

USC Rossier

M A G A Z I N E

Can Education Save Democracy?

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Dear Friends,



As I write, upholding USC Rossier's pledge to the next generation of educators and students feels difficult. Schools everywhere are closing because of a pandemic, their service impacted in untold ways, likely for months. We at USC Rossier are continuing our teaching and learning activities online, and by most accounts, our students are adapting well.

But I can't help but think about the fragility of human norms, structures and assumptions. It just takes one catastrophe, or one election result, to make our goals seem farther from reach. Particularly fragile—even before COVID-19—are the norms, structures and assumptions of our democratic system.

"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education." President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote this message to educators in September 1938, during American Education Week. His words were clear: An educated democracy is the only democracy that works.

It wasn't until years later, in 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation of children in public institutions was unconstitutional, that our laws started catching up with our ideals. Delivering the Court's opinion, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote that education is central to our democratic society, "it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. ... [It] is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."

The health of America's educational institutions—its K-12 schools, colleges and universities—represents the health of our democracy. The history of America's schools is also a history of access, rights and liberties. When threats to our democratic foundations emerge or grow, we need to ask ourselves, how do we leverage the significant power of our educational institutions to meet those challenges?

At USC Rossier, our mission is to achieve educational equity, particularly to prepare leaders to achieve it. We create and support scholars who understand that systems are made up of individuals, each with the capacity to see inequities and do something about them. In this issue of *USC Rossier Magazine*, you'll read stories of people who are refusing to be passive participants in a democratic society in turmoil.

This is the final semester of my deanship, but I look forward to rejoining the faculty in the fall of 2021 to focus on scholarship related to women in leadership and the significant equity issues that exist there. I am proud to know my successor will lead a school that is confident in its purpose and its ability to rise to any occasion.

Fight On!

Karen Symms Gallagher PhD
Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean
USC Rossier School of Education

A LANDMARK DECISION

Nettie Hunt, sitting on the steps of the Supreme Court in 1954, holding a newspaper and explaining to her daughter Nikie the meaning of the Court's decision banning school segregation. Photo courtesy of Bettmann Archive/Getty Images.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



When I arrived at USC Rossier in the fall of 2019, I attended as many lectures, events and other happenings as I could. The school, with its 228 full- and part-time faculty, 173 staff, 2,251 students, broad array of degree programs, 11 research centers and over 28,000 living

alumni, is always buzzing. And as I met more members of the Rossier community and learned about the work they are doing, I was floored. At a time when our country feels incredibly divided, and we are often left wondering if our democracy is still functioning, I found myself feeling encouraged: The work of USC Rossier deeply embodies the democratic principles our nation was built upon.

Education and democracy share an essential bond, and this issue asks the question, can education save democracy? In these pages, Rossier faculty Mary Helen Immordino-Yang discusses how fostering abstract thinking in youth can support democracy, and Adrianna Kezar considers why we need to rethink the power structures that govern higher education. The features offer deep dives into some of our nation's—and world's—most pressing concerns. From burning questions of how schools grapple with climate change to how an inspiring school of refugees run by a Rossier alum is learning how democracy functions, this issue offers stories of hope and important reminders.

Democracy—rule by the people—requires participation from the populace. To have a healthy democracy, we must have an educated citizenry. And to truly have an educated citizenry, we must have educational equity.

Kianoosh Hashemzadeh, Editor



PHOTO BY RACHEL LU / ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS GASH

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PHOTO BY REBECCA ARANDA

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STORY IDEAS? FEEDBACK?
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Printed with vegetable oil-based inks on 100% PCW paper stock.

USC creates full-ride scholarship for Ednovate graduates

By Ross Brenneman



Students from USC Hybrid High's Class of 2018 move their tassels from the right to the left side of their mortarboards during their graduation ceremony.

USC HAS ANNOUNCED the establishment of a full-ride scholarship for low-income students graduating from schools in the Ednovate network. USC Rossier School of Education established the Ednovate charter management organization in 2012 to create and operate five high schools in the Greater Los Angeles area. A sixth school will join the Ednovate network in 2020. One graduating senior from each of the schools who applies to and enrolls in USC will be eligible for the scholarship.

"Since we founded our first school in 2012, the goal has always been about preparing students to succeed in college, and then to have them do it," said Karen Symms Gallagher, chair of the Ednovate board and Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean at USC Rossier. "We know money is one of the top stressors for

graduating seniors. These scholarships are an important new way to help fulfill our vision of creating positive multigenerational change and of ensuring that students are headed toward a life of purpose and impact."

Most students in the Ednovate network come from low-income families. While many who attend USC already receive some form of financial aid, the new full-ride scholarship will close any remaining gaps in funding for selected students.

Of the five senior classes that have graduated from Ednovate schools (four from USC Hybrid High, founded in 2012, and one from East College Prep, founded in 2015), all have had a 100 percent graduation rate and a 100 percent acceptance rate to at least one four-year college. Fourteen current USC students graduated from Ednovate schools. —R



IMPACT SHOWCASE HIGHLIGHTS ROSSIER'S REACH

"**ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING** is possible if you have mentorship." These words were spoken by Tensie Taylor ME '14, associate director of the USC Black Alumni Association, as she delivered an EdTalk—Rossier's version of a TedTalk—at the Impact Showcase that took place in February at the Amy King Dundon-Berchtold University Club of USC.

This year's event took a new format. Rather than telling attendees about all of the important work that their philanthropy supports, a series of interactive exhibits demonstrated the impact of Rossier's faculty, staff and students, Dean Karen Symms Gallagher explained during her opening remarks.

Taylor's talk, "Bullied From Terror to Triumph: Now Living My Best Life," reflecting on the years of bullying she endured during her youth, was one of two EdTalks presented. Kenya Williams MAT '11, EdD '18, pictured above, a principal in the Los Angeles Unified School District, gave a talk called "Extraordinary vs. Average," which explored how her parents and teachers inspired her throughout her life. —R

PHOTOS BY BRIAN MORRI / 211 PHOTOGRAPHY

THE RUN OF HIS LIFE

By Kianoosh Hashemzadeh

THE FIRST TIME Edgar Fidel Lopez ran the Los Angeles Marathon, his phone died. Unable to listen to music, he was alone with his thoughts.

He ran some 12 miles in his basketball shoes, but when he had nearly reached the halfway mark, he injured himself. He visited the medical tent. It wasn't good news. The medics advised him to withdraw from the race and take a van to the finish line.

"Just give me that Gatorade," Lopez said. "I'm going to power through it."

He limped another 12 miles, and then two miles from the finish, his body began to shut down. He fell to the ground. But then his sister and cousin jumped in to help. They lifted him up and kept pushing him toward the finish line.

Lopez completed the marathon that day, and has gone on to complete two more, thanks to the aid of his loved ones. The experience, Lopez said, made him think about those times "when we're in our darkest moment [and] we think that no one's there to help us, that's when we get the most unexpected support."

Lopez compares running the L.A. Marathon to his experience navigating higher education. It's a journey that has required both perseverance and the ability to accept help when it's offered. Like the marathon, Lopez's path as a PhD student in USC Rossier's Urban Education Policy program hasn't always been easy, but he's been able to find support along the way.

When Lopez was a high school senior, he was approached by Randall Clemens PhD '12, a mentor in the Pullias Center for Higher Education's Increasing Access via Mentoring (I AM) college-transition program at USC Rossier. "It was the first time anyone had told me about a PhD program," Lopez said.

Clemens was one of Lopez's first mentors, and the I AM sessions motivated Lopez to think about college. Clemens made him feel as though someone understood the circumstances

and background of first-gen students like him.

Lopez grew up in inner-city L.A. with undocumented parents. They had dropped out of middle school, so to them, "high school was my higher education," Lopez said. But Clemens guided him through the college application process, and Lopez was accepted to UCLA.

When Lopez was an undergrad, his mother lost her job, so he worked a lot to help his family. His grades suffered. When a science professor asked to meet with him, Lopez optimistically hoped the professor would help him get back on track. Instead, he asked Lopez why he hadn't dropped his class.

The professor asked Lopez where he was from, and when he learned that he was from Inglewood, the professor said he didn't understand why "this school accepts people like you if they know you're not going to succeed," Lopez recalled.

Lopez avoided office hours for months. Eventually, though, after some pleading, he found himself in the office of a professor who provided the inspiring words he had been looking for during that challenging semester. The experience changed Lopez's trajectory, inspiring

"When we're in our darkest moment [and] we think that no one's there to help us, that's when we get the most unexpected support."

— Edgar Fidel Lopez, PhD student in Urban Education Policy



him to pursue education instead of his initial interest, law. "I want to be someone who I wish I had known when I was younger," Lopez said.

Lopez went on to graduate from UCLA with two bachelor's degrees and a minor in education. But he continued to keep his eye on the prize. Lopez left Los Angeles and his family—not an easy decision—to attend the University of Texas at Austin, where he received his MEd in educational leadership and policy. Now, he's a student in the same PhD program he first heard about from Clemens.

At USC Rossier, Lopez is still deep in the race, but he's heading toward the finish line.

Born out of his own experiences in higher ed, Lopez's research looks at first-gen college students' interactions with faculty as well as how faculty construct positive perceptions of students regardless of their perceived disadvantages. "We have to get to a positive frame of thinking about these students," he said. "Just because they come from a poor background doesn't mean they have poor skills." —R

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE YANTZ



Women superintendents share insights

By Wendy Shattuck

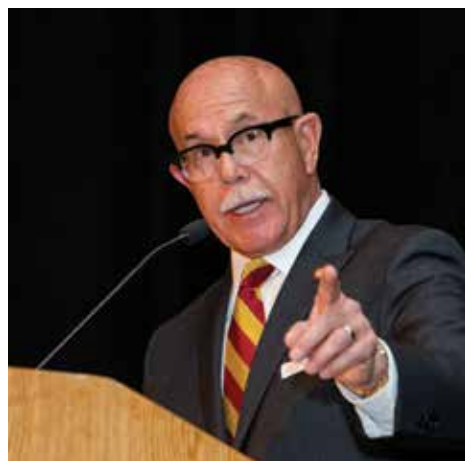
OVER A DOZEN TOP DISTRICT LEADERS, all members of the Dean’s Superintendents Advisory Group (DSAG), gathered on Jan. 31 after the annual DSAG awards dinner, to share perspectives about occupying the highest seat in public K-12 education. From the disparities in career pathways they face compared to male counterparts to unsolicited wardrobe advice, they related common experiences about the role and expectations. Dean Gallagher established the brunch in 2015 to give a voice within DSAG to these professionals and provide a forum for workplace insights about the role and expectations.

One participant shared a realization she came to early on. She followed a man into the supe’s chair, and her district is particularly sports-dominated. The “guy” factor is important, she said. She had to work at that part of leading her district—paying attention to sports because of how much they meant to so many. A colleague across the table agreed that navigating and honoring those important “symbolic frames” like athletics can be critical to a leader’s success.

The group agreed that the concern about women’s representation within their ranks remains high. Women comprise just 21.7 percent of all superintendents in the U.S., according to AASA, The School Superintendents Association. For women of color, it is especially difficult to overcome the “broken rung” on the ladder to a superintendent’s seat. Today, just six percent of supes in the nation are of color, regardless of gender (see illustration on page 24).

“All of us around the table mentor women in our organizations,” said one attendee. “What do superintendents need to do to accelerate these young professionals’ journey to the top?” —R

Four Rossier EdD students named DSAG Scholars, David Verdugo EdD ’05 inducted into Hall of Fame



1 From left to right, Shane Craven, Heather Bojorquez, Dean Gallagher, Richard Noblett and Jerome Rucker.

2 David Verdugo EdD '05 delivers remarks.

AT THIS YEAR’S DEAN’S SUPERINTENDENTS ADVISORY GROUP (DSAG) awards dinner, held on Jan. 30 in Palm Springs, Calif., David Verdugo EdD ’05, who served as superintendent of schools for the Paramount Unified School District in Los Angeles for nine years, was inducted into the DSAG Hall of Fame. The DSAG Endowed Scholarships were also awarded to four USC Rossier EdD students who aspire to become superintendents. This year’s recipients were Shane Craven, coordinator of special education at Conejo Valley Unified School District; Richard Noblett, director of student achievement at Olive Middle School in Baldwin Park Unified School District; Jerome Rucker, dean of students at Wiltsey Middle School in Ontario Montclair School District; and Heather Bojorquez, principal at C.E. Utt Middle School in the Tustin Unified School District, whose DSAG scholar award was presented in partnership with TELACU. —R

PHOTOS BY BRIAN MORRI / 311 PHOTOGRAPHY



\$1 million award goes to Brendesha Tynes to study digital literacy skills

USC HAS RECEIVED a \$934,221 Lyle Spencer Research

Award to study youth’s digital literacy skills related to race. Brendesha Tynes, associate professor of education and psychology at USC Rossier, will lead the project in collaboration with faculty from USC and other institutions.

Tynes is one of the country’s foremost researchers on issues related to race and online bullying. The project will include a national study of exposure to messages about race,

including from bots and misinformation.

“Digital literacy education in the U.S. does not adequately prepare youth for the barrage of race-related material they encounter online,” Tynes said. “This project will help us gauge the specific needs youth have at each developmental stage so that we can design curricula more in step with a post-2020 digital landscape.”

There are major political consequences to Tynes’ work: In May 2019, U.S. intelligence documents showed that Russian agents had ambitious plans to stoke racial discord and resentment online ahead of U.S. elections.

“We have a foreign power engaged in an information war with conservatives and Black Americans, trying to exploit already widening racial divides,” Tynes said. “The stakes couldn’t be higher.” —R



Estela Mara Bensimon named new board member for Complete College America

ESTELA MARA BENSIMON, USC Rossier

professor of higher education and director of the Center for Urban Education, was recently named a new board member of Complete College America. CCA advocates for increasing college completion rates and closing equity gaps by working with states, systems, institutions and partners to scale highly effective structural reforms and promote policies that improve student success. —R



Roybal Foundation Medal of Courage in Education awarded to Darline Robles

DARLINE ROBLES,

professor of clinical education and associate dean for diversity and inclusion at USC Rossier, was presented with the Medal of Courage in Education at the Roybal Foundation’s 2019 Legacy Gala. Founded in 1985 to commemorate the legacy of the late Congressman Edward R. Roybal and Mrs. Lucille Beserra Roybal, the organization supports community programs in East Los Angeles that engage, educate and empower residents in the areas of mental health, careers and financial knowledge. —R



Gisele ‘Gigi’ Ragusa honored for work with underrepresented groups in STEM

PROFESSOR GISELE ‘GIGI’ RAGUSA, a jointly appointed faculty member with USC Rossier and USC Viterbi

as professor of engineering education practice, was recently awarded a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring. The award, announced in October by the White House Office of Science and Technology, is “the nation’s highest honors for mentors who work with underrepresented groups to develop fully the nation’s human resources in STEM.” Ragusa was one of only 15 recipients of the award nationwide. —R



Adrianna Kezar named Pullias director and Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education

ADRIANNA KEZAR,

Dean’s Professor of Leadership and Director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education, has been named the new Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education at USC Rossier.

Kezar will be installed as holder of the endowed professorship on a date still to be determined.

Kezar stepped into the role of full director of the Pullias Center upon the retirement of the center’s founder and former co-director, William G. Tierney, in December. —R

Major awards to go to USC Rossier research centers

THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION awarded a grant totaling \$550,000 to two USC Rossier centers: the USC Race and Equity Center will receive \$400,000 and the

Center for Urban Education will receive \$150,000.

The Pullias Center for Higher Education was awarded an approximately \$400,000 grant from the Spencer Foundation to research how Los

Angeles Community College District schools are implementing the major structural changes required under the newly passed AB 705 legislation in California. —R

PACE/USC Rossier poll finds voters skeptical of school quality, support more funding

By Ross Brenneman

THE RESULTS OF THE ANNUAL 2020 Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)/USC Rossier poll show that California voters lack enthusiasm about the state education system and local school quality.

In the poll, voters gave schools their lowest grade in a half-decade (only 20 percent gave an A or B on an A–F grading scale), with parents especially critical. More than two-thirds of respondents said that over the past few years, California school quality had either gotten worse or stayed the same (gotten better: 10 percent; gotten worse: 41 percent; stayed same: 36 percent), and voters felt similarly about the quality of their own

local schools (gotten better: 15 percent; gotten worse: 32 percent; stayed same: 38 percent).

Yet voter responses indicated they may see school funding as a way to improve school quality, with a majority saying the state needed to spend more on schools (should spend more: 56 percent; spends enough: 25 percent).

“Two of the state’s largest school districts had prolonged strikes last year, and I worry whether Californians are losing faith that the people with real power to improve schools can lead,” said Karen Symms Gallagher, dean of the USC Rossier School of Education. “Voters obviously want schools to have the money they need, but I think voters also want to know that the money



More than one year after Los Angeles teachers went on strike, momentum hasn’t carried over to the voter turnout required to pass new levies for school funding.

they’ve already invested is being used well.”

