiatives such as creating food banks, providing funds for housing, and offering help in navigating complex government assistance programs.

In the state with the highest homelessness rates, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office has addressed the issue by allocating \$9 million of the state budget in the form of three-year grants to 14 member colleges. The grants are directed at helping students find reliable shelter with support from local agencies and organizations.

Utilizing its share of the funding for the Welcome Home City (WHC) program, San Diego City College (City College) partners with People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), a housing services agency, to assist students with case management services, housing navigation, and in some instances, limited one-time financial assistance.

Students Rely On Community College Support

The need to create more initiatives to help students access basic needs continues, despite the ongoing efforts of community colleges.

Over a 30-day period:

- **46% of students said their college helped them get food when they could not afford it.**

Over a 12-month period:

- **21% said their college helped them find or maintain secure and affordable housing.**
- **22% said their college helped them pay for their utilities.**

Source: “Mission Critical: The Role of Community Colleges in Meeting Students’ Basic Needs” (2022, Center for Community College Student Enrollment)

Although emergency housing is not provided, students are connected with the county for immediate housing and can still qualify for other WHC services.

Nearby, Long Beach City College (LBCC) also receives a portion of the state funding. The school partners with Jóvenes, an area nonprofit that helps youth end their cycle of homelessness. They work together to identify rapid housing solutions for students in the form of shared apartments and rental subsidies for long-term housing.

Additional LBCC programs and partnerships support single parents and offer shared homes, along with resources such as career services for students. The school’s Safe Parking program allows students living and sleeping in their cars to stay in a safe environment overnight, with access to bathrooms, showers, and Wi-Fi.

Supporting students’ basic needs often looks like advocacy and social justice at the local and state level, says Nohel Corral, EdD, executive vice president of student services at LBCC.

“We support our students to reach their goals, regardless of their experience or circumstances,” he says.

At City College, nearly half the students enrolled are Latino, and many are considered nontraditional. With the city’s high cost of living, they face stiff barriers to securing housing, says Emily Saldine, grant coordinator for WHC.

Students who have been touched in some way by housing insecurity often explore careers around reforming the issue. Recognizing that, City College offers the Program for Engaged Educational Resources (PEER), a course designed to train a future workforce to address homelessness, says Kirin Macapugay, City College assistant professor and PEER instructor.

“A lot of people, once they get to experience the heart of service providers or they’ve also been homeless themselves, [are] best equipped to continue to serve in that capacity,” Saldine says.

In Massachusetts, collaborations are key to solving food and housing insecurity for students.

The Moving to College (MTC) Scholarship program began as a pilot between Massachusetts Bay Community College (MassBay) and Framingham State University, a public four-year university. It launched in 2019 and is



Nohel Corral



Emily Saldine



Massachusetts Bay Community College students experiencing homelessness stay in dorms at Framingham State University, a public, four-year college, through a partnership known as the Moving to College Scholarship program. (Photo courtesy of Framingham State University)

organized by the state's Department of Education. Eight schools now participate in the MTC program and assist up to 20 people at a time with scholarships.

As a community college, MassBay doesn't have student dorms, so Framingham houses its participating students. Additional resources are provided by MassBay's campus, including case management, tuition and fees, books and supplies, and transportation.

The future of the MTC program is uncertain, as state funding for subsequent years has yet to be approved, says David Podell, PhD, president of MassBay. While institutional advocacy and partnerships with other sectors are essential, state financial support is critical to create projects like MTC, he says.



David Podell

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For many, education is the way out of a lower socioeconomic status, Podell says.

“If we want our students to succeed, which we do, we have to focus on all of these other basic needs that are standing in the way,” he says.

In western rural Kentucky, addressing basic student needs is a driving force at Madisonville Community College (MCC). Among other initiatives, MCC operates a \$45,000 emergency fund for students with a demonstrated financial need to help them pay for car repairs, groceries, bills, rent, school supplies, and other expenses. Most of those eligible can access up to \$300 in emergency funds per academic year, though more can be approved in special circumstances. When a deadly tornado tore through the region in 2021, MCC raised an additional \$40,000 to act as a secondary emergency fund for students affected by the natural disaster.

“We believe, wholeheartedly, that for every student in our area that we can educate, it will raise the ship for the entire community,” says Cindy Kelley, PhD, MCC president. “We want to lead with compassion to help students find their better lives through education. This is one small thing we can do to make education more accessible for our students.”

Along with the emergency fund, MCC also operates food banks across its three campuses.

Food banks and pantries have become a more common sight at community colleges in recent years and serve as both an immediate and ongoing solution for food insecurity for students and their families.

“Many of our students have a lot [to manage] between work, family, and school,” says Alicia Schroeder, Sinclair’s director of student affairs. “The fact that they can access that support right here on campus is a big game changer.”

As with housing initiatives, many schools partner with state and local agencies, nonprofits, and businesses to help run their programs. The Maricopa County Community College District



Cindy Kelley



Julia Stidham (left), coordinator of student support and social work at Sinclair College, collects food donations from community partner Miami Valley Meals to supply the college’s food pantry. (Photo courtesy of Sinclair College)

(MCCCD) in Arizona, for example, operates food banks on all 10 of its campuses, with help from several community nonprofits, most notably St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance.

Through these partnerships, some of MCCCD’s food banks rival commercial grocery stores in their food selection, such as The Village at South Mountain Community College (SMCC), which offers a wide range of food options, including shelf-stable foods, fresh produce, fresh and frozen meats, and even ready-to-eat vegan meals. Students can access larger food quantities for themselves and their families through the biweekly Shopping @SMCC program and can stop by The Village for a daily snack to tide them over during classes, says Ralph Thompson, SMCC’s student affairs director.

“A food box is a great immediate fix, but sometimes it’s just not enough, especially when it comes to protein,” he says.

Some community colleges, like MassBay, Sinclair, and Phoenix College (PC), an MCCCD school, have implemented free lunch programs with

access to hot, nutritious meals throughout the week.

In addition to its food bank and lunch assistance program, PC provides several other supports for student parents, including food and necessities for infants and children. The college also hosts baby showers for new and expectant parents, which involves giving them diapers, formula, and other essentials, says Vashi Worley Moore, DDiv, senior student services specialist at PC.

“It is a necessity to have a program on-site to accommodate those students who have larger-size families, because there is a limit to government assistance,” she says. “Making sure that each of the individuals in the household is fed takes off or reduces some of the stress that parents have.”

Along with campus food assistance services, administrators and staff at community colleges often work closely with students to help them identify, navigate, and apply for outside resources, including the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In addition to operating the school’s food programs, for example, Stidham is a licensed social worker, and she serves as Sinclair’s student coordinator for outside resources.



Ralph Thompson

At MCCCCD, a districtwide SNAP outreach staff member walks students through the application process for federal funds. The district also maintains a webpage listing free events and resources throughout MCCCCD and the region for food, housing, personal safety, and transportation.

“It’s hard to be a good student when you’re hungry, your kids are hungry, or you’re worried about where your next meal is going to come from,” says Ray Ostos, EdD, district director for student affairs at MCCCCD. “But if we’re able to connect them to SNAP opportunities or other resources to eliminate that barrier, it makes them better students who are more focused. And, odds are, they will be successful.”

A key element of community colleges’ efforts to address food, housing, and other basic needs insecurity is to help destigmatize the use of assistance programs. Because many of these initiatives are relatively new, community colleges continue to experiment to find the best approach.

MCCCCD schools, for example, aim to normalize the use of food assistance programs by making their food banks a centerpiece of student union centers.

MassBay takes a different approach by working to preserve the anonymity of those relying on food and housing assistance programs. Students in the dorm housing program are unidentifiable from any other residents, and those who receive free cafeteria meals simply scan their pay card to do so.

As they explore best practices for destigmatizing assistance, these community colleges share the same goal: ensuring students feel comfortable seeking and accessing help on campus.

“There should be no stigma attached — you have to have dignity,” says Podell. “Students should not feel ashamed about the situation they’re in.”

Placing an emphasis on all types of basic needs insecurity, while also addressing the root cause and effects, are important aspects of any holistic approach to support community college students, says Ostos. By working to remove barriers, institutions can ensure that students have the tools and capacity to thrive, he says.