The poll surveyed 2,000 registered California voters online Jan. 3–10. The poll was led by researchers Julie A. Marsh and

Morgan Polikoff at USC Rossier and by Heather Hough and David N. Plank at PACE, and was conducted by Tulchin Research. The PACE/USC Rossier poll has generally been conducted annually since 2012. —R

Scholars push bold agenda to bring trust to college admissions

By Ross Brenneman

CHANGING A MASSIVE SYSTEM doesn’t happen overnight, but at an annual conference this year that hosts the nation’s senior admissions and financial aid officers, researchers from the USC Rossier School of Education and elsewhere argued for major reforms.

“We believe the admissions system in the United States is broken,” said Don Hossler, a senior scholar with USC Rossier’s Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice

(CERPP), laying out the thesis of a damning new paper he’s co-authored. “The immodest hope we have is that we can stimulate policy actors at the state and federal level to say, ‘We can do something about this.’”

Hossler made the case at the annual CERPP Conference, held in downtown Los Angeles at the end of January.

Hossler’s co-authors and allies in this fight are Jerry Lucido, a professor of practice and CERPP’s executive director; Emily Chung, CERPP associate director; and Robert Massa, an associate professor in USC Rossier’s Enrollment Management and Policy graduate program and former head of enrollment at Drew University.

CERPP’s officers designed this year’s

conference to find a way forward on higher education’s most significant enrollment-related issues. Over the course of three days, experts talked about the roadblocks to institutional change, both internal and external, as well as the problems that led them to this point, including how to define and measure merit, a lack of preparation for changing high school demographics, growing price and debt aversion, and loss of public confidence in the fairness of the college admissions system.

“We have no illusions that anything we share at this conference will result in any national decisions,” Hossler said, “but we hope it can result in discussions that result in some level of consensus that plays out differently in each state.” —R

PHOTO COURTESY OF ASSOCIATED PRESS / DAMIAN DOVARGANES

PHOTO COURTESY OF LORENA ALVAREZ

Engineering a better climate



THE PROFESSORS BEHIND the Center for Engineering in Education want educators to have a bigger stake in climate change. The center, founded by Professors Anthony Maddox and John Brooks Slaughter in 2017, launched its signature program, EdVentures, to act as an accelerator and mentorship initiative for education-oriented entrepreneurs. The professors announced this March that they also want to incorporate climate change.

“There are going to be whole new sciences to deal with this issue,” Maddox said, envisioning huge opportunities for teachers.

Maddox and Slaughter also see potential for new classes and academic degree programs—and that’s just to start. “The world is going to have to realize that climate change is here,” Slaughter said. “Action has to happen now.” —R

“The world is going to have to realize that climate change is here. Action has to happen now.”

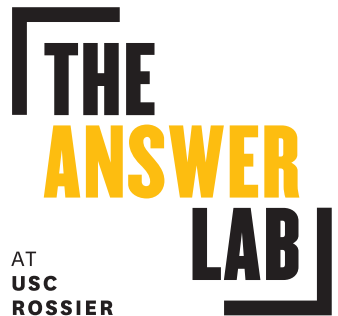
— John Brooks Slaughter

#11

FOR THE FOURTH YEAR IN A ROW, *U.S. News & World Report* named USC Rossier one of the 15 best graduate schools of education in the country. This year we’re #11, and have ranked in the top 20 in nine of the past 10 years.

Many USC Rossier programs also ranked in the top 30 within their respective areas: Higher Education Administration (#5), Education Policy (#14), Education Administration and Supervision (#14), Secondary Teacher Education (#17) and Curriculum and Instruction (29).

CEPEG announces:



THE USC ROSSIER CENTER ON Educational Policy, Equity and Governance this fall announced the formation of The Answer Lab, an initiative that provides policymakers and administrators with targeted research and expertise to better inform decision-making.

“There have been lots of efforts to connect research to policy; some of these have succeeded, and many have not,” said CEPEG co-director Morgan Polikoff, who founded The Answer Lab. “I’m excited about this new approach, which I think addresses many of the shortcomings of prior efforts by taking questions directly from policymakers and giving them clear answers in formats they can readily use.” —R

Visit The Answer Lab

theanswerlab.rossier.usc.edu

In the media

“It’s a crazy cycle. We know that when you have a college education, there are good outcomes with health. You’re more likely to live longer. It matters for employment stability and civic engagement. You’re less likely to rely on social services.”

— **Adrian H. Huerta**, USC Rossier assistant professor of education, in *The Washington Post*

“It is totally fine and appropriate and good for White people to write about the legacy and impact of Martin Luther King Jr. I would go so far to say I wish we had more White students in college who would and could take the time to articulate King’s impact on social justice. We send millions of White college students into the world without the study of racial justice and equity topics.”

— **Shaun Harper**, Provost Professor of Education and Business, Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership, and founder and executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center, in *Inside Higher Ed*

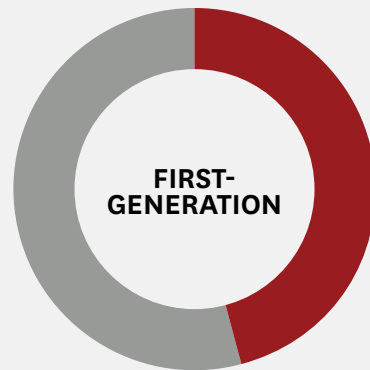
“As college prices exceed ... \$70,000 a year, parents are scratching their heads going, ‘I don’t think it’s going to be worth it unless my kid is going to go to a school that everyone is bragging about.’”

— **Robert Massa**, associate professor in USC Rossier’s Enrollment Management and Policy graduate program and vice president emeritus of enrollment and college relations at Dickinson College, in *The Washington Post*

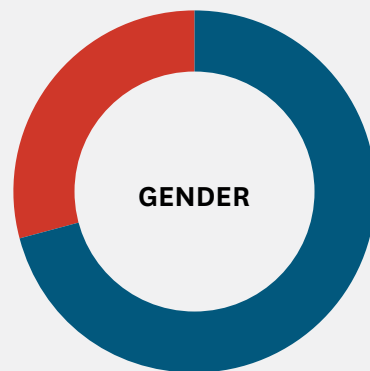
“There’s great work on learning being done around student engagement and collaborative learning, and within disciplinary associations, and by groups focused on diversity. Why don’t these communities speak to and learn from each other? Could they come up with a set of common things they’re exploring and work together on them?”

— **Adrianna Kezar**, Dean’s Professor of Leadership, Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education and director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education, in *Inside Higher Ed*

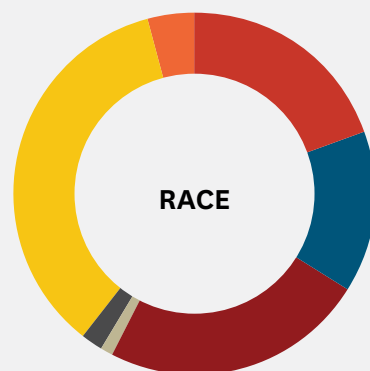
Fall enrollment at a glance



● Yes ● No



● Female ● Male



● Asian American ● Black ● Hispanic/Latino
● Native American ● Pacific Islander
● White ● Two or More

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS DURING AN ELECTION YEAR

By **Artineh Samkian**
Associate Professor of Clinical Education

ELECTION YEARS ARE OFTEN A good time to engage in difficult conversations with students about how the course content is relevant to elections that will impact existing policies and structures, as well as how students’ own learning in the course relates to their decision-making as voters. Because students have varying political and social perspectives, it is important for educators to create brave spaces that allow for open and respectful dialogue, but that also don’t stay at the surface level and can challenge students’ assumptions and thinking.

First, there are a few preconditions to creating a classroom climate that would be considered a “brave space.” Early in each term, educators can co-construct a set of discussion

norms that structure and frame how students relate to and interact with one another. These norms should be revisited throughout the term with an emphasis made on the collective responsibility to uphold them.

The second precondition is that educators should be on the path to developing a mindset and practice of critical reflection. What are the assumptions I have about the topics I might bring forward in class? How do my own positionality and lived experiences shape what I hold dear and how I vote? What are alternative ways of seeing these issues, and how might they make sense to those who see the issue that way? How is the way I view the issue informed by power dynamics? By reflecting on our own thinking and pushing ourselves to see alternative perspectives, we can better anticipate the varying perspectives our students will likely bring to the discussion.

Instructionally, educators can

make space for challenging dialogue about the election by asking open-ended, nonjudgmental questions to spur and facilitate discussion. Some of my favorite go-to questions and prompts are: “Tell me more about your thinking.” “Please clarify what you mean by ...” “What evidence can you point to that helps support your assertion?” “How have your lived experiences shaped your perspective?” “Are there alternative ways of seeing the presenting issue(s)?”

It is important to note that while questioning strategies might bring about rich dialogue reflecting different perspectives, educators should be ready to critically engage students when their comments reflect misunderstandings and assumptions that perpetuate entrenched inequities. —R



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS GASH

The Burning Questions

Students are demanding a better education on climate change, but can schools keep up?

Story:
Ross Brenneman
Illustration:
Chris Gash



Eight miles separate USC’s main campus from the Santa Monica mountain range north of Los Angeles. On a good day, you can see those mountains from campus. On a bad day, those mountains—and even the skyscrapers of downtown L.A.—are more of an idea; object permanence reassures us these places still exist within the smog, but you’d have to take someone’s word for it if you didn’t know.

That smog is a daily reminder of the toll humans have on the Earth, a subtler and more consistent sign than the more-extreme events that suggest fallout from climate change: flooding in Houston; more-powerful hurricanes in the American South; wildfires that ravage California and Australia.

In September, the United Nations’ Michelle Bachelet declared climate change the leading threat to human rights: “This is not a situation where any country, any institution, any policymaker can stand on the sidelines,” said the high commissioner for human rights. “The economies of all nations; the institutional, political, social and cultural fabric of every state; and the rights of all your people—and future generations—will be impacted.”

Experts say that climate change has the capacity to undermine democratic systems by making existing inequalities worse and causing civic instability. It is against this backdrop that the youth-orchestrated climate-strike movement has boomed, in which hundreds of thousands of students worldwide have walked out of school to protest systemic inaction on anthropogenic climate change.

Those strikes and an abundance of other evidence suggest that both K–12 and higher education systems are unprepared to meet students’ demands for a better climate education. And if so—if our educational institutions are unable to meaningfully address the greatest threat to our democracy and to human rights—then what does that say about the purpose and priorities of our educational system?

“Schools and school districts ought to ask themselves, ‘To what extent can we actually be responsive to the needs of our students given where the world is today?’” says Charles H.F. Davis III, an assistant professor of clinical education at the USC Rossier School of Education. “There’s something to be said for whether, despite its democratic aspirations of developing and forming people who participate and engage in society, [our education system] has consistently gotten away from the things that improve the material conditions of everyday people and society as a whole.”

THE STAKES

Current worldwide goals—set by the Paris Climate Agreement in 2016—are to keep global average temperature from rising 2 degrees Celsius above levels predating the Industrial Revolution. The accord has an even stronger goal of preventing the global average from rising 1.5 degrees Celsius. Scientists estimate we are *already* at 1 degree Celsius above the preindustrial average.

The 2-degree mark is considered to be the point of major, likely irreversible damage—the death of coral reefs; ice-free Arctic summers. But hitting the 1.5-degree number would also bring consequences, scientists say, such as accelerated permafrost thawing, which would release tons of trapped methane, further warming the planet.

The United Nations’ abbreviated list of the already established and growing climate change problems includes warming and acidifying oceans; more-extreme weather events such as flooding and heatwaves; changes to crop yields; and sea-level rise. Already, the pressure is felt in places like the Marshall Islands, where President Hilda Heine EdD ’04 has been vigorously advocating for climate-change reform.

We have data on the culprits: The largest carbon emissions contributors are China (29 percent), the United States (14 percent), the European Union (10 percent) and

India (7 percent). Of those, the U.S. has the highest emissions per capita.

The largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions are electricity, transportation, manufacturing and agriculture. In October, the Climate Accountability Institute released a report naming 20 companies responsible for 35 percent of the world’s carbon emissions since 1965; 12 are foreign-state-owned energy companies, while the remainder include names familiar to most Americans, such as Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP and Shell.

How much students learn about climate change depends on their state’s curricular standards; whether their teachers have adequate preparation, materials, desire and political cover to effectively teach it; and what resources educational institutions are willing to invest in creating learning opportunities.

Given what we know about climate change, it would be unfair to lay the responsibility for fixing it solely at the feet of an education system that is chronically underfunded, ignored and overburdened. But polls show that many adults lack a basic climate science education; research suggests that climate science education may be helpful to reducing climate change; and most of all, as evidenced by the student-led climate strike in Los Angeles on Nov. 1, students want it.

“We need a moonshot,” says Gale Sinatra, an expert on science education and the Stephen H. Crocker Professor of Education at USC Rossier. “We need the Sputnik of climate change education.”

HOW STUDENTS EXPERIENCE CLIMATE CHANGE

The most extreme long-run effects of climate change will hit everyone, but low-income communities and, especially, students of color are already disproportionately feeling the effects.

Indeed, experts say the movements for equity and for action on climate change need each other.

“We live in a society that tries to compartmentalize a lot of these things, rather than recognize the ways in which they’re overlapping and intersecting,” Davis says.

For example: Portland, Ore., has long claimed a

L.A.’s Youth Climate Strike

→ STUDENT WALKOUT

Climate activists participate in a student-led climate change march in L.A. on Friday, Nov. 1, 2019.



leadership role in environmentalism. The city was one of the first to adopt a light rail transit system; it has plans to create a zero-emissions bus fleet; and in 2016, its school district agreed to implement a progressive climate-change curriculum after a petition from students and teachers.

But the benefits of climate action have not been felt equitably in Portland. Writing for *Fast Company* in November, Alisa Kane, the climate action manager for the city’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, noted how unjust urban planning has left behind children of color.

“Decades of institutional racism and gentrification pushed Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latinx communities from Portland’s central city to its outer neighborhoods,” Kane writes. “What was waiting for them there? Poor transit options, a deficit of trees and parks and inequitable investments in infrastructure. These areas are also further from job centers, leading to longer commute times and distances and increased transportation costs.”

These differences are common in cities and lead to disparities in opportunities but also in health. Black and Hispanic people are the most likely demographic groups to live next to freeways (think Los Angeles’ Interstate 10), which research shows exposes them to poor air quality, increasing the likelihood of asthma. Food insecurity hits communities of color harder, meaning that the kind of price shocks that affects food—say, after a natural disaster—would most hurt people of color.

“We can’t make the environment separate from people, and we can’t separate people from the environment,” Davis says. “And if that’s the case, we have to ask which people are most likely to be affected by what’s happening.”

ON NOV. 1, THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS and adults converged at Los Angeles City Hall to call on California lawmakers to take stronger actions against climate change.

The climate-strike organizers focused their ire on the state’s fossil fuel industry, especially the oil drilling that is ubiquitous in urban areas. Swedish activist Greta Thunberg headlined the event.

“We cannot continue to look away from this crisis anymore,” Thunberg said. “What is so hard to understand?”

California is one of the largest producers of crude oil among U.S. states, with 107,000 active and idle oil and gas wells. In January, a report compiled for the state Legislature estimated that cleaning up thousands of defunct and expiring oil wells will cost the state tens of millions of dollars.

There are more than 3,000 active oil wells in Los Angeles itself, and many wells in operation off the state’s coast. Unplugged oil wells are known emitters of carcinogens associated with a higher risk of cancer. An analysis of census data by the *Los Angeles Times*/Public Integrity estimates that more than 350,000 Californians live within 600 feet of unplugged wells.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ASSOCIATED PRESS / RINGO H.W. CHIU

BETWEEN A HOT ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Each state has its own standards for what children should know by the time they graduate from high school. Last decade, a coalition of teachers, researchers and education nonprofits produced the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), an initiative meant to unify science standards across the U.S. Twenty states and the District of Columbia have adopted NGSS, while many other states have adopted similar standards.

Yet English and Math classes overshadow science classes in terms of instructional time, Sinatra says, and being able to learn climate science obviously presupposes that students have learned science generally. But a 2016 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine found that science teachers need more preparation under NGSS.

“It’s like if you’ve never even jogged before,” Sinatra says, “and now you’re going to run the Boston Marathon?”

NGSS does include climate science elements, but the implementation of those standards varies wildly between schools and even between classrooms. Environmental literacy is not otherwise mandated in most states; Maryland was first of a handful to do so in 2011.

And political differences can skew curricula between states; for example, a January review by *The New York Times* found a more-conservative approach to climate change in Texas textbooks than California texts.

“We know that what’s actually implemented in classrooms often varies considerably from what’s in the standards,” says Morgan Polikoff, an associate professor of education at USC Rossier and an expert on standards and curriculum. “The question is, if this is an important priority—and by all accounts it should be—what specific content and strategies are being implemented at the school to ensure that students are learning about climate change and what they can do to combat it?”

Remember how those students in Portland petitioned for a better climate change curriculum? In March 2019, students staged a walkout because the district hadn’t implemented what it said it would. A science teacher told *The New York Times* that he had sent a letter of concern to the superintendent, relaying that he had been told by the district that “peripheral” work like climate justice education would need to be put on hold.

Indeed, the climate-strike movement of 2019 unearthed similar apathy across the country, as districts charged protesting students with unexcused absences and told them that “there just isn’t time” to address interest in climate change.

“Of course literacy and numeracy are important,” Davis says, “but it shouldn’t have to be an either/or conversation. . . . This is a system not acknowledging its role and responsibility.”

TEACHER BARRIERS

It’s not that most teachers are uninterested in climate justice. The California Federation of Teachers (CFT), for instance, claims to be the first statewide labor organization to adopt a Climate Justice Agenda, in 2016. CFT followed up on that agenda by offering a climate justice toolkit for teaching and by pushing for the state’s teacher pension fund to divest from the fossil fuel industry.

In fact, three out of four teachers agree that climate change and its impact should be taught in schools, per an August survey by National Public Radio. Yet in the same survey only 4 in 10 teachers say they teach climate change. (Only 45 percent of parents talk to their children about it.)

By an overwhelming margin, surveyed teachers who don’t teach climate change say it’s because it’s not their subject area. This may be a reflection of a broader viewpoint within district leadership that sees climate science education as incompatible

with the many things schools are already asked to do.

In their book *Teaching Climate Change to Adolescents: Reading, Writing, and Making a Difference*, authors and professors Richard Beach, Jeff Share and Allen Webb write that school districts need to understand that state standards aren’t so confining: “A purely science-oriented approach to climate change can miss the social, historical, ethical and human realities that are critical to the problem.”

But it’s one thing to write that, and it’s another thing for an interested teacher to have the resources

Climate Change Resources for Educators

Teachers—and the public in general—often don’t know where to start when it comes to educating themselves about climate change. Here’s our guide.

THE SCIENCE

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the United Nations body tasked with gathering the data on climate change. Their latest report “represents the state-of-the-art scientific knowledge on climate change,” says Gale Sinatra, the Stephen H. Crocker Professor of Education at USC Rossier.

FOR EDUCATORS

A growing number of resources show how climate change is interdisciplinary. We recommend two:

American Educator, Winter 2019–20 is a climate-focused edition of the American Federation of Teachers’ magazine with lessons on climate change for English language arts, social studies and science teachers alike.

The NAACP has been on the front lines of the climate justice movement and has amassed scores of teaching resources connecting climate change with equity.

MORE

Visit rsoe.in/teachingclimate for these and additional resources.

and knowledge, much less feel supported, to tackle climate change in a non-science classroom.

Viet Nguyen MAT ’11 has been a teacher of science and engineering for 11 years. Although he can point to a proactive history of bringing climate change into the classroom, he says the level of similar concern among colleagues varies widely, with some teachers worried about re-credentialing or having time to learn new curricula.

“If you’re doing a free workshop on a Saturday,” Nguyen says, “you have to really be into your stuff.”

Nguyen adds that students are not so monolithic in their activism, which means that teachers need to lead on climate science education.

“I bring it up more than they do,” he says.

HIGHER EDUCATION

When she took over as USC’s 12th president, Carol Folt galvanized an institution that many objective measures has lagged behind its peers for years on sustainability measures.

In her few months leading the university, Folt has made climate change one of the signature issues of her presidency. Early actions included reinstating a discount on bus and rail passes for USC employees, planning the installation of solar panels at the Galen Center and USC Wrigley Marine Science Center, and establishing a working group to guide the university’s future sustainability efforts. (Sinatra is a member.)

“The culture at USC is changing,” says Claire Mauss ’20, an environmental sciences and health major and co-executive director of USC’s Environmental Student Assembly (ESA). “There’s been a lot of student traction for a long time, and it wasn’t until we got this new administration that we’ve actually been able to do anything.”

Mauss says the ESA has been working on a project that would establish mandated training for incoming freshmen around sustainability and climate change, the way students already must learn about alcohol consumption. At the university level, the provost’s office is exploring how to improve climate change education. (*To learn about one path USC Rossier is taking to address climate change, see page 9.*)

Experts say that a key component of climate change education is having institutions examine their own practices; schools can’t expect to teach students about climate change and escape culpability for their own roles in accelerating it.

“The more you learn about the climate and what it’s doing to society, the more you want to do something about it,” says Victoria Petryshyn, an assistant professor of environmental studies at USC and teacher of a history class focused on climate change. “The generation ahead of our students has seen this problem and not done anything. At least you want to see that your university is doing something about it, because then you don’t feel like you were part of the problem.”

According to Julian Dautremont, director of programs for the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, there are three places where colleges and universities can see the most impact in fighting climate change: responsible endowment investment, responsible procurement and revisiting graduation requirements.

Reallocating endowment funds away from the fossil fuel industry has long met resistance. The National Association of College and University Business Officers reports that 600–700 institutions have endowments exceeding \$50 million where 2–7 percent of funds are invested in “energy and natural resources.”

As covered by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, universities haven’t been as responsive to moral divestment arguments so much as economic ones, as investments in renewable energy are now showing more long-term promise than fossil fuels. More than three-dozen colleges and universities—primarily in left-leaning states—have withdrawn or begun to withdraw from fossil fuel investments.

Student protests have been more effective in bringing transparency; in February, for example, pressure from a coalition of student environmental groups such as Mauss’ successfully pressed USC to divulge that it has \$277 million invested in fossil fuels.

In addition to finances, colleges and universities have to be willing to ask a host of questions about how committed they are to fighting climate change: How sustainable are the school’s suppliers? How might meat consumption be reduced on campus?

What barriers exist to creating more climate change classes? Should a climate change course or service-learning component be a graduation requirement? Do efforts address the racial and gendered components of climate change? Is the school acting as

a good partner for the community in which it exists?

“This is an unprecedented amount of change,” Mauss says. “Universities are working against a system not designed to do this.”

But, she says—in a positive sign that awareness and activism are spreading—incoming classes are showing excitement about addressing the issue.

“Our first meeting this year had 250 attendees,” Mauss says. “We had freshmen emailing us over the summer asking how to get involved. The more I see youth want to get involved with this, the more hopeful I become.”

That’s the kind of progress necessary to help fix such a large, multifaceted problem. Sinatra, the USC Rossier professor, says climate anxiety is merited, but the minimum that educational institutions can do is signal urgency instead of fatalism.

“If you tell people we’re screwed and that there’s nothing you can do, then they don’t want to do anything,” she says. “And if nobody does anything, then we are screwed.” —R



Mary Helen Immordino-Yang

Neuroscientist, psychologist, former teacher and mother to two teenagers, professor Immordino-Yang discusses why fostering abstract thinking in adolescents is essential to democracy.

Interview: Kianoosh Hashemzadeh

Illustration: Heather Monahan

This issue explores the relationship between democracy and education. Why is empathy important in a democracy?

We have some interesting new longitudinal data on adolescents. We can show that there are certain dispositions of mind—propensities toward engaging with social scenarios in ways that facilitate reflection on broader implications, the bigger historical context and values that are at stake—that, in some ways, help you transcend beyond just here and now. What our data suggests is that engaging in these styles of meaning-making grows the brain.

The kids who were inclined toward engaging empathically, directly in the world, but then transcending that and making broader kinds of more abstract meaning, that is what actually allowed us to predict their brain development two years later. When kids did this, and also activated their brains in ways that suggested it wasn't just empty words, then we could predict [they'll] have better ego integrity, a better sense of values and self-worth, and feel more fulfilled and purposeful as young adults, no matter their IQ.

A democracy is about being able to manage those two ways of making meaning and regulating your behavior. On the one side, you have to be respectful and engage with other people. But that's not enough to build a democracy or a person. To be a fully actuated and functioning member of democracy means that you can infer the deeper intentions and patterns of beliefs and values that are instantiated in the way we act over time and the broader implications of what's going on based on our historical past and our hypothetical futures.

Being able to think in that abstract realm—that culturally, socially constructed realm—that's grounded in broad values like justice and equity. Those kinds of things, you can't see them looking at the world. Diversity doesn't equal equity. Equity is an intent. Being able to transcend to build broader meaning seems to be instrumental for adolescent development and well-being, and it's fundamental to a functioning democracy.

How can educators help foster empathy and this type of abstract thinking?

In a classroom, you need people to be able to get along with each other and regulate themselves. But data has suggested that you need to transcend that. You need to be able to think about the bigger story of what's happening. And when

kids are not set up with opportunities to construct their own beliefs about what's happening, to reflect on those together, and to reexamine them, elaborate on them and also curtail them when necessary, you get predictable things like, "Why do we have to know this?"

That question should never happen. Kids ought to know why they need to know this, because they are dying to know it, because something they're working on demands that they must understand it.

What educators need to focus on is deep, interconnected, thoughtful, project-oriented work, where kids are always engaging socially around the work, explaining the work to others [and] reflecting on their process. Those kinds of authentic learning activities, when they're supported and structured well, produce much higher-level thinking than [what goes] into the tight rubrics and questions.

You built boats with street children in Russia and studied traditional boatbuilding in Kenya. What attracted you to boatbuilding, and how did this experience shape your work?

That was a long time ago, but it was pretty seminal for my identity. I wanted to explore the world. I wanted to learn languages. I was fascinated with how people build traditions around construction. Traditional ways of teaching and engaging with one another enable people to build things that are amazingly complex, beautiful and functional. Huge boats made out of wood with no power tools!

"Democracy is about being able to manage ways of making meaning and regulating your behavior."

What attracted me to it was the same sort of thinking that goes into my science now. You collaboratively assess a problem and a space. You have a bunch of constraints that operate on it. You have a certain set of needs that you

need to fulfill. And then you figure out, how do I build something that will be beautiful, functional and serve these people well?

The Center for Affective Neuroscience and Developmental Learning in Education (CANDLE) just launched. What are your goals for the center?

CANDLE is a continuation and renaming of activities that I've been building up to for years. The new projects will be collaborative, between educators and education scholars like myself, because that's really where it's at. We need to build science that informs important questions in education, answers what people need to know and gives new insights into what's going on, without telling people what to do.

My hope for CANDLE is to launch a new kind of conversation in education about what counts as learning, that shifts the purpose that people understand schools to have in society. I think it will help us to reexamine the big assumptions that undergird modern education and shift to a conversation that's more centered on development as the desired process and outcome—[understanding] learning as a way to promote development but not as the main outcome of education.

It profoundly changes the way you think about achievement, accountability and assessment. We've known for a long time that the best preschool experiences do this. You can't ignore kids' social emotional growth, agency and ability to regulate themselves in a preschool environment or the place will fall apart. Older kids are able to compensate for our bad design, basically, except that then they show mental health problems, higher levels of anxiety, depression and boredom, and drop out of school because they're bored.

You're incredibly busy. What do you do to relax?

I have a regular yoga practice, which isn't relaxing—it's actually super strenuous—but it's kind of a moving meditation. I like to feel fit and to engage. And it's a nice community that I'm part of.

I also think just as important as what I do is what I don't do. I hardly watch TV or movies. I don't use social media. I'm not saying these things are bad—I just don't have the bandwidth. I imagine the balance will be different once my kids are grown, but as of right now, it's them or Facebook. —R

For an expanded version of this interview, please visit rsoe.in/immordino-yang

GALLAGHER FIGHTS ON

After 20 years as dean, Karen Symms Gallagher returns to scholarship to investigate what keeps women out of the most powerful jobs in education.



Story:
Elaine Woo
Photo:
Brian Morri / 211 Photography

Karen Symms Gallagher was a doctoral student in education administration in the early 1980s when she began to consider a big step in her career.

She'd spent a decade climbing the K-12 district ladder in her native Washington state, North Carolina and Indiana, serving in positions that included middle school social studies teacher, PE teacher, women's basketball coach and assistant principal.

As the first member of her family to graduate from college, she had battled the odds and triumphed. So, she thought: Why not reach for the superintendency?

When she brought up the possibility with her PhD adviser at Purdue University, however, the response she received was discouraging. "She said, 'You have two problems,'" Gallagher recalled recently.

The first was that Gallagher wasn't a Hoosier, practically a prerequisite at that time as far as Indiana school boards were concerned. "You'd have to spend 20 years here," her adviser warned, before her candidacy would be taken seriously.

And the second obstacle?

"You're a woman."

The adviser suggested that higher education was more open to women in leadership, so Gallagher changed direction. She wound up becoming the first female dean at the University of Kansas School of Education in 1994 and repeated that first at USC Rossier in 2000. But she never lost sight of the challenges confronting qualified women aiming for top leadership roles.

Across the U.S., few women occupied the superintendency when Gallagher was in graduate school, and their numbers remain disproportionately low. Women make up 78 percent of teachers, 52 percent of principals and 78 percent of central office administrators but only 33 percent of the nation's superintendents, according to AASA, The School Superintendents Association.

The preponderance of women in USC Rossier's programs also underscores the disparity. Women make up 65 percent of the enrollment in the doctoral program in educational leadership. Across all of the school's master's and doctoral programs, 71 percent of the students are women.

With such a large talent pool, why are women still so poorly represented in the superintendent's office? What roadblocks do they face in the difficult climb to the most powerful job in K-12 education?

These are among the questions that will command Gallagher's attention in fall 2021 when she returns to the faculty in a senior research position. After two decades as

the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of USC Rossier, she says she looks forward to diving into research about the factors that hinder women's progress as education leaders, particularly in the K-12 arena.

← WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Before their annual breakfast, Dean Gallagher poses with women in the Dean's Superintendents Advisory Group at the ACSA Superintendents' Symposium.

Her interest in the subject echoes what has been the overarching theme of her deanship and the centerpiece of USC Rossier’s mission: advancing educational equity for historically marginalized groups, whose success is essential to a healthy democracy.

“What does it mean to be advancing educational equity when there’s such a strong mismatch between who is in our programs and who is getting into the superintendency or becoming community college chancellors?” Gallagher said in an interview not long after deciding that this would be her last term as dean. “I’m interested in finding out: Where is the disconnect and what can we do about it? How can we find out what’s causing it?”

“This is what I’d like to do, work on these issues as well as teach,” she said. “That’s where I can continue contributing to our mission.”

To honor the dean’s two decades of transformative leadership, the school has launched a \$100,000 campaign to endow the Karen Symms Gallagher Scholarship, which will support doctoral students—especially women—who have demonstrated their commitment to USC Rossier’s mission and seek to become leaders in education.

She said she hopes the scholarship will send a strong message to the recipients. “I hope they will feel it means they have something to live up to,” she said, “that they’ll feel we’ve recognized their talents and their need.”

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

As dean, Gallagher has driven equity and diversity to the top of USC Rossier’s agenda. These goals form the crux of the mission statement the school adopted in 2017: “Prepare leaders to achieve educational equity through practice, research and policy.”

Gallagher brought more women into senior leadership; five of the seven members of USC Rossier’s Executive Council are women. She also greatly diversified the faculty: Eleven of the 20 new faculty hired in the past three years are women, and 14 are individuals of color.

The enrollment also has grown more diverse, with students of color making up 49 percent of the entering class in 2018–19, a 12 percent in-

crease over 2003, the earliest year for which figures are available.

“Her focus on diversity, equity and inclusion will, I think, be her most important contribution to the school’s future,” Lawrence O. Picus, associate dean for research and faculty affairs, said of Gallagher.

When she arrived at USC Rossier 20 years ago, morale was low, and the school was rumored to be in danger of closing. It had just undergone a scathing academic program review, which cited a lack of nationally known researchers and an ill-defined mission.

“One of the biggest criticisms at the time of the review was that we really weren’t known for anything distinctive. Everyone [on the faculty] was doing their own thing, none of it very well,” said Professor Emeritus of Education Robert Rueda, who taught at USC Rossier for 30 years.

“That began to change at the start of Dean Gallagher’s tenure.”

Gallagher embraced the academic review as a blueprint for change.

Her first order of business was bringing a seesawing budget under control through a series of austerities. (She has demonstrated fiscal responsibility every year since—not only balancing the school’s budget but increasing it by \$12 million to \$14 million a year, Picus noted.) Then, she convened key faculty, staff, students and alumni in a three-day retreat to build consensus on new directions. “We were going to tear everything down and start over. Which we did,” Rueda said. “It was an intentional starting point to create something different.”

The first major effort was to redesign the doctoral programs so that each had a distinct purpose. The PhD program was scaled down and geared to students who desired careers as scholars. The EdD became the flagship program, aimed at producing research-savvy practitioners who wanted to lead school systems.

The new approach, unveiled in 2005, earned praise from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a national model for education schools. Its success was a turning point for USC Rossier, “a key factor in changing the nature of the school,” according to Myron Dembo, a professor emeritus of educational psychology who co-chaired the redesign effort with former Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Stuart Gothold EdD ’74.

“Karen,” Dembo said, “has to be credited with moving the school into a new era.”

The successful overhaul of the doctoral programs was the first of several groundbreaking initiatives in the Gallagher era.

The dean ushered the school into the digital age with the launch of the first fully online master of arts in teaching program in a major U.S. research university; it now enrolls more students than the school’s traditional MAT program.