“We want our students to succeed, we want them to achieve their goals,” Ostos says. “This work directly contributes to their success because it eliminates barriers. ... We’ve found that when they get a little bit of help, they do really well. Each one of them faces some bumps in the road and if we can help them overcome those challenges, then they are well on their way to graduating.” ●



Ray Ostos

*Mission Critical: The Role of Community Colleges in Meeting Students’ Basic Needs (2022) | CCCSE



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TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER



UPenn's 'Eidos' Project Tackles LGBTQ+ Health Inequity, Discrimination

By Nikki Brahm

All too often, LGBTQ+ people experience discrimination, stigma, and prejudice when seeking and receiving health care, but a new project called the Eidos LGBTQ+ Health Initiative, housed in the School of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), aims to change that.

Operating like a consulting agency, Eidos, which UPenn calls “a first-of-its-kind academic social entrepreneurship lab,” engages students and faculty across disciplines and from different UPenn schools, outside businesses, and organizations to work together and offer diverse perspectives aimed at improving LGBTQ+ health initiatives. Eidos team members focus on several areas, such as public health research, evaluation, user experience analysis, and marketing expertise to support the LGBTQ+ population.

The need is great, says Jessica Halem, Eidos senior director, because resources are often strained in LGBTQ+ communities. In 2020, for every \$100 awarded by U.S. organizations, 23 cents specifically supported LGBTQ+ communities, according to a recent study by Funders for LGBTQ Issues, which aims to increase the scale and impact of philanthropic resources for queer communities.

The political climate also makes work more difficult, she says. She points to differing LGBTQ+ laws and policies in each state, such as Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” law and bans in over 20 states for best-practice medical care for transgender youth.

“The number one problem that LGBTQ people face is discrimination and stigma,” Halem says. “It’s not that

we are any different than anyone else, it’s that we face so many barriers in the health care system that keep us from getting the kind of preventative care, the screenings, and the education that we deserve.”

Research affirms this assertion. Queer adults experience higher rates of discrimination in health care, according to a survey conducted in 2022 by The Center for American Progress, a policy institute.

Among their findings, researchers reported more than one in five LGBTQ+ individuals and more than one in three transgender or nonbinary respondents postponed medical care

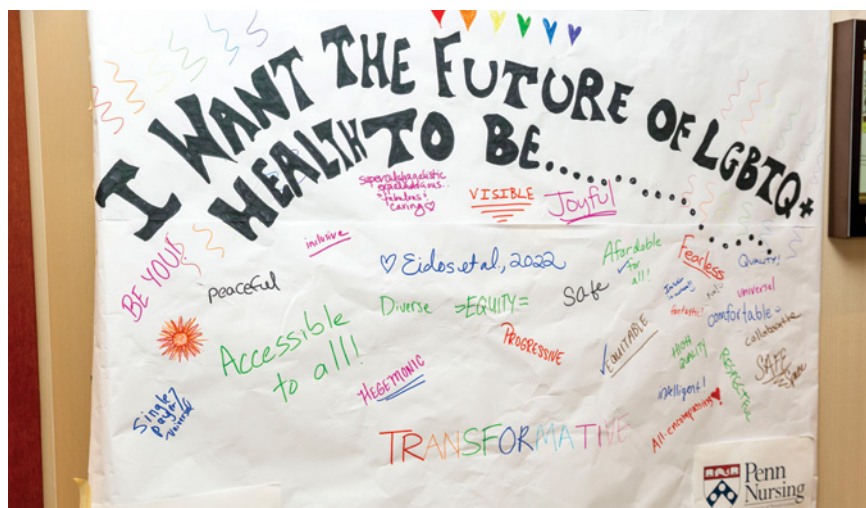
due to disrespect or discrimination by providers. Common instances of mistreatment, harassment, and discrimination by providers include making religious statements about their actual or perceived gender identity, intentionally misgendering patients, using harsh or abusive language when providing treatment, engaging in unwanted physical contact, and exhibiting physically rough or abusive behavior.

To solve this, Eidos works to connect stakeholders across all areas of health care delivery, from inside and outside higher education.

For example, Halem is working with the developers of the mobile application Trace, a platform for transgender and nonbinary individuals to track their gender-identity transition



Jessica Halem



University of Pennsylvania researchers are working to improve LGBTQ+ health with the Eidos LGBTQ+ Health Initiative. At the launch event in November, attendees contributed to a poster that signifies the future of health care. (Photo courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania)



More than 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ individuals and more than one in three transgender or nonbinary respondents postponed medical care due to disrespect or discrimination by providers.