Next, she led the school in a bold experiment to operationalize USC Rossier’s mission by creating successful schools in historically marginalized neighborhoods. The Ednovate network of public charter high schools, which serves predominantly low-income Latino/Latina and African American students, has achieved a 100 percent graduation and college acceptance rate for each of the five graduating classes since 2016.

“In the world of higher education, you can get stuck sometimes in a level of abstraction and theory. Sometimes it can be hard to innovate and try new things. Karen is not afraid of that at all,” said Benjamin Riley, founder and executive director of Deans for Impact, an alliance of education deans working to improve teacher preparation programs of which Gallagher is a founding member. “She’s a doer.”

“WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY WHEN THERE’S SUCH A STRONG MISMATCH BETWEEN WHO IS IN OUR PROGRAMS AND WHO IS GETTING INTO THE SUPERINTENDENCY?”

— Karen Symms Gallagher, Dean

Under Gallagher, USC Rossier has risen in national prominence. For the past four years, it has ranked in the nation’s top 15 graduate schools of education, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The magazine has also rated USC Rossier No. 1 in research dollars per faculty.

At the same time, the school has continued its proud history of supplying California school districts with superintendents. Currently, 75 of the state’s nearly 1,000 superintendents are Trojans. Of those 75, almost half—33—are women.

Although exact figures are not available, about 42 percent of 855 California districts surveyed by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) are led by women. That’s higher than the national average of 33 percent but too low considering the prevalence of women in the classroom and administrative ranks.

Five years ago, Gallagher began hosting a breakfast at ACSA’s annual Superintendents’ Symposium for women in the Dean’s Superintendents Advisory Group (DSAG). Founded in the early 1980s as a support group for USC Rossier, DSAG was dominated by male superintendents, including many who were retired.

“Karen noticed that women were in the minority and wondered what she could do to elevate their voice and be a stronger influence in that group,” said Professor of Clinical Education Maria Ott, who led the Rowland Unified School District and Little Lake City School District before joining USC Rossier in 2012.

At the DSAG women’s breakfasts, the dean invites attendees to share the challenges they have faced in climbing the administrative ladder. She particularly remembers the story one graduate told about her interview with a school board as a candidate for the superintendent’s job.

“Many of the questions directed at her were about her husband,” Gallagher recounted. “Did her husband approve of her going after this job? How did her husband feel about relocating?”

Ironically, the head of the board was a woman, and she was the one asking those questions.

“Our graduate said, ‘I don’t want the job if that’s what they’re saying to me.’ So school boards are obviously a big barrier to women seeking to move up.”

SURMOUNTING BARRIERS

Gallagher is passionate about identifying barriers and the strategies to surmount them. When she rejoins the faculty in 2021, she hopes to establish a research center devoted to studying the issues affecting women in pursuit of leadership roles, not only in K–12 systems but also across the education spectrum.

In higher education, for instance, gender disparity in leadership is also problematic. About 30 percent of college presidents are women, despite more women than men having served as an interim president, earned advanced degrees and participated in formal leadership development opportunities, according to the American Council on Education.

“The issue is not about women getting ready,” Gallagher said. “They’re ready.”

The “disconnect” between who’s in the pipeline and who reaches the top jobs is not limited to USC Rossier. Nationally, women received nearly 70 percent of education doctorates in 2017–18. In fact, women have earned more than 50 percent of all doctorates for 10 straight years.

Nor do women lack the desire to lead.

In a 2005 study by Margaret Grogan and C. Cryss Brunner, 40 percent of women in central office administration reported that they aspired to the superintendency; 74 percent had the superintendent credential or were working toward it. In a 2010 follow-up, Brunner and Yong-Lyun Kim found that nearly all female central office administrators who aspired to the superintendency had their credentials.

Family obligations are commonly thought to be a factor in the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency, but researchers are finding this isn’t the case.

Using responses from more than 700 female superintendents who participated in the American Association of School Administrators’ 2007 National Study of Women Superintendents and Central Office Administrators, Brunner and Kim reported on the top four reasons female administrators didn’t aspire to the superintendency: 1) They were satisfied with their current positions and didn’t want to change jobs; 2) The politics of the superintendent’s job didn’t appeal to them; 3) The superintendent’s job was too stressful; and 4) The salary wasn’t commensurate with the responsibilities.

As Brunner and Kim noted, all four of these reasons could easily be cited by men. Only 11 percent of the respondents in the AASA survey cited family demands as an impediment.

Another study that Brunner co-led found that 35 percent of female superintendents had raised children under the age of 20 while they were in the position; 32 percent of the women raised children who were 15 or younger.

If formal preparation, ambition and family concerns are not holding women back, then what is?

Gallagher is especially interested in investigating “structural barriers” to women’s progress—where the pipeline breaks down.

Studies of the career paths that lead to the superintendent’s office show stark differences depending on gender. In their 2010 study, Brunner and Kim offered side-by-side charts that were startling in just how different women’s journeys are compared to those of men.

For men, the rise to the top is quite linear and simple, leading from the classroom to coaching to principal, with a stint as assistant or associate superintendent before landing at the top.

For women, the path is neither simple nor straightforward. Instead, as Brunner and Kim illustrated, it zigs and zags, with more stops on the journey (see chart on page 24).

Gallagher notes that for men, moving from the classroom to coaching is a crucial step: Brunner and Kim found that 63 percent of male superintendents began their ascent as coaches. Among female superintendents, only 16 percent had been coaches.

The dean can attest to the significance of the position. Early in her career, she was asked to coach basketball for middle-school girls.

Four Terms, Four Questions

What was the most memorable USC football game you attended?

It would have to be the “Bush Push” in 2005. It appeared that we had lost. But then it was reported that Reggie Bush pushed Matt Leinart into the end zone. And we indeed did win. That’s when I knew, we’re really Trojans!

What do you remember about your first day as dean of USC Rossier?

The drive down the 110. I had left early because I didn’t know how long it was going to take to get here. I had thoughts like, “I guess we’re not in Kansas anymore!”

What do you consider as one of your greatest achievements as dean?

I would say the fact that 20 years later, we’ve had differences on how to do things, but not about what we value. The Cultural Values Assessment made this clear: We value equity, diversity and inclusion. That’s so remarkable compared to where we were when I came in. We don’t just talk about these values now. We live them.

In hindsight, what advice would you give to your younger self taking on this role?

I would say to my younger self: You know what you want to do, so you ought to do it. And say it out loud.

Paths to the Superintendency: Women vs. Men

This chart compares men's and women's most typical paths to U.S. superintendency. While men's mobility is concentrated in line positions, women's paths include both line and staff roles. Although men's path to the superintendency is simpler, Brunner and Kim argue that this doesn't necessarily mean that they are more prepared than women, whose paths typically include more variation and focus on curriculum and teaching.



“THE ISSUE IS NOT ABOUT WOMEN GETTING READY. THEY’RE READY.”

— Karen Symms Gallagher, Dean

“I enjoyed bringing young women together to learn to compete as a team,” she said. “And I also discovered that being a coach really impressed people. I learned that many of the qualities desired in superintendents are attributed to you if you are a coach, such as the ability to motivate others to work at high levels, delegate authority and being willing to be judged publicly by others about your performance. People assumed I was an experienced leader.”

Because many women begin their careers in elementary schools, they don’t have access to coaching positions. The same goes for assistant principalships, which, like coaching jobs, are not common at the elementary level.

Another notable difference in men’s and women’s trajectories is that men tend to go after line positions—those with responsibility for achieving an organization’s major goals—while women are more likely to take staff positions, which typically are support and advisory roles. “We need more research to find out why so many women administrators choose the staff route,” Gallagher said. “Is this route a personal choice, or perhaps the only choice?”

Given Gallagher’s passion for the subject of women in educational leadership and her record on advancing equity and diversity at USC Rossier, “I hope she will facilitate conversations on this topic and create a research center,” Ott said. “The school’s culture attracts women seeking to make an impact as leaders in their various fields. The dean seeded this culture, nurtured it and defended it to ensure that its roots would grow deep.”

THE NEXT CHAPTER

A year has passed since Gallagher began wrestling with the decision about whether to pursue a fifth term as dean. Her family, who too often had to take a back seat to her work, was excited by the prospect of spending more time with her. “My son said, ‘Think about having time to be a grandmother,’” Gallagher recalled.

She was also swayed by an article in *The Atlantic* by Arthur C. Brooks that was ominously titled “Your Professional Decline Is Coming (Much) Sooner Than You Think.”

In the piece, Brooks described the experiences of high achievers, including athletes, artists and academics, noting the average age at which they peaked and faltered. Gallagher thought of people she has known who “stayed too long” in their jobs and concluded that she didn’t want to be one of them.

And she was inspired by Brooks’ advice for finding late-life happiness: Avoid the temptation to keep accumulating accomplishments—running one more marathon, writing one more book, earning another million dollars—but focus instead on cultivating the most meaningful personal virtues. “As we grow older,” Brooks wrote, “we shouldn’t acquire more, but rather strip things away to find our true selves—and thus, peace.”

For Gallagher, that odyssey means taking a sabbatical year to adjust to the rhythms of her next phase, then plunging back into teaching and research.

“I’m very proud of my career,” she said. “But everybody gets to the point where you should go try to do another thing.”

She intends to give her successor the space to create new directions for the school. But, she adds, “I’m not done making a difference in education. I think I can do it in other ways.” —R

← WOMEN VS. MEN

Adapted from “Are Women Prepared to Be School Superintendents? An Essay on the Myths and Misunderstandings.” Brunner, C. Cryss; Kim, Yong-Lyun, *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*.

The Karen Symms Gallagher Endowed Scholarship Fund

THE KAREN SYMMS GALLAGHER Endowed Scholarship will support doctoral students—especially women—who have demonstrated their commitment to USC Rossier’s mission and aspire to a leadership position.

“When we asked the dean what was near and dear to her heart, she said it was ‘building a pipeline to advance women into leadership positions,’” said Rachel Beal, USC Rossier director of major gifts. “This scholarship reflects her passion.”

The school aims to raise at least \$100,000 to establish the scholarship fund.

Gifts to the Karen Symms Gallagher Endowed Scholarship can be made online at rossier.usc.edu/giving or by check payable to the University of Southern California and mailed to: University of Southern California, Rossier School of Education, 1149 S. Hill St., Suite 575, Los Angeles, CA 90015.

During a lesson in January exploring the principles of Athenian democracy, Rachel Davey, a teacher at City Heights Preparatory Charter School in San Diego, explained to her sixth-grade class the meaning of the word “democracy.” The word comes from two Greek words, she said: demos, meaning “the people,” and kratia meaning “power or rule.”

Rule by the people.

The students—a group overwhelmingly made up of refugees—took in her words. Some nodded. Others scribbled details on their sticky notes and whispered in their partners’ ears.

The students in Davey’s class work at shared tables. In fact, you won’t find individual desks arranged in neat rows anywhere within City Heights Prep. The classrooms are designed to foster collaboration and facilitate discussions among students.

And when a Socratic seminar is on the agenda, as it was in Davey’s class on Jan. 21, all of these tables are pushed into the center of the room. For these text-based discussions, the students gather round the single, central table, seated in two rows. The inner row is made up of the “pilots,” the speakers during the seminar. Behind them, in the outer row, are the “co-pilots,” who listen closely to the discussion. They take notes and quietly pass back their questions and observations about the subject at hand to the pilots.

City Heights Prep, directed by Elias Vargas EdD ’17, uses Socratic seminars in all of its levels, grades 6 through 12.

Some students, like senior Abdirizack, prefer to be a pilot. “It makes you feel like you’re more engaged and involved in the process,” he said. Abdirizack, a Somali Bantu refugee born in Kenya, has been at City Heights Prep for seven years.

Others, like junior Hinda, an Ethiopian refugee, would rather be the co-pilot. “Sometimes I’m too scared to say something. I feel like it might be wrong,” she said. “But if I have someone [to work with], I write it down and pass it to her and she [can] agree with me if it’s a good idea.”

Socratic seminars are a sort of representative democracy in miniature. The pilots are the voice, the co-pilots the body politic. Each role is valued equally: Listening is just as important as speaking.

There are no right or wrong answers in

Socratic seminars. Differing opinions are encouraged, and some students are instructed to gather and present evidence for a viewpoint with which they don’t personally agree. Unlike traditional debate teams, where students memorize information and recite it at speeds

even if current policies and laws do not align with this vow.

But within the walls of this small charter school in City Heights, a community on the east side of San Diego, the promise spoken by Lazarus’ “Mother of Exiles” is kept. The student body at City Heights Prep is roughly 85 percent refugee. More than 30 languages are spoken among the 150 pupils, and students interact freely with one another. Bullying is largely absent, and the annual potluck day where students bring dishes from their native countries is one of their favorite events of the year.

Bereket, a junior whose family emigrated from Ethiopia as refugees, said, this “tight-knit [community] is different from traditional schools,” and it has been life-changing for him. He has many groups of friends from a variety of backgrounds, and when new students arrive, they often fit in immediately.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY has historically welcomed refugees, and for many, City Heights has become a haven. Data compiled from the 2000 census estimates that City Heights’ population comprises residents from more than 60 countries, including Vietnam, Syria, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Iraq, Ethiopia, Somalia, Laos, Mexico and Guatemala. This population is reflected at the school—and with it comes challenges, but also a cultural richness.

Most students who find their way to City Heights Prep initially hear about the school via word of mouth—admission is free and open to all. When students arrive, many are learning English, and many come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds or from experiences of war. Students have what Vargas describes as “interrupted education.” One group of teenage boys from Syria had spent months in a refugee camp before finding their way to City Heights Prep. During their time at the camp, Vargas said, the only formal schooling the boys received was an hour of Arabic each day.

When Vargas was appointed director in fall 2018, the school was housed in a church, and only a small percentage of students were

**DEMOCRACY
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indecipherable to the average ear (see page 31), the Socratic seminar encourages engagement from all students in the discussion—both those speaking and those listening.

But before a class can even begin to participate in a Socratic seminar, it’s essential for students to consider their peers’ voices as “something they want to hear,” Davey explained. Without this environment of mutual respect, where everyone’s voice matters, the Socratic seminar, like democracy, will not function properly.

IN EMMA LAZARUS’ famous poem, “The New Colossus,” her “Mother of Exiles” stands at “sea-washed, sunset gates,” and welcomes tired, poor and huddled masses “yearning to breathe free.” These words, inscribed on a bronze plaque on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty—one of the most recognizable visual icons of Western democracy—have long served as America’s promise to immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees,

← **OUT OF MANY,
ONE**

Students at City Heights Prep socialize in the school’s large common area during lunch.

How a San Diego school of refugees led by a

DEMONSTRATING DEMOCRACY

Rossier alum is cultivating civic engagement

Story:
Kianoosh Hashemzadeh

Photos:
Rebecca Aranda

meeting state standards. Since then, Vargas has overseen the relocation of the school and hired new staff—including a full-time counselor to address students’ academic and emotional needs—and test scores have increased significantly.

In 2016–17, 13.2 percent of City Heights Prep students met California’s standards for English language arts and only 8.2 percent for math. By 2018–19, those numbers had risen to 38.5 percent and 20.8 percent, respectively.

Impressive, to say the least.

Although Vargas is proud of this metric (after all, test scores are an unavoidable circumstance of the current education system and the way California measures a school’s success), he is adamant that he is not just concerned with graduating students with high test scores. Just as essential, he said, is graduating good citizens

who appreciate diversity and will “embrace and develop their talents to engage with the world.”

WHEN VARGAS WAS CONSIDERING taking on the role of director of City Heights Prep, he was specifically drawn to working with this unique population of students. As he weighed options on how the school’s curriculum should be structured, he decided to embrace and implement the principles of AVID—Advancement Via Individual Determination. The San Diego-based nonprofit offers a suite of resources—from professional development for educators to lesson plans and other classroom activities—that are focused on closing the opportunity gap. The Socratic seminar is one such classroom activity, and it’s an exemplar

of how an AVID school approaches its goal of preparing students for life after they graduate. It encourages students to communicate positively, listen actively and take focused notes. It asks students to think outside the textbook and engage in their own inquiry. It asks them to see themselves in what they are studying.

Vargas finds the AVID approach especially useful for underrepresented students and English-language learners. And there’s data to support this. According to figures from the National Student Clearinghouse, 2016–2018, and AVID Senior Data Collection, 2010–2012, first-generation and low-income students who graduate from high schools where AVID is a part of curriculum are four times more likely than their peers to graduate from college within six years.

The ability to apply an approach like AVID to an entire school was one reason that Vargas was attracted to the position. Before City Heights Prep, he had never worked in a charter school. He held a variety of roles—from basketball coach and social studies teacher to high school principal—in the El Rancho Unified School District in southeastern Los Angeles County. But while City Heights Prep does not have all the resources that come along with a large school district—things like IT and HR departments—the school is able to make decisions swiftly and institute changes to benefit students.

OUTGOING. EMPOWERING. Progressive. Serious. Knowledgeable. Passionate. These are some of the words that Assistant Director Mrs. Mohammed—who came to the U.S. as a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan—and school counselor Amanda Graceffa used to describe Vargas. Michael Watts, board chair of City Heights Prep and a first-generation college student himself—describes Vargas as “a pro” and “a great leader.” When Watts and the rest of the search committee were evaluating candidates to lead the school, they were “looking for someone who could apply really sound educational principles and orthodoxy to a very diverse [student body]” and could take the school to the next level. Vargas fit the bill. He also encourages professional development and gives his staff the space to be creative and incorporate new ideas.

When speaking of his philosophy of education, Vargas refers to a famous Albert Einstein



THE SOCRATIC SEMINAR

1 Students are arranged around a central table. Pilots, who lead discussion, sit at the table and their co-pilots sit directly behind them, passing notes with their own questions and observations.

2 Sixth graders in Ms. Davey’s class discuss the meaning of democracy.



Carrying the Torch

SO, WHEN ARE WE GOING TO GO FOR THE DOCTORATE? A former classmate and friend of Elias Vargas EdD ’17 posed this question to him regularly, and it eventually led him to the USC Rossier School of Education. After attending an informational session, he soon realized that the school’s Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership program was an excellent fit for him. He felt that the USC Rossier faculty had “the right balance of practitioners and researchers.”

His dissertation focused on English learners in urban schools in California. Rudy Castruita, professor of clinical education at USC Rossier and the Irving R. and Virginia Archer Melbo Chair in Education Administration, served as the chair of his dissertation committee. Castruita, Vargas said, “both pushed and praised me.” The two share a special bond and keep in touch. “Elias is one of my top doctoral students that I’ve had over the years at Rossier,” Castruita said, [and] “he will really impact the educational arena in the future because of his leadership, his passion and because he



wants to make a difference in the lives of many, many students.”

Vargas’ experience as a student at USC Rossier—and, in particular, as a recipient of the Dean’s Superintendents Advisory Group scholarship—encouraged him to stand up for underrepresented students and be “that voice at the table” to empower communities and transform systems and the culture of institutions. He’s taken this mindset to City Heights Prep, where he intends to be “one of the many [who] carry the torch for USC Rossier’s mission and vision.”

↑ CITIZEN SCHOLAR

School director Elias Vargas EdD ’17 at City Heights Prep Charter School in San Diego, Calif.

SOCRATIC SEMINARS ARE A SORT OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN MINIATURE. THE PILOTS ARE THE VOICE, THE CO-PILOTS ARE THE BODY POLITIC.

quote: “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” Vargas believes exposure to possible career paths—from app developer to attorney—can help students find a calling they will excel at and enjoy.

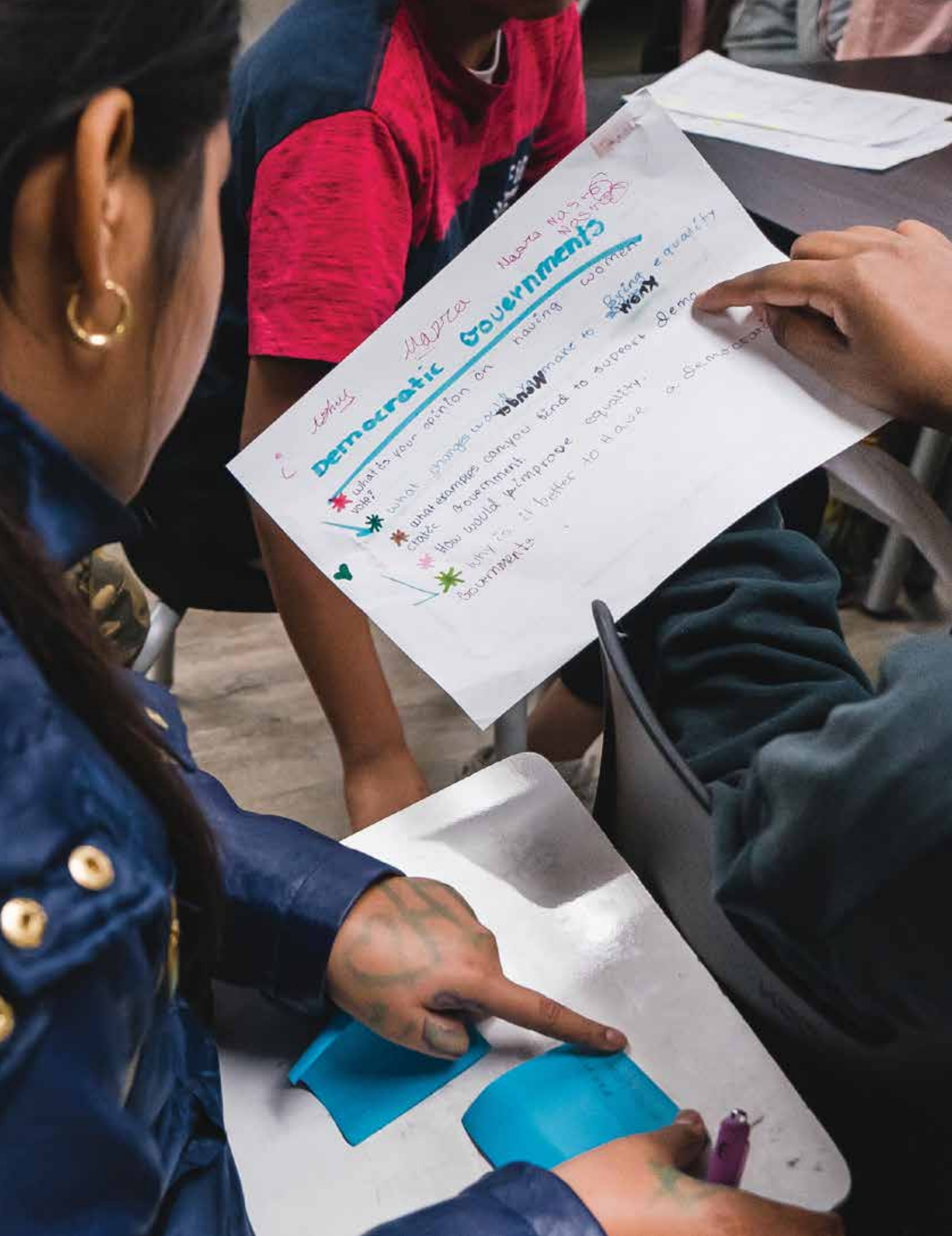
Through a grant from the nonprofit Project Lead the Way, the school offers multiple PLTW courses including, Computer Science for Innovators and App Creators, which shows students who love playing games on their phone what it might be like to develop them instead. Through courses like this one, students are exposed to what a career path could entail. And while some might learn they love creating apps as much as playing on them, others will realize this is not the right path for them.

This exposure, Vargas believes, is essential in helping students form their identities—not only for their own personal fulfillment, but also so they can contribute positively to their communities.

JON MORRIS, a lawyer-turned-educator at City Heights Prep who teaches 11th- and 12th-grade courses like Language of Law and Public Policy, says education should help “prepare students who can engage in a democracy.” But what are the tools required for engaging in democracy?

If a populace is to elect officials to represent them—from school board members to the president of the United States—it’s important to be equipped with the ability to think critically about issues and to engage in deliberation with fellow citizens.

Morris asked students to prepare legal memos that examined President Donald Trump’s now-infamous phone call with



What Happened to School Debate Teams?

ELIAS VARGAS EdD '17 IS NOT JUST CONCERNED WITH GRADUATING STUDENTS WITH HIGH TEST SCORES. JUST AS ESSENTIAL, HE SAID, IS GRADUATING GOOD CITIZENS WHO APPRECIATE DIVERSITY AND WILL “EMBRACE AND DEVELOP THEIR TALENTS TO ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The students worked in groups of three to examine the call and make a determination on whether Trump violated federal law. Hinda explained, “We were studying our leader doing something he shouldn’t.” She enjoyed the project.

Many of the students come from nations where civil wars rage, and where democracy either doesn’t exist or is in tatters.

Some have witnessed its unraveling.

Kun, a senior who said “being highly informed” is essential to being a good citizen, is originally from Cambodia. After years of civil war and turmoil, the nation’s fragile democracy is threatened, despite international intervention. Media freedom—to name just one essential ingredient to a functioning democracy—has been “further curtailed,” a 2019 Human Rights Watch report found.

Another assignment asked students to select a law they believe to be unjust or one they would like to see enacted, and write a

← HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE EQUALITY?

Two sixth graders at City Heights Prep compare notes during a Socratic seminar.

paper asserting their position. Topics ranged from overturning the law forbidding people from feeding homeless individuals to banning single-use plastic bags.

The project, however, will not end with their papers. The students, again working in teams, will identify and reach out to organizations sympathetic to their cause. They’ll then contact their local representatives and advocate for seeing the legislation overturned or rewritten.

The students at City Heights Prep are learning that democracy is ultimately a practice. It requires engaged citizens to participate and help shape the rules that govern them. It is not static. As the needs of the people who make up the democracy change, so must the democracy that represents them.

AS I SAID GOODBYE to the students at City Heights Prep, Bereket and the other upperclassmen I spoke with asked if I could “give a shout-out” to Mr. Chalabi, the school’s meals and facilities coordinator. Mr. Chalabi, Bereket said, does so much for the students: He prepares their meals, fixes anything that’s broken, cleans the school and coaches after-school soccer. The students recognized and appreciated his essential role at the school. Democracy requires respect and equity to flourish, and the students at City Heights Prep understand these fundamental principles—perhaps because they know what it means to live without them. —R

THESE DAYS, IF YOU ATTEND a high school or collegiate debate competition, chances are you might not be able to understand what the competitors are saying. In Policy Debates—a competition in which two sides advocate for or against U.S. policy changes—each side is judged on the ability to present as much evidence as possible in a short timeframe. This speed reading, dubbed “spreading,” leads competitors to recite their arguments at speeds around 350 words per minute, resulting in debates that are comprehensible only to a few.

Debates are meant to be discussions. The spirit of this exchange of ideas is at the heart of democracy, but how can students engage in meaningful debate if the words they are responding to are being spoken at such an unnatural speed?

A SNEAKERHEAD ON A MISSION

GOLD NIKES ARE HIS DRAW, BUT GERREL SAYLES' GOAL IS COLLEGE ATTENDANCE.



← FROM ADVISEE TO ADVISER

Gerrel Sayles is a first-year adviser in the USC College Advising Corps at Jordan High School.

Story:
Diane
Krieger
Photos:
Josh Krause /
211Photography

Gerrel Sayles' metallic-gold Nikes catch the sunlight as he walks the path to the career center at David Starr Jordan High School in Long Beach, Calif.

Fancy footwear is more than a fashion statement to Sayles. It's a tool (bait, really) for funneling low-income, first-generation, underrepresented students into the college pipeline.

"A lot of my students wear nice shoes," explains Sayles, an avowed sneakerhead. "We talk about shoes, then start talking about other things. It opens up. I might see them on campus and say, 'Hey, are you going to get those new Air Jordans?' And they may say, 'I don't know, I spent a lot of money over Christmas.' Then we start talking about financial aid."

Sayles, 22, is a first-year adviser in the USC College Advising Corps (CAC).

Based in USC Rossier's Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice (CERPP), the program addresses head-on the dearth of college-guidance services for students in the region's most underserved schools. Now in its seventh year at USC, CAC places passionate, high-quality college advisers directly in the schools.

"It is not only the work they do but they themselves who give us great hope for the future," CERPP Executive Director Jerry Lucido says of corps advisers like Sayles. By devoting two years of their lives to CAC, they act out an "abiding belief in education and equity," he says.

Corps advisers, who are USC employees, receive an entry-level salary plus full employee benefits. CAC Program Director Ara Arzumianian calls it a hybrid service-learning and career-building experience. When Sayles—who graduated from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), last May—finishes his two-year stint, he will have racked up hundreds of hours in the booming college advising and youth-development field by overseeing the college-access process for about 1,000 students.

Recruited straight out of college, incoming advisers enter a four-week summer bootcamp where they're immersed in the technical aspects of college research, applications, financial aid and enrollment. They'll master the soft skills that work best with underserved youths and their parents, teachers and school administrators. And they'll learn to track the youths' progress and analyze results.

"I tell them when they're getting started that this is going to be one of the most challenging but also most rewarding and fun experiences of their lives," Arzumianian says. "They usually tell me by the end of two years that this was a very accurate description."

CAC's recruitment process is highly selective. Last March, nearly 400 candidates interviewed for just 25 first-year corps adviser openings.

Sayles was one of the select few to make the cut.

INSIDE THE CAREER CENTER, Sayles is softly streaming hip-hop through the Bluetooth speaker on his desk. It's one of two desks facing rows of computer workstations where students dutifully create logins for college admissions portals, compose personal statements and fill out financial aid forms.

The other front desk belongs to second-year corps adviser Stacy Anguiano, a Compton native who graduated from Cal State Northridge in 2018. This is Anguiano's third year at Jordan High. As a senior majoring in sociology with a minor in child development, she'd worked there part time as a college adviser for Educational Talent Search (ETS). But the cohort-style program capped her caseload at 60 students and came with restrictions she found troubling.

"I didn't like the limitation of not being able to work with undocumented students because ETS is a federally funded program," she says. "I wanted to try something where I can work with all students, and USC CAC allowed me to do that."

Standing nearby, Sayles assists Mayra, who is creating a portal account on the Long Beach City College site. He guides her through the steps, checking the school code on his cellphone.

Imani waits his turn. He has already finished his college apps and financial aid forms. He's hanging out at the career center because he has a free period, and Sayles agreed to help with his economics homework.

They share a passion for basketball. Sayles used to play varsity basketball at nearby Lakewood High School, and he participated in intramural, coed and open leagues throughout college at CSULB.

Imani is on the Jordan Panthers varsity team and has received nibbles from a recruiter at the University of Illinois. His college list also includes Tuskegee University, CSULB and several local community college "safety" schools.

IT'S NO ACCIDENT that corps advisers are chosen from recent college graduates—near-peers, in program lingo.

In Sayles' first week on the job, Jordan High security guards kept stopping to ask for his hall pass as he made his way to classroom presentations.

"I think it's a good thing that I look young because the students come and talk to me about random things. Sometimes I have to tell them, 'Hey, roll it in a little bit. Have a level of respect,'" he says.

As authentic role models, Sayles and Anguiano are living proof that a college education is attainable for their advisees—young people just like them.

College and career specialist Marquesa Lawrence-Wells is one of three Long Beach Unified School District staffers who work alongside the two corps advisers in Jordan High's career center. After 12 years on the job, Lawrence-Wells has seen the power of the near-peer formula.

"The kids become very attached. If Gerrel and Stacy are not here, they don't even want to talk to me," she says, only

RE:

Financial Aid Wars

“WE ARE CURRENTLY AT WAR with our students and parents on taking this matter seriously,” Gerrel Sayles and Stacy Anguiano wrote in a Jan. 16 email to Jordan High’s senior English teachers, asking them to “join the fight in pushing our students to complete their FAFSA or CA Dream Act.” The two CAC advisers planned a three-day blitzkrieg upon senior English classes, armed with presentations, flyers and letters to parents. They asked teachers to give class assignments and course credit related to completion of the forms. The battle plan culminated in a series of hands-on FAFSA workshops, including a Saturday session for working parents.

This shouldn’t be so hard. But it is.

By mid-January, only one-fifth of Jordan High seniors had completed their financial aid forms.

The need to reveal tax filings and Social

Security numbers is a tall hurdle, Sayles and Anguiano say, especially for undocumented parents. But also for parents who are citizens. Some worry that submitting the FAFSA will invite an IRS audit. Others harbor a general distrust for government.

“There are a lot of myths and misconceptions out there that we have to constantly work at dispelling,” says corps alumna Cynthia Le, who now works in USC’s Office of Financial Aid.

“All they need is their Social Security number, and the parents won’t give it to them,” says Marquesa Lawrence-Wells, a college and career specialist at Jordan High. “We don’t collect it anymore at school,” she explains, and minors can’t access it on their own. “If they try to go directly to the Social Security Administration, they need a parent’s signature.”

A generation from now, the students whom CAC advisers steer to college today will have children of their own who, hopefully, won’t need their services.

A TABLE BY THE WALL in the career center has two bins filled with more than 500 hanging folders—one for each graduating senior they’ve met with, arranged in alphabetical order. Inside each folder is their login information for every portal and their complete academic record. Sayles and Anguiano have succeeded in connecting with 94 percent of the school’s seniors. As of mid-January, 25 of Jordan’s 530 graduating seniors have failed to submit any college applications. The corps advisers visited their classrooms, connected



→ A NEAR-PEER GUIDE

Sayles helps students create logins for college admissions portals and fill out financial aid forms in the Career Center.

half-joking. “Their age counts. Their just having finished college counts. Stacy and Gerrel are first-generation, so they’re able to meet the students where they are—because nobody really understands the mental part of being a first-generation college student like they do.”

BORN AND RAISED in Long Beach, Sayles graduated from Lakewood High in 2015. His mom works in the cafeteria at nearby Jane Addams Elementary; his stepdad works on a maintenance crew for the City of Long Beach.

A successful student, Sayles was holding down a 3.25 GPA as a senior. Still, going to college seemed unimaginable. The aha moment came when he met Cynthia Le MEd ’19, Lakewood High’s first USC CAC adviser.