The Center for American Progress

journey and find allies for support, ideas, and resources.

Eidos has connected Trace with experts across multiple university departments, including engineering, public health, business, and marketing, to assist in strengthening its business model and the application's user experience. Enabling Trace to work with people in different disciplines supports the goal of assisting a greater number of transgender and nonbinary users and positively impacting their mental health.

Another innovation Eidos team members are working on — in collaboration with the nursing and engineering schools at UPenn — is Project SLIP, an effort to develop a new type of condom to improve the efficacy of preventing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Leaders at Eidos have also assisted Julia Votto, a graduate student in UPenn's School of Engineering and Applied Science, with a thesis project aimed at finding solutions to LGBTQ+ health disparities.

"I am queer, and I have so many wonderful queer friends, peers, and mentors," Votto says. "I see how hard they work every day to better their communities and the world, but I also see and personally understand the traumas that are associated with being queer, especially in America and in health care."



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The launch party for the Eidos LGBTQ+ Health Initiative in November brought together people in support of the new project from different practices, academic disciplines, and ministries. (Photo courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania)

Votto says it's inspiring to watch LGBTQ+ people get the attention they need to effect change at a major university. She hopes that through projects such as Eidos and her thesis research, LGBTQ+ people will receive health care in new ways and live healthier lives.

By prioritizing communities that are most marginalized and finding solutions to their suffering, everyone is uplifted, says Halem. There are many stories of LGBTQ+ resilience and community support, which is what she hopes will inspire people when they're faced with other challenges.

"Even when the world is against us, we persevere, and that for me is the kind of story that I want health care to figure out and bottle," Halem says. ●

EMBEDDED AND ESSENTIAL TO OUR MISSION

Our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access is embedded into all our university operations and initiatives that support the retention, empowerment and thriving of underrepresented students and employees.



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Statewide Collaboration Results in Greater Financial Aid for Students

By Erik Cliburn

The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program, which launched at the start of the 2016-2017 academic year, provides scholarships to Connecticut students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It exemplifies the powerful impact of collaboration between higher education institutions and organizations to support underserved students.

While the concept of a need-based scholarship is not unique, the Willis scholarship is distinctive in that it provides funding to students of both public and select private nonprofit institutions.

This state-sponsored program was made possible in large part by a joint lobbying effort from the University of Connecticut (UConn); the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, which advocates for private institutions; and the Connecticut Board of Regents, which governs two- and four-year public institutions, excluding UConn. In recent years, these organizations have worked together, alongside the New England Commission of Higher Education, to advocate for more financial aid for students at the state level with the Willis scholarship and at the federal level through Pell Grants.

“As you can see, this program doesn’t really differentiate between public and private [schools],” says Mark French, director of financial aid for the Connecticut Office of Higher Education. “It is the same program at all schools. In effect, they work together to make sure the program meets the needs of all their students. That is pretty much how this program was designed.”

The program is divided into two scholarships, both of which provide funding to low-income students —



need-merit and need-based offerings. The need-merit grant provides up to \$5,250 per year for high school graduates who rank in the top 20 percent of their junior year class or achieve a score of at least 1200 on the SAT or 25 on the ACT. Recipients of the need-based grant can earn up to \$4,500 per year and must only have an expected family contribution below the maximum amount determined by the state, which has ranged between \$10,000 and \$11,500, depending on the year.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, nearly 2,000 students received the need-merit scholarship. This totaled more than \$9 million, with an average

award of approximately \$4,600.

In that same time frame, nearly 8,600 students received an average of \$2,800 each from the need-based scholarship, totaling more than \$24 million.

Thirty public and private institutions participate in the Willis program, including 12 community colleges, 12 private four-year institutions, and six public colleges and universities. Participating schools determine award amounts per student for each year they are enrolled. The funds only apply to tuition and fees but can be combined with other grants and scholarships. This program is intended to fill gaps that students might have in their financial aid.

In addition to providing financial assistance, the program is also an opportunity for the state to demonstrate its support for higher education. This is especially valuable given the diverse landscape of institutions located within the relatively small state, says French.