“She told me that college is not a dream, it’s a reality, and that I was eligible for lots of schools,” Sayles recalls. “After that, I would be there every morning, asking her, ‘What do I need to do? You need me to write a personal statement? How do I pay for this? Are there scholarships?’”

Le recognized that Sayles was exceptional. When she gave him feedback on his application essays, he came back the next day with revisions. Other students took weeks or months to return.

“She told me that college is not a dream, it’s a reality.”

—Gerrel Sayles, first-year adviser in the USC College Advising Corps

“He’d get to school earlier than me,” she recalls. “I would show up at my office, and Gerrel would be sitting outside waiting for me.” Soon he was bringing his friends.

The two stayed in touch while Sayles earned his bachelor’s degree in sociology. Then last spring, when Sayles reached out to ask about becoming a USC CAC adviser, Le put him in touch with program recruiters and gave him a glowing endorsement.

Now, he’s following in her footsteps.

USC CAC STARTED IN 2013 with three advisers. In just six years, the corps has grown to 44 advisers working full-time at 39 Title I schools across eight Los Angeles County districts: Alhambra, Compton, Downey, El Monte, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Lynwood and West Covina. Last year, they collectively held nearly 46,000 one-on-one meetings with seniors. Those interactions directly led to nearly 39,000 college applications filed and about 11,000 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) submissions.

More than 10,000 (from a pool of 16,000 seniors at the 39 partner schools) ended up submitting at least one college application and were accepted into at least one school.

According to the 2019 CAC impact report, seniors who met with a corps adviser were 18 percent more likely to apply to at least one college, 19 percent more likely to submit the FAFSA and 20 percent more likely to apply for scholarships.

Beyond the metrics of direct impact, corps advisers’ full-time campus presence has profound ripple effects.

They boost their school’s overall college-going culture. Last year, the 44 advisers organized 5,700 school visits by

college admission reps and arranged 1,000 college campus tours for their advisees. They regularly engage in parent education, host FAFSA workshops and build excitement around College Decision Day.

Despite its 88 percent graduation rate and “Best U.S. High School” ranking in *U.S. News & World Report*, Jordan High faces big hurdles. According to the School Accountability Report Card, 11 percent of its current students are homeless, and 20 percent are English learners. Only 48 percent of students meet the minimum admission requirements for California four-year colleges, and 87 percent are economically disadvantaged.

“With our kids, it’s not, ‘Here are the directions, now do it,’” Lawrence-Wells says. “It’s almost to the point of, ‘You deserve to go to college. You’re worth going to college!’ You have to sit next to them and convince them, even though they’re eligible.”

A 2016 SURVEY conducted by Phi Delta Kappa International asked how a hypothetical influx of funds would best be spent to improve public schools. Counselors came in dead last, with just 6 percent of the popular vote. Teachers, supplies, classes and extracurriculars, infrastructure and new schools were all deemed more important.

Meanwhile, the American School Counselor Association recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. The national average is 442:1. In California, it’s 644:1.

“We have a system of higher education that provides an outsized advantage to those with wealth,” says CERPP’s Lucido. “Students who are fortunate enough to attend well-resourced schools, have college-educated and experienced parents, and have sophisticated college counselors, have a dramatic leg up when it comes to attending and graduating from college. With 65 percent of new jobs in the economy requiring postsecondary education and with virtually all student growth coming from low-income, first-generation populations, our advising corps contributes directly to the future of our democracy.”

Seventy years ago, the Truman Commission Report called for massive expansion of postsecondary education opportunities with the goal of buttressing American democracy. Today, college access lies at the heart of a new movement to do the same.

A 2002 longitudinal survey showed that Hispanic students were much less likely to attend college than other groups. Since then, their participation level has improved dramatically. As a predicted college enrollment crisis approaches, a growing percentage of high-school graduates will be Hispanic. At Jordan, they make up 77 percent of the student body.

The downstream effects of sending first-gen students to college are powerful. Children of college graduates are far more likely to pursue postsecondary education and aim for top schools, *Harvard Business Review* director Justin Fox notes in a Bloomberg column.



with their teachers and school counselors, reached out by email and phone. To no avail.

Still, should any of the stragglers wander in, there's a binder with their academic records standing by.

Corps advisers track each student interaction through a proprietary database. They keep careful records of each college application completed, each acceptance, rejection or waitlist received. They monitor progress on financial aid form status. They keep charts of students organized by their membership in learning communities and cross-tabulated by their GPAs, college choices and admission status. They share these records with academic counselors to keep them in the loop.

It's labor-intensive but important work.

Once advisees leave high school, CAC continues to track their college enrollment, persistence and graduation. The data is integrated with information from the National Student Clearinghouse and other publicly available data sources, vetted by independent auditors and shared with all CAC partner institutions.

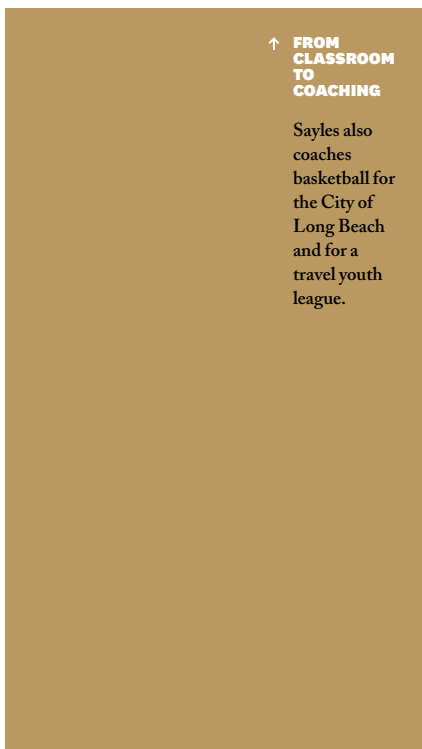
USC CAC belongs to a network of 29 universities that

partner with the nonprofit College Advising Corps. Founded in 2005 and headquartered at the University of Virginia, the umbrella organization provides seed grants covering 40 percent of partners' program costs, with school districts providing the balance. The lion's share—79 percent—goes to paying advisers' wages.

Collectively, the 29 programs reached 200,000 students last year at 782 high schools in 17 states. The goal is to reach 1 million students by 2025, backed by a \$20 million gift from philanthropist Connie Ballmer and her husband, former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer.

AS THE PROGRAM builds steam, an alumni network is evolving.

A large number of corps advisers (42 percent) go on to graduate school—several at USC Rossier—during or immediately after their two-year stint. As a result, many now work at colleges where current corps advisers are trying to place their students. Cynthia Le is just one of 11 corps alumni employed at USC. Others are now insiders across nine Los



FEATURE

Angeles-area community colleges, four Cal State campuses and an array of other postsecondary institutions.

The connections they form go deep and cross cohorts.

"We train each other, like I trained Gerrel," says Anguiano. "We all support each other. When one of us gets into grad school, we all say, 'Congratulations!' If someone gets engaged, we all celebrate. It's not just a job. It feels like family."

Corps alumni like Le, who is now assistant director of financial aid at USC, regularly return as expert presenters at the summer bootcamp and lead special workshops held every month at USC Rossier throughout the year. Le's niche is the College Scholarship Services Profile and appeals. Another corps alum, now based at Scripps College, leads the FAFSA training.

"The corps helped me realize that I want to work in higher education," says Le. "It's what inspired me to pursue my master's. I pretty much owe my current career to being a USC CAC adviser."

THE WORK BRINGS ITS SHARE of disappointments. For Anguiano, it was an advisee last year who'd jumped through every hoop and was admitted to Cal State Dominguez Hills, only to learn in the summer that his admission had been rescinded. He'd called her, distraught. It turned out he'd allowed his spring semester grade in an art class to drop to a D.

"He didn't think that counted," she says with a sigh. As a result, he failed to meet his college admissions requirement for visual/performing arts.

That student ended up at community college, but he's resolved to transfer to a Cal State campus, he tells Anguiano. She's keeping her fingers crossed.

Sometimes the letdown is no one's fault.

A grim-faced young man in a pale-blue hoodie walks into the career center. He makes eye contact with his corps adviser.

"How's the rehab going?" Sayles asks.

Anthony shrugs.

Last summer, as a rising senior, Anthony was riding high. Named team captain of the Panthers football team, he was expected to line up at quarterback, receiver, running back, safety and special teams.

Instead, a knee injury sidelined him.

Jordan High's star athlete is also an academic star, holding down a 3.5 GPA. He was aggressively being recruited by colleges.

"Until I got injured," he mutters, dejected. Holding out his phone, Anthony scrolls through a list of 20 NCAA recruiters who have stopped calling.

He will be cleared to play again in April.

LOOKING BEYOND THE DISAPPOINTMENTS, Sayles, Anguiano and Le take comfort in a shared passion for working with youths.

"I love engaging with the students," says Sayles. "I love when they come to me to ask for help." Though his career

Seniors who met with a corps adviser were 18 percent more likely to apply to at least one college.

goals aren't fully formed, Sayles knows this much: "I don't see myself doing anything that's not connected with youth. That is my passion and my purpose. Not just high school age, but 5 years and up."

After a day of college advising, he moonlights as a basketball coach for the City of Long Beach's rec program and volunteers with a travel youth league.

Le also volunteers in her spare time. She first became a mentor with the Pullias Center for Higher Education's Increasing Access via Mentoring (I AM) program at USC Rossier back when she was a corps adviser at Lakewood High. She continues to mentor a dozen kids through the Pullias Center through the Pullias I AM college-transition program.

Anguiano is applying to graduate programs in education counseling. As she looks ahead to leaving Jordan High School, she is filled with nostalgia.

"I definitely will miss this job. I love coming to work every day," she says. "Seeing the students, just them saying 'good morning.' Or when they get accepted into schools they didn't think they had potential for—that just brightens my day."

In the fall, Anguiano will be gone and Sayles will be the senior corps adviser at Jordan High, which comes with more responsibilities. He'll need to bring his first-year corps partner up to speed and step up as the point-person for new programs and collaborations with teachers and the administration.

BACK IN THE CAREER CENTER, the computer terminals are filling up. Two students enter holding clusters of blue-and-silver helium balloons.

"Happy birthday!" Sayles greets them brightly.

Two Army recruiters dressed in camouflage come in, carrying pizza boxes. Sayles and Anguiano eat their slices at their desks.

"Gerrel and I have a really hard time taking lunch," Anguiano admits, "because we know if we said, 'Come back, we're closed,' we might not see that student again for a month."

For breaks, she and Sayles take turns retreating to the teachers' lounge to clear their heads.

As the lunchtime crowd subsides, Sayles walks across the room, his golden Nikes two bright spots on the carpet.

His face lights up as an advisee shows him a recent ceramics project.

"Oh, man. That's amazing! You make that?" Sayles asks.

It's a colorful, brightly glazed sculpture of a high-top sneaker.

"Can I have it?" Sayles asks jokingly.

Bashful, the student shakes his head and stows the ceramic shoe in his backpack.

A sneakerhead on a mission, Sayles grins as he makes his way back to his desk. —R

REVITALIZING SHARED GOVERNANCE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

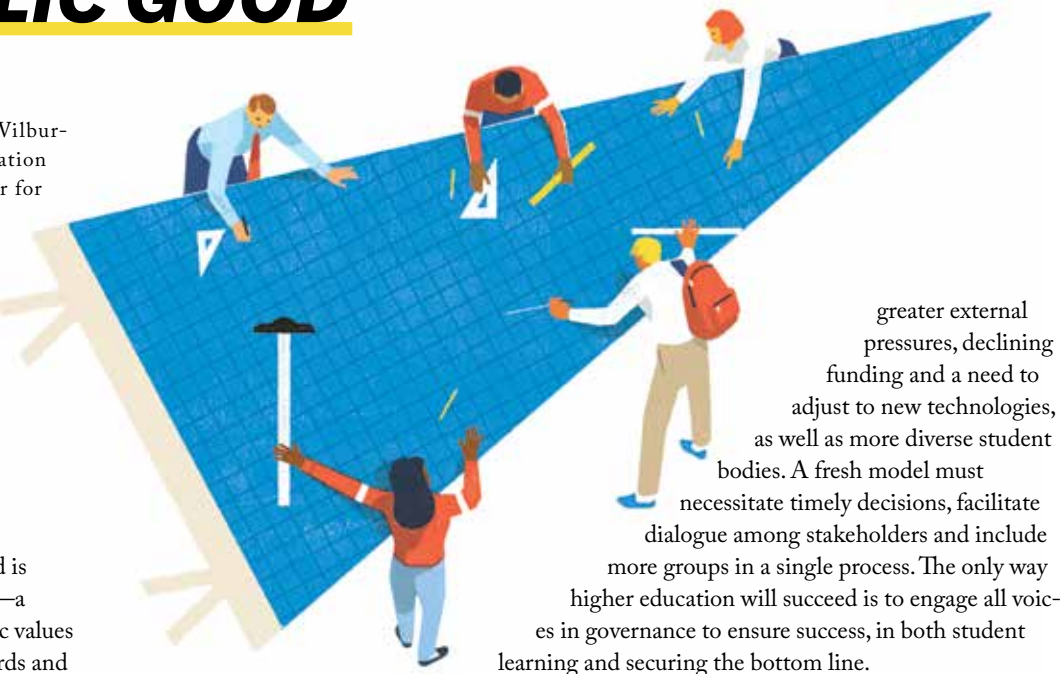
By **Adrianna Kezar**
Dean's Professor of Leadership, Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education

OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS, shared governance in higher education has been replaced with top-down governance structures in which administrators take greater responsibility for policymaking and fewer responsibilities are delegated to faculty. Higher education as a public good is at stake when shared governance—a model that draws from democratic values and lays out a way for faculty, boards and administrators to work together to set policy and institutional direction—is weakened. Increasingly, campus leaders are privileging prestige and revenue over access and success of students, community engagement and democratic participation.

Scandals at prominent universities have revealed cracks in the neoliberal governance system, one in which regulation is transferred away from the public and its stakeholders and progress is measured by profits. Pennsylvania State University, Michigan State University and USC are all visible cases where a breakdown in shared governance led to catastrophic ends: individual administrators prioritizing institutional reputation over student protection from sexual assault. Keeping egregious ethical and policy violations private rather than addressing employee misconduct led faculty, staff and students to lack confidence in senior leadership.

We cannot continue down this path—away from our democratic ideals. It is time for faculty, staff, students, administration and local communities to advocate for dialogue to co-determine how universities can best serve the public. USC is beginning this course through the Values Poll, which went out to all members of the community seeking their input about our existing and desired values. Town hall meetings and dialogues are being hosted to discuss what our values should be moving forward.

Inclusion and equal participatory power can restore higher education's role as a public good. A new approach for universities must deal with the complexity of today's campuses, which face more regulation,



greater external pressures, declining funding and a need to adjust to new technologies, as well as more diverse student bodies. A fresh model must necessitate timely decisions, facilitate dialogue among stakeholders and include more groups in a single process. The only way higher education will succeed is to engage all voices in governance to ensure success, in both student learning and securing the bottom line.

One of the most difficult challenges of creating a new model is a growth in power inequalities. Institutions of higher education need to examine policies that exclude important voices. Faculty have been de-professionalized and moved to semester-to-semester appointments; staff are largely silenced in order to meet the entrepreneurial goals of the university rather than students' needs; and students themselves have been reduced to customers. Without re-professionalizing faculty and staff and recognizing their value, the creation of any shared governance process is on shaky

“We cannot continue down this path — away from our democratic ideals.”

ground. It is simply too easy for market and state voices to dominate in this new era. Engaging students as stakeholders, rather than treating them as passive customers or neglecting their concerns to the point of protest, will help reposition the university as a site of dialogue and citizenship development.

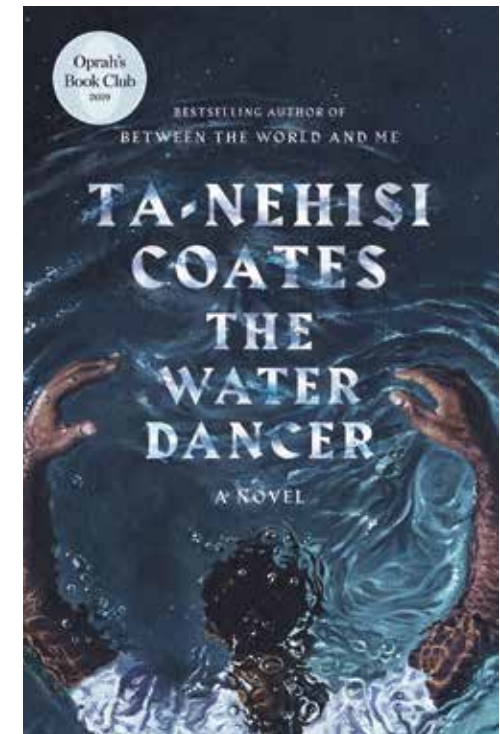
It will take leadership among those with authority to ensure redistribution of power and inclusion, coupled with grassroots efforts among faculty, staff and students to regain their voice and create positive, sustained change. Shared governance is not just important for institutional decision-making but also for higher education to meet its goals of developing educated citizens who can participate in a democracy. —R

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS GASH

Rossier Book Club to read Ta-Nehisi Coates' new novel

THE ROSSIER BOOK CLUB WAS LAUNCHED in spring 2018 as part of the school's "The Rossier Way" initiative, which is designed to cultivate a culture of caring and support amongst faculty, staff and students. Dean Karen Symms Gallagher hosts the book club events each spring and fall in partnership with Darline Robles, associate dean of equity and inclusion. The goal of the book club is to select a work of fiction that helps the Rossier community explore themes relevant to Rossier's mission of advancing educational equity.

This spring's selection is *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the discussion will take place virtually. Past selections include *The Other Americans* by Laila Lalami, *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen and *There There* by Tommy Orange. —R



What are you reading?

Joy Oaks ME '03, EdD '11
Student Programs Manager at the Keck School of Medicine of USC:

- » *An American Family: A Memoir of Hope and Sacrifice* by Khizr Khan
- » *Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping* by Julie R. Posselt
- » *Dreamers and Schemers: How an Improbable Bid for the 1932 Olympics Transformed Los Angeles from Dusty Outpost to Global Metropolis* by Barry Siegel

Morgan Polikoff
Associate Professor of Education at USC Rossier:

- » *The Joy of Statistics: A Treasury of Elementary Statistical Tools and their Applications* by Steve Selvin
- » *The Years that Matter Most: How College Makes or Breaks Us* by Paul Tough
- » *Red, White, and Royal Blue* by Casey McQuiston

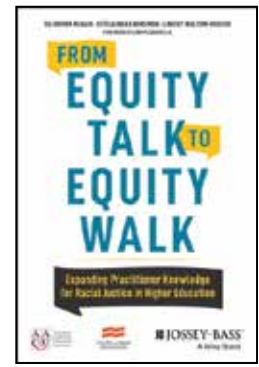
Faculty publications



The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University
By **ADRIANNA KEZAR** (Dean's Professor of Leadership, Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education), **TOM DEPAOLA** and **DANIEL T. SCOTT**
October 2019 / Johns Hopkins University Press

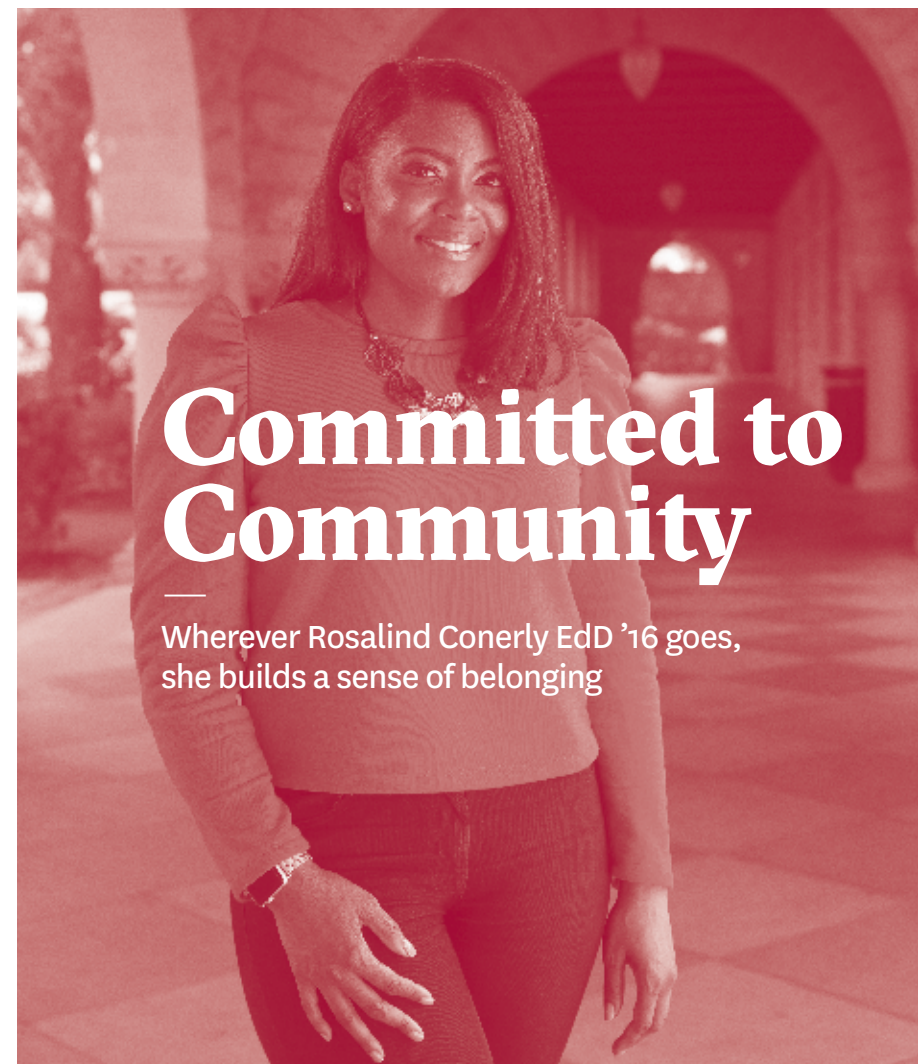


Strategic Mergers in Higher Education: How Proactive Mergers Can Stabilize and Enhance Colleges and Universities—and Ensure Their Future
By **RICARDO AZZIZ**, **GUILBERT C. HENTSCHEKE** (Richard T. Cooper and Mary Catherine Cooper Chair Emeritus and former USC Rossier Dean 1988-2000), **LLOYD A. JACOBS** and **BONITA C. JACOBS**
October 2019 / Johns Hopkins University Press



From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education
By **TIA BROWN MCNAIR**, **ESTELA MARA BENSI-MON** (Dean's Professor in Educational Equity at USC Rossier School of Education and Director of the Center for Urban Education), **LINDSEY MALCOLM-PIQUEUX**
January 2020 / Jossey-Bass

Alumni News



Committed to Community

Wherever Rosalind Conerly Edd '16 goes, she builds a sense of belonging

↑ FROM L.A. TO THE BAY

Last year, Rosalind Conerly left Southern California for a position leading Stanford's Black Community Services Center.

Story:
Kianoosh
Hashemzadeh

ROSALIND CONERLY EDD '16 WAS BORN in Long Beach, Calif., but as a young girl, she bounced around Southern California, from Compton to Rancho Cucamonga. The experience “forced me to figure out how to navigate spaces early,” she says, a skill she’s leaned on since moving some 350 miles north to take a position at Stanford University.

Last March, after working at USC since 2012, Conerly took on the new role of associate dean of students and director at Stanford’s Centers for Equity, Community, and Leadership. She oversees the university’s Black Community Services Center (BCSC), which focuses on intellectual development and advocacy of Stanford’s Black students and student groups.

The center, which was “created out of student activism” in 1969, Conerly says, celebrated its 50th anniversary last year and was looking for someone to “reshape and retool” it to mark the milestone.

No day is the same for Conerly. She manages 20 direct reports, a group that includes students and professional staff, and leads the center’s alumni engagement and donor relations.

The physical size of the Stanford campus—spread out across 8,180 acres—is much different from USC’s. Conerly

is often out and about on campus, working from her laptop in between meetings and site visits, an ethos that no doubt draws from the Bay Area’s start-up culture.

And while there are the inevitable administrative tasks to complete and emails to write and reply to, a typical day can include a variety of activities, from emceeding a campuswide Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration lunch to accompanying a student organization surveying a possible venue for a concert the group is planning.

Conerly’s time at USC—both as a student in the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership program at USC Rossier and as director of the Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs—prepared her for this new role. In particular, it “gave me the opportunity to really think about what it means to be a true scholar-practitioner,” she says. At USC Rossier, her research focused on cultural and community centers, and she thought critically about what it means to merge research and practice.

One of Conerly’s primary tasks over the coming year is to create her vision for the BCSC, after taking the reins from a director who had held the role for 18 years. She’s been conducting a listening tour over the past few months, meeting with students, faculty and alumni.

She wants to be certain that she is “being intentional about the work that I’m doing and ensuring that it’s truly intersectional.” Although the center is focused on the Black student community, Conerly intends to “examine power structures at the university and see where those are in play and how they are impacting different parts of students’ identities.” Working with the other centers on campus—the Asian American Activities Center, Women’s Community Center and Native American Cultural Center, to name a few—is essential to ensuring “we are really, truly supporting students on campus,” Conerly says.

The relationships that Conerly formed at USC Rossier have also served her well, especially the connections made through the student organization Jenga, which she formed with seven other women in her EDD program.

Initially, Jenga—Swahili for “to build”—was created as a support network as the classmates finished their dissertations. But the group stayed in touch, and now the members connect one another with professional opportunities, whether in education or business. “The diversity of folks in the program allowed me to really open up my mind to other ways that I can use this degree,” Conerly says.

In addition to her new role at Stanford, Conerly is also building a consulting practice, working with employee resource groups, tech companies and universities looking to recruit employees and students of color.

Conerly misses USC—her colleagues, family, friends, the students she worked with and the “electric” energy of the Trojan campus. But she’s embraced one thing the Bay Area is known for: wine. Over the summer, she explored many wineries in the region, and she’s since taken this love further by enrolling in her first wine education course. “That’s the thing I’m doing for me,” Conerly says. “I love how wine creates community.” —R

Highlights from Class Notes

Class Notes are compiled and written by Matt DeGrushe ME '04, USC Rossier's director of alumni engagement. For additional Class Notes, please visit rossier.usc.edu/alumni/class-notes. To submit updates for consideration for future magazine issues, please email alumni@rossier.usc.edu.

JOIN MORE THAN 1,600 ALUMNI & CURRENT STUDENTS ON THE USC ROSSIER CAREER NETWORK!

The USC Rossier Career Network is a new online networking and mentorship platform designed to connect members of the USC Rossier Family (students, alumni, faculty and staff).

Platform features include: searchable member directory, built-in messaging platform, ask a question to entire community, join groups, share job leads, learn about events, explore resources.

Join today at rossier.peoplegrove.com

1960s

SONNEE WEEDN BS '68, MS '69, MS '73 recently published a workbook, "8 Ways to Wellbeing for Recovering People," with a foreword by Roger Walsh, MD, PhD. Sonnee was also selected by the American Psychological Association to present her work in cognitive restoration, using computer brain interface, at the Technology, Mind and Society Conference in Washington, D.C.

CANDY YEE '68, MS '69 and her husband, Jim, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 3, 2019. They were married in Houston.

1970s

TODD DEMITCHELL EdD '79 is the John & H. Irene Peters Professor of Education at the University of New Hampshire. He will have two books published by Rowman & Littlefield in the next three months, *Threading the Evaluation Needle: The Documentation of Teacher Unprofessional Conduct* and *Teachers and Their Unions: Labor Relations in Uncertain Times*. In addition, Todd published, "Armed and Dangerous – Teachers? A Policy Response to Security In Our Public Schools" in the *Brigham Young University Education and Law Journal*.

MARY ANN MISHLER '79, MA '81 retired from the El Rancho Unified School District. She spent the first five years of her career with the South Whittier School District and the next 26 years with El Rancho. For 31 years, Mary Ann taught preschool-age children with moderate to severe disabilities. She looks forward to a restful retirement!

1980s

VIRGINIA KENNEDY PhD '81 is president of the California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE), a statewide organization of teacher education professionals in higher education and K-12 programs. Its members and member institutions represent over 70 public and independent institutions of higher education. CCTE's primary activities include professional development and research dissemination at semi-annual conferences, and advocacy at the state and national level.

JOHN DUGGAN MS '83 was inducted into National Association of Underwater Instructors

Hall of Honor. Very few of the thousands of underwater instructors get this recognition.

JOHN ROACH EdD '88 serves as the CEO of the School Employers Association of California (SEAC), whose mission is to provide education, support and professional development to superintendents and management team members through training, research and advocacy. SEAC represents district interests regarding labor relations and collective bargaining and other personnel issues on statewide, regional, local and district levels.

1990s

FAY SHIN MS '93, PhD '94 is the chair and professor in the department of teacher education at Cal State Long Beach. She oversees the teacher preparation program for students interested in becoming elementary and secondary teachers, graduate level coursework leading to master's degrees, advanced credentials and certificates.

KEN ROSSI EdD '96 was appointed chair of the master of arts in organization development and change program at Hawaii Pacific University (HPU). In his role as chair, Ken advises students in the program. He teaches courses in the program as well as the leadership course in HPU's MBA program.

REBECCA SHORE EdD '96 is an associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She released her fourth book this year, *Journeys of Charter School Creators: Leadership for the Long Haul*, which quickly made its way to the Book Authority's top 10 list of national best books on charter schools. The preface and forward are authored by Guilbert Hentschke, former USC Rossier dean and Terrence Deal, former USC Rossier Irving R. Melbo professor, respectively.

BARBARA MOORE EdD '98 is director of the speech-language pathology education programs (master's and minor) at Keck School of Medicine of USC. She is developing a master of science program in speech-language pathology (MS-SLP). The goal is to enroll the first class of students in fall 2021. The MS-SLP program will prepare new speech-language pathologists to work in both medical and educational settings. Barbara has also developed a minor for undergraduates to learn about the professions

of speech-language pathology and audiology. It begins this spring.

ARIANNE TEHERANI MS '99, PhD '00 is professor of medicine in the Division of General Internal Medicine and an education scientist in the Center for Faculty Educators at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine. She is director for program evaluation for the School of Medicine, a role in which she leads design, development and policy for evaluation of the School of Medicine. Arianne is an education researcher whose main research interests are in the areas of professionalism, professional identity formation and equity in medical education.

ERNEST ZARRA PhD '99 recently published his ninth book titled, *The Age of Teacher Shortages: Reasons, Responsibilities, Reactions*. He is under contract for two additional books to be published in spring 2020, *Detoxing American Public Schools: From Social Agency to Its Academic Urgency*, and *America's Sex Culture: Its Impact on Teacher-Student Relationships Today*.

2000s

KEVIN BAXTER EdD '04 was hired as the first chief innovation officer for the National Catholic Educational Association in July. He is focused specifically on three areas of the organization's strategic plan: leadership formation and succession planning, curriculum and pedagogical innovation at the school-site level, and developing new governance and finance structures for Catholic schools. The ultimate aim is to see growth in Catholic schools across the U.S. by focusing on strong leadership at the school and diocesan level and creating innovative models that rest on a culture of continuous improvement.

TIMOTHY COUNCIL ME '09 was named assistant vice president and dean of admissions at Claremont Graduate University.

KARLA RHAY EdD '06 was recognized at the state level as the 2019 California Classified Leader of the Year and at the regional level as Classified Administrator of the Year for Region 12 by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).

MARCELO VAZQUEZ EdD '08 is dean of student services at Ventura College. He is in charge

of leading student success initiatives through supervision of the offices of academic counseling, educational opportunity program services, disability services, CalWorks, international student services and the university transfer center. Marcelo is also the Title IX coordinator in charge of student conduct and co-chairs the behavior intervention team.

2010s

LAURA CASTAÑEDA EdD '10 is a professor at USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. She recently published the following stories for NBC Latino: "Groups aim to boost low Latino participation in organ and marrow donations, clinical trials" and "Latina longevity is real, but it can bring health, financial challenges." Laura and her colleague Rebecca Haggerty EdD '14 published a peer-reviewed research article in *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*: "Undergraduate Students Prefer Learning Text and Broadcast Skills Sequentially Versus Concurrently, But Assessments of Their Final Projects Are Mixed." In September, Laura was awarded the 2019 Barry Bingham Sr. Fellowship by the American Society of News Editors in recognition of an educator's outstanding efforts to encourage students of color in the field of journalism.

TRAMMELL JONES ME '10 has become certified in various yoga and meditation techniques and most recently began facilitating workshops catered to different student groups on how to incorporate a mindfulness practice into their everyday lives.

JUSTIN VANCE EdD '10 was promoted from chair of the department of culture, history and politics to dean of the School of Arts and Humanities at the College of Western Idaho in Nampa, Idaho.

ANGELA BRATHWAITE EdD '11 received three U.S. patents with two being for Road Trip Potty, a portable female urinal that stores discreetly under a car's passenger seat.

KIMBERLYANN GRANGER EdD '11 was invited to attend the League for Innovation in the Community College International Conference in New York to receive the John & Suanne Roueche Excellence Award. Kimberlyann was also recognized by the state of Missouri for her

Allyson Felix '08 breaks Usain Bolt's record for world titles



ALLYSON FELIX BS '08 has broken a world record previously held by track star Usain Bolt, and she did it just 10 months after giving birth. Allyson was part of Team USA's mixed-gender 4x400-meter relay team that won the gold at the World Athletics Championships in September. The win gave Allyson her 12th world title, pushing her past Bolt's record for the most gold medals of any athlete at the track and field world championships.