“Helping low-income students afford a college education is the primary goal of this program. But it also provides, at a secondary level, support to our state institutions of higher education,” he says. “It shows that the state values higher education and these institutions. Though Connecticut is a small state, we have quite a few institutions of higher education. They run the gamut from low-price community colleges to Yale [University].”

For the upcoming fiscal year, UConn accounts for

“It is well known that students tend to end up working in the state where they get their degrees. [The Willis scholarship program] is an attempt to keep students in-state, no matter the college they choose.”

Mark French

more than 22 percent of state appropriations for the need-based portion of the scholarship, and it enrolls the most qualifying students. The state’s community colleges collectively account for more than 35 percent of Willis scholarship need-based allocations.

The Willis scholarship program is an example of how higher education institutions and state governments can work together to improve opportunities for underrepresented students while also benefiting the schools and the state economy, says French.

“Connecticut is sort of a bastion of the traditional New England private college, so the state believes in supporting those colleges,” he says. “But above and beyond that, the program is really aimed at retaining our college-aged students and older students who want to go back and start or complete a degree. It is well known that students tend to end up working in the state where they get their degrees. [The Willis scholarship program] is an attempt to keep students in-state, no matter the college they choose.” ●



EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS



Plymouth State University’s new Center for Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice, opened in 2022, supports belonging, success, and empowerment for students and employees across diverse identities and experiences. But what does that mean in practice and how do we promote student success?

When strategizing to improve retention and persistence for underserved students, higher education often attempts to identify their needs without actually asking them what they need. We’ve begun to answer this question with the help of our student activists.

In addition to a variety of educational programming and events, the center has formed a new diversity leadership program designed to empower students to promote student success. This program pays students from different backgrounds to come together and educate the campus on concerns that historically underserved students are facing and provides real-life examples of what can be done to address these concerns mirroring our unique Cluster Learning model.

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SUNY Cortland to Honor First Black Alum, Thanks to Student's Effort



"I wanted to remind everyone of the power this one Black man had and the influence it carried, and hopefully it will inspire more students of color or students in general. ...I hope Abraham Lincoln DeMond Day opens up a new door of recognition for the Black community on campus. I also hope it allows us to understand our history at SUNY Cortland and the importance of the fights for equality and how that fight must continue today in our own students."

Tatum Pittman, discussing the impact of Abraham Lincoln DeMond, the first Black graduate of the Normal School at Cortland, NY (now SUNY Cortland). Abraham Lincoln Demond 1889 Day is a new university tradition due to an idea first suggested by Pittman, a senior studying adolescence education and director of diversity, equity, and inclusion for the Student Government Association.



Abraham Lincoln DeMond was a minister and advocate for African American emancipation in the late 19th and early 20th century at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., the same church from which Martin Luther King Jr. helped launch the civil rights movement six decades later. On January 1, 1900, a day of annual commemoration for President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, DeMond delivered an influential speech, "The Negro Element in American Life," which noted the achievements of African Americans and called for their full rights as American citizens.



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OUR PLAN IN ACTION

As our nation celebrates Black History Month, MUSC joins in this celebration of culture, tradition, contributions and much more. Visit our website today, to view our celebration of Black leaders across our MUSC enterprise.



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MEANINGFUL MOMENTUM

The University of Kentucky's north star is advancing our state in everything that we do.

We are, after all, Kentucky's university. And now, more than ever, advancing Kentucky means deepening our commitment to inclusive excellence.

At UK, our students remain at the center of everything we do. We ensure their success in an interconnected world by increasing the diversity of our faculty and staff, establishing multicultural gathering spaces and incorporating unconscious bias materials in our first-year introductory course curriculum.

We take seriously our role in promoting diversity, inclusion, economic development and human well-being. That is why

hundreds of community members across our campus have engaged in nearly 20 initiatives that embed in our culture and our systems this commitment to diversity, equity, justice and inclusion. From expanding our supplier diversity purchasing program to position local diverse businesses for success, to engaging in consequential research centered around racial equity, we are investing in sustainable and meaningful change.

While we have made important progress, there will always be more to do. But we are laying an important and durable foundation for lasting change – on our campus, across the state and in the world we seek to make better each day.

These are our promises, commitments and expectations as the University of, for and with Kentucky.