Six USC Rossier alumni hired as tenured faculty at local community colleges



After serving as adjunct counseling faculty for three years, six 2016 graduates from USC Rossier's Master of Education in Educational Counseling program were hired as full-time, tenure-track faculty at five local community colleges:

Genevieve Ayala ME '16
East Los Angeles College

Paolo Banaag ME '16
Glendale Community College

Yvette Martinez ME '16
Pasadena City College

Adriana Moreno ME '16
Norco College

Yvette Nguyen ME '16
Orange Coast College

Sabrina Pan ME '16
East Los Angeles College

statewide work in Math Pathways, serving as a member of the task force from August 2014 to December 2018.

M. EREZ KATS MAT '11 set up a new website called Katsstats.com, both a sports and travel blog.

HAN NEE CHONG EdD '12 married Nathan Garrett in a Lord of the Rings-themed wedding in Honolulu on June 11.

MATTHEW JELICK MAT '12 continues to teach at Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech), located in Shenzhen, China. During the summer semester, he taught methodology and pedagogy to a class of medical school faculty and aims to replicate this teacher training to other departments through a series of faculty teaching seminars in the fall semester. Matthew continues to enjoy the professional and personal opportunities afforded to him in Shenzhen, although he can't stand the heat!

MARGARITA LANDEROS ME '12 is a counselor support specialist at Green Dot Public Schools. She coaches and supports school counselors across the network and facilitates professional development conferences. Margarita also coordinates organization-wide efforts around course articulation, enrichment program partners, credit recovery, college readiness and crisis management.

TOLOUPE NOAH EdD '12 is an associate professor of liberal studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Azusa Pacific University. She received the university's 2019 Teaching Excellence Award.

BRENT WARNER MAT '12 is completing his tenure probation as an ESL professor at Irvine Valley College, where he works in academic writing for multilingual learners and coordinates the Language Acquisition Center. Brent has also launched the DIESOL Podcast, focusing on pedagogy and best practices for using technology in the ESL classroom.

BRIANA WEILAND ME '12 is manager of admissions and student affairs in the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. She provides strategy for admissions and student affairs for a suite of four specialized master of science programs in the school. Briana works directly with two of those programs and supports the faculty directors to deliver academic advising, certify degrees, manage

co-curricular budgets and plan/execute events. She also directly supervises the admissions staff for those two programs.

PATRICIA BECKMANN EdD '13 is currently on sabbatical. She directed a film in her teaching subject area that was featured in the 2019 Slam-dance film festival in Park City, Utah.

TANYA CHALDARIS EdD '13 formed a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Calliope Academy, with other USC Rossier, USC Marshall and USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck grads. Their mission is driven by a fierce passion for equity and social justice.

MARK PIERCE MAT '13 was tenured in the Soledad Unified School District. Also, Mark was selected as one of 24 candidates to be part of the class of 2020 of Leadership Morgan Hill, a training and development program created to inspire future leaders to community service.

THOMAS CROWTHER EdD '14 is the proud new principal at Burbank High School in Burbank Unified School District. Thomas is returning to the district after serving as principal at Toll Middle School in Glendale Unified School District for the past few years.

ISABEL MORALES EdD '14 received a Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching to study student voice and educational decision-making in the Netherlands.

BRIAN GUERRERO EdD '15 was elected vice president-college for the 2019-20 National Association of Colleges and Employers Board of Directors. He is senior director of the Arts & Sciences Center for Career and Professional Success at the Ohio State University.

MADELEINE MEJIA EdD '15 received an award from the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance for her excellent leadership in support of students, parents and educators at K-12 schools, colleges and universities across Southern California.

LEISHA NICKELS MAT '15 is an eighth grade science teacher and eighth grade specifically designed academic instruction for English (SDAIE) science teacher in the Turlock Unified School District in Turlock, Calif.

OSCAR LUGO MAT-TESOL '16 has been working as an English teacher at Fusion Academy Los Angeles for over three years. This year he assumed the role of English department head,

where he hopes to continue inspiring students to explore communities outside of their own and to understand the destructive nature of "othering."

LAUREN REDMAN ME '16 is an athletics academic advisor at Santa Clara University where she provides academic advisement and support to NCAA Division I student-athletes.

AMY-MARIA SCHULZE MAT '16 opened Grace School, a preschool in Dover, Mass., which welcomed its first class of students in the fall.

DEBRA BOGLE EdD '17 released a new book that is an action-research project turned book on curriculum: *Building Bridges: Curricula Notes, The Arts, Equity, Democracy and Inclusion Transitional*.

SARA-JEAN LIPMEN EdD '17 is a newcomer instructional coach at the Los Angeles Unified School District. In this position, she has the honor to advocate for the inspiring students who have recently immigrated to the United States and provide professional development support and opportunities to their teachers and educators.

JAYNEMARIE ANGBAH EdD '18 is excited to join the Education Division at the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation as senior manager of strategic projects. In this role, she provides implementation and strategic support to the president of education. Jaynemarie also leads cross-team projects and develops operational systems and practices.

AMELIA FRANCK MEYER EdD '18 was featured as one of *People Magazine's* "25 Women Changing the World" in 2018. Amelia is CEO of Alia, a national nonprofit focused on transforming how child welfare is done in this country.

CLORIS HENRY EdD '18 is chief of operations at Lycée Français de San Francisco (LFSF). She oversees the LFSF's operations, risk management and legal activities. Cloris also serves as the school's operational and administrative leader responsible for admissions, marketing, finance, advancement, HR, communication, security, IT and facility management and operation. She works with the head of school to support and work collaboratively with three campus directors responsible for pedagogy of LFSF's rigorous academic and extra-curricular standards.

WILLIAM PIERROS EdD '18 is an associate professor at Concordia University Chicago in River Forest, Ill. William was also a Rotary International Peace Fellow at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand last summer.

SHERRY SHEPARD MAT '18 teaches ninth grade English and also teaches the AVID/College & Career elective for ninth grade in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

MARINA THEODOTOU EdD '18 received the Defense Acquisition University 2019 Individual Corporate Award (17 winners out of 900 employees).

DANIEL GARCIA ME '19 is a global education advisor at Chapman University. He advises business, economics and accounting students on study abroad. Daniel will also be implementing programs aimed at raising the participation rates of male and Latinx students on campus.

MELANIE HAMON ME '19 presented on Contemporary Discrimination Against African American Professionals in the Hiring Process at the National Career Development Association Conference in June 2019.

ELISA RAMIREZ MAT '19 is a high school chemistry teacher in the Paramount Unified School District where she molds young minds and lives through the lens of science.

KATHLEEN REILAND EdD '19 was selected to present her findings at the 2019 Ohio State Diversity in Aviation Conference in October. In May 2019, she received the North Orange County Community College District Chancellor's Staff Above & Beyond Award for her work as dean of technical career education at Cypress College.

DANIEL URRUTIA EdD '19 is a safety and risk coordinator at Lawndale Elementary School District. He plans, organizes, coordinates and manages the district's risk management functions, which include, but are not limited to, safety, general liability, workers' compensation and student insurance programs.

ROGER WISE EdD '19 is a senior education specialist at Carbon, Inc. in Redwood City, Calif. The education team at Carbon, Inc. creates training materials for both customers and employees as well as conducts in-person classes in the use of our cutting edge digital manufacturing technology.

ROSSIER ON THE ROAD

In the fall, Dean Karen Symms Gallagher and staff hit the road for the Bay Area to meet with local alumni. The team made stops in San Francisco and San Jose, and then watched USC's football team take on UC Berkeley on Nov. 11. The Trojans won, 41-17.



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2



3

1 San Jose luncheon with Dean Gallagher, from left to right, Rosalind Conerly EdD '16, Shazma Wadhwanian ME '13, Roxane Fuentes EdD '15, Dean Gallagher, Julianne Johnston ME '16 and Paul McNamara

2 Rossier on the Road - San Francisco, from left to right, Steven Pritzker MS '83, PhD '98, Rachel Beal and Mary Hawkins

3 Rossier on the Road - San Francisco, Dean Gallagher and Charlie Morales ME '19

EIGHT USC ROSSIER ALUMNI NAMED SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS



VIVIAN EKCHIAN
EdD '19
Superintendent for Glendale Unified School District



EMY FLORES
EdD '15
Superintendent for Evergreen School District



MARIA GANDERA
EdD '02
Superintendent for Coachella Valley Unified School District



STEVEN MARTINEZ
EdD '17
Superintendent for Kernville Union School District



CYNDI PAIK
EdD '06
Superintendent for Westminster School District



SCOTT PRICE
PhD '03
Superintendent for Lennox School District



ANDREW PULVER
EdD '11
Superintendent for Los Alamitos Unified School District



ROGER RICE
EdD '07
Superintendent for Ventura Unified School District



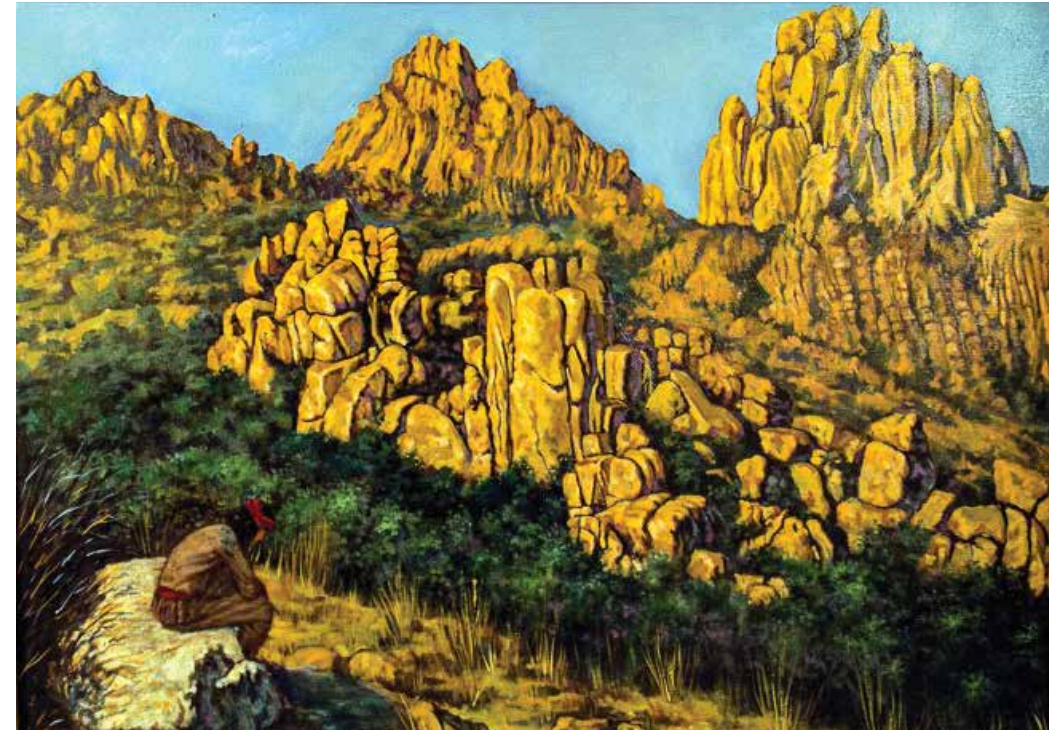
BARRY GRIBBONS MS '92, PhD '95 NAMED PRESIDENT OF LOS ANGELES VALLEY COLLEGE

BARRY GRIBBONS MS '92, PhD '95 has been president of Los Angeles Valley College since August. Los Angeles Valley College is one of the largest of the nine campuses of the Los Angeles Community College District with more than 18,000 students in the eastern portion of the San Fernando Valley. It primarily serves the communities of Valley Glen, Van Nuys, North Hollywood, Valley Village, Studio City, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Lake Balboa, Panorama City and Burbank.

Before arriving at Los Angeles Valley College, Gribbons had 19 years of leadership experience at College of the Canyons, serving for the last four years as deputy chancellor. Additionally, he has held several administrative posts, including assistant superintendent, vice president, executive dean and dean, and he has been in charge of technology, research, planning and public safety training.

From 1996 to 1999, he was senior researcher and project director at UCLA's Center for the Study of Evaluation, where his work coordinated large-scale education reforms to benefit underserved students. During this time, he was also a consultant to the U.S. Department of Education.

He has co-authored more than 520 research reports over the past 19 years and presented work at more than 50 national, state and regional conferences. He has taught at California State University, Los Angeles, and College of the Canyons. —R



IN MEMORIAM

Manuel E. De Leon BS '51, MS '61



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE DE LEON FAMILY

MEXICAN-AMERICAN ARTIST, professor emeritus and USC Rossier alumnus Manuel E. De Leon died Dec. 6 at age 93. His wife Helga, daughter Marita and son André were by his side.

De Leon was born on the USC Campus in Jan. 25, 1926, in his family's home, where Heritage Hall stands today. Born into a low-income family in South-Central Los Angeles, De Leon transferred from Compton College to USC on a football scholarship and played football at USC from 1948 to 1951. A proud Trojan, he received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the USC Rossier School of Education.

After graduating from USC, De Leon taught in L.A.-area schools from South-Central to Lomita. He went on to pursue fine art at ArtCenter College of Design and Otis Art Institute, where he studied under Norman Rockwell.

De Leon met his future wife, Helga, while teaching on an American base in Germany. They wed on June 15, 1957, in Mainz, Germany, and soon returned to Los Angeles.

In 1964, De Leon accepted the position of art professor at Cerritos College, where he became the chairman of the Cerritos College Art Department. He worked at the college until his retirement in 1991.

In 1998, De Leon and his wife left their home in Orange County to retire in Oro Valley, Ariz. He is survived by wife Helga, sons Marcus and André, daughter Marita Carina, a son-in-law and two granddaughters. —R

A LASTING INVESTMENT IN NEW VISIONS FOR LEARNING

The Katzman/Ernst Chair in Educational Entrepreneurship, Technology and Innovation continues to make waves

→ **NOT SO HIDDEN**

Scientist Knatokie Ford with *Hidden Figures* stars, from left to right, Octavia Spencer, Janelle Monáe, Aldis Hodge and musician and producer Pharrell Williams spoke at a screening of the film, co-organized by Alan Arkatov, Katzman/Ernst Chair in Educational Entrepreneurship, Technology and Innovation.



IN 2008, JOHN KATZMAN and his wife Alicia Ernst decided they wanted to do something that would make a lasting impact. The two have dedicated their lives to driving change in education. Katzman, who is also a member of the USC Rossier Board of Councilors, founded The Princeton Review, 2U and The Noodle Companies, and Ernst was vice president of research at The Princeton Review.

And thus, with a generous gift, the couple created the Katzman/Ernst Chair in Educational Entrepreneurship, Technology and Innovation.

Professor David Dwyer was the first to hold the Katzman/Ernst Chair, and during his time in the role, he set forth the initial model and inspiration for USC Hybrid High School, a college preparatory charter high school located near the USC campus. The high school is part of the Ednovate network. Every Ednovate school boasts a 100 percent

graduation rate, and 100 percent of Ednovate students have been accepted to a four-year college or university.

In 2015, Alan Arkatov was formally installed as the chair. “John Katzman,” Arkatov says, “was always a hero to me because of the way he broke down barriers to great education.” Over the few short years that Arkatov has been in the role, he has focused on harnessing the talent of the imagination economy to have a greater effect on educational ecosystems through a variety of projects. Arkatov helped organize an event that brought over 8,000 L.A.-area teenaged girls to a screening of *Hidden Figures* in January 2017. Not only did the participants get to engage in a Q&A with the film’s actors and musician and producer Pharrell Williams, but the evening also celebrated the achievements of women of color in science. Arkatov helped to produce a curriculum guide on the film as well.

In 2018, Arkatov launched the

Center for Engagement-Driven Global Education (Center EDGE), through which he’s debuted several initiatives. In 2018, the L.A. Education Exchange was established. The Exchange gathers L.A. education leaders from across all sectors for a two-day summit with the goal of improving local education by bringing together individuals who do overlapping work but might not cross paths otherwise. Center EDGE is currently working on a series of dynamic teaching and learning initiatives, including a unique education competition, a platform for leveraging the values of the Olympic Games and harnessing the power of documentaries, films and games for K-12 education.

Arkatov compares the role of the Katzman/Ernst chair to that of a musical composer. “The chair is someone who brings together the best composition, the best soloists with the best orchestration to transform [education.] [We] need a full orchestra, to really have impact.” —R

PHOTO BY BRIAN MORRI / 211 PHOTOGRAPHY

ANNOUNCING THE

KAREN SYMMS GALLAGHER ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Since 2000, Karen Symms Gallagher has served the USC Rossier School of Education as the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean. To honor her leadership, we invite you to help endow a scholarship in her name. The scholarship will support doctoral students—especially women—who have demonstrated their commitment to USC Rossier’s mission and aspire to a leadership position in education.



From left to right, Dean Gallagher, Renee Swift McCain EdD '19 and Cindy Hensley McCain '76 MS '78 honorary degree '19.
Photo by Brian Morri / 211 Photography

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Students in the Master of Education in Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs program at the 2019 USC Rossier Homecoming Picnic. From left to right, Courtney Chang, Krista Meinke and Harbir Atwal.
Josh Krause / 211 Photography



For more stories about how Rossier faculty, staff, students and alumni are helping to save democracy through education, please visit rsoe.in/democracy or follow us on social media:

