

USC Rossier

MAGAZINE



Amazing storyteller

Deeply humane

AUTHENTIC

expert on equity

smartest guy in the room

Bighearted

Peacemaker

ACTIVIST

Loving parent

Energetic

parent

Dean Noguera

PROFILE p. 12

DEDICATED TO TEACHING

Committed intellectual

Truth-teller

CURIOUS

EMPOWERS PEOPLE

MADE IN BROOKLYN

SOCIOLOGIST



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Tracy Poon Tambascia on combating anti-Asian racism p. 11

Do police belong in schools? p. 20

How districts led by Rossier alums moved K-12 online p. 29

Dear Friends,



It is my pleasure to join you as dean of the USC Rossier School of Education. Entering this new role during a global pandemic, a looming recession and a racial justice movement sweeping the nation has been daunting. Despite the enormity of the challenges confronting our school and the field of education, I am heartened by the potential for change.

Fortunately for me, my predecessor, Dr. Karen Symms Gallagher, provided steady and visionary leadership to our school for 20 years. Under her tenure, USC Rossier built partnerships with Los Angeles-area schools and provided leadership training to hundreds of school administrators worldwide. I welcome the opportunity to build upon this foundation.

USC Rossier's mission—to achieve educational equity through practice, policy and research—is mine as well. From my early experiences as a teacher in the Providence, Rhode Island, and Oakland, California, public schools; as a professor and school board member in Berkeley, California; and as a scholar at Harvard, NYU and UCLA, I have made the deep challenge of educational equity my life's work.

Clearly, the present moment we find ourselves in is unlike any that our nation or our school has faced before. The pandemic threatens our health and has thrown campuses into chaos, the economic crisis threatens the welfare and well-being of millions, and political polarization and climate change threaten our future.

Yet, despite the instability and uncertainty of our current situation, I am excited about the possibilities for USC Rossier at this time. With cutting edge research and a long tradition of preparing leaders, USC Rossier is well positioned to assume a role as a changemaker in bringing about the profound transformation that must occur in the field of education. Together, we can rise to the challenge of the moment by helping educators, policymakers and schools to move decisively toward developing a system of education that is more equitable, just and humane.

In these pages, you will read about how USC Rossier faculty, students and alumni are helping to improve how we teach Black history, researching the role of police on our campuses and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also much news to share about our school's recent efforts, from the USC Race and Equity Center's partnership with California community colleges, to the letter recently issued by education scholars from around the country (with leadership from our own Julie A. Marsh), urging policymakers to center equity as schools restarted this fall.

Ours is truly an honorable profession. I believe that USC Rossier can lead in making the case for profound and lasting change in education. Our children and society are counting on us.

Fight On!

Pedro Noguera

Pedro A. Noguera, PhD
Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean
Distinguished Professor of Education
USC Rossier School of Education

BLACK LIVES MATTER

This summer, demonstrators participated in a Black Lives Matter protest and marched to Los Angeles Unified School District headquarters, calling on the school board to reallocate funds spent on campus police to student services.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images / Mario Tama.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



WHY WE CAN'T RETURN TO NORMAL

In 2020, the status quo was shaken up, challenged and, quite possibly, forever altered. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed life for us all. The models our globalized world is built upon—our financial systems, the way we work, the way we travel, and yes, the way we educate all students, from pre-K to higher ed—have been tested and transformed. In the midst of this worldwide health crisis, another long-running crisis—systemic racism and the killing of Black men and women by police—fueled months of protest led by the burgeoning Black Lives Matter movement.

And as the world shifts around us, the USC Rossier School of Education is also in a state of transition as we welcome a new dean, Pedro A. Noguera. Our cover story, “Pedro A. Noguera Is Reimagining Education,” provides an introduction to his scholarship, his vision for USC Rossier and why he believes we can’t afford to return to normal.

Also in these pages, USC Rossier faculty members respond to some of the urgent challenges of 2020: John Brooks Slaughter asks if higher education’s support of the racial justice movement will lead to lasting change, Tracy Poon Tambascia offers practical tips for combating anti-Asian racism in the classroom and Brendesha Tynes shares insights from her research on the effects that videos depicting racial violence have on Black and Brown youths. The feature stories examine the history and future of police in schools, how we teach Black history and the ways districts outside the urban center are handling the transition to remote learning.

This issue considers both the macro effects of a microscopic virus and how the demand to end structural racism will require us to reshape the field of education to ensure a more just and equitable future.

Kianoosh Hashemzadeh, Editor



PHOTO BY RACHEL LU / ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS GASH



PHOTO BY REBECCA ARANDA

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STORY IDEAS? FEEDBACK?
Please write to us at communications@rossier.usc.edu



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WILL THE SHIFT TO ONLINE LEARNING CHANGE HOW WE TEACH?

By Kianoosh Hashemzadeh



USC'S FALL SEMESTER BEGAN on Aug. 17, and while the university originally hoped to offer a hybrid of online and in-person classes, as California and many other parts of the country experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases, guidelines from state and county public health officials resulted in the university shifting courses online, with some exceptions for clinical education.

Transitioning to remote learning has not been without its hiccups. For faculty, "learning the technology has been the No. 1 challenge," says Ginger Clark, USC's assistant vice provost for academic and faculty affairs and professor of clinical education at the USC Rossier School of Education.

Clark directs the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET), which provides resources for developing, evaluating and rewarding teaching excellence as well as best practices in course design. To say that the center has been busy since USC first shifted courses online in March is an understatement. It runs a six-week course, "Accelerated Online Teaching Intensive" (AOTI), which teaches faculty how to use online instruction tools, holds workshops to provide schools with customized training, and conducts smaller group and one-on-one consultations with faculty.

Since March, "over 2,500 faculty have attended CET workshops," and 900 have participated in the AOTI course, Clark says. Yet, she stresses, "those numbers don't reflect the hours spent in other types of training and course preparation."

Faculty have had to reexamine how they teach and devise ways to present information in ways that are engaging and understandable. Clark sees

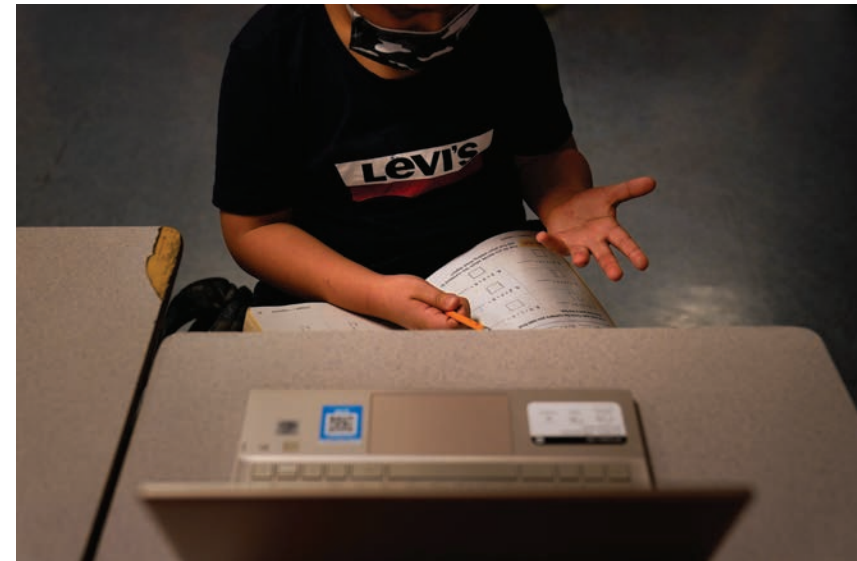
a silver lining in this process, as she believes it "may also be the catalyst for a renaissance period for teaching across the world, especially as we consider how our teaching connects to issues raised by Black Lives Matter, #MeToo and other movements toward an inclusive, equitable society."

The pivots of the spring and fall will have a lasting impact on how we educate. Faculty will look at online learning differently, Clark believes, as they've now experienced the drawbacks and benefits of online learning. Some might even find that their courses work better online.

The tools we've turned to for online learning have given educators and students more options, Clark says, and if "we can find a way to ensure all learners have access to adequate technology," which she notes is a big if, online learning "can mitigate a number of challenges we face in education ... resulting in a more accessible, flexible and equitable" system.

For example, recorded lectures give students the opportunity to revisit material and the flexibility to attend class on their own time if other obligations make it difficult. And some students might be more comfortable participating in online classrooms.

This spring, the center is planning "discipline-specific advanced training for things like performance, math-based and lab courses," Clark says. Most important, is that we learn from this moment. "The time we all dream of" Clark says, is when we are using "these tools by choice because they amplify the effectiveness of our teaching." —R



← **COUNTERING SUMMER SLIDE**

A student uses his fingers to solve a math problem while taking an online summer class at Boys & Girls Club of Hollywood in Los Angeles.

THE AUTHORS' SEVEN MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Provide substantial additional resources to prevent looming school budget cuts
- 2 Implement universal internet and computer access
- 3 Target resources to those most in need
- 4 Provide the most personalized and engaging instruction possible under the circumstances, even when it is necessary to be online
- 5 Address the learning losses created by the crisis by expanding instructional time in ways that challenge, support and engage students
- 6 Offer tailored, integrated support to each child in order to address social-emotional, physical health and family well-being
- 7 Make decisions about teachers that support pedagogical quality and equity

How schools should teach in a pandemic, according to research

By Ross Brenneman

SCHOOLS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO address seven key areas if they should hope to successfully teach K-12 students, education researchers say.

In an open letter, crafted by 16 education scholars and signed to date by nearly 500 others, the researchers offer recommendations about how to make sure students feel cared for and engaged. The letter is aimed at the federal and state governments as well as local school and district administrators.

"Knowing the inequities exacerbated by this pandemic and the need to attend to students who are

historically underserved and marginalized, I believed the research community needed to weigh in," says USC Rossier Professor of Education Policy Julie A. Marsh, one of the 16 authors of the letter. "We know the resources and supports that are essential for educators, students and parents during this difficult time."

Dean Pedro A. Noguera is another principal signatory, and 15 additional USC faculty have also signed.

While the principal authors note that they are often on different sides of educational issues, they hope that by joining together, they can convey the extent to which education research offers helpful and practical solutions.

"Policy decisions about how to educate and support kids in the fall need to be driven by evidence, not politics," Marsh says. —R

Community colleges partner with USC Race and Equity Center to battle racism

By Ross Brenneman

A NEW INITIATIVE from the USC Race and Equity Center will bring together leaders from California's community colleges to address issues related to race and racism.

The California Community College Equity Leadership Alliance will use a three-pronged approach to help administrators

and faculty leaders learn how to better address the concerns of students and employees of color, who have long cited the persistence of racist policies and attitudes within their institutions.

In the aftermath of mass, worldwide protests following the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, students across the country have pressed schools and universities to take tangible actions that improve the education of Black students.

"Merely proclaiming in written statements that Black Lives Matter is insufficient," says USC Rossier

Professor Shaun Harper, who leads the USC Race and Equity Center and created the Alliance. "I am grateful to the presidents who responded favorably to my invitation to take serious, strategic action to dismantle systemic racism, address longstanding racial-climate problems and eliminate racial inequities on their campuses."

To date, 60 community colleges, including all nine in the Los Angeles Community College District, have joined the Alliance. California's community colleges are responsible for the education of more than 1.2

million students each year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

The Alliance's approach will include professional learning experiences for high-level administrators and faculty leaders, an online repository of resources and tools and a campus climate survey.

"Tremendous strategy, intentionality and expertise went into the creation of this Alliance," said Compton College President Keith Curry. "I am convinced it will make every campus that participates more equitable and inclusive." —R



Center for Urban Education and USC Race and Equity Center merge; Estela Mara Bensimon announces retirement

By Ross Breneman

FOR TWO DECADES, the Center for Urban Education has worked with higher education leaders to reform their practices in order to improve racial equity. On July 1, CUE merged with the USC Race and Equity Center, with all staff and contracts retained. In an online event on June 1 revealing the merger, CUE Director Estela Mara Bensimon also announced her intention to retire in December 2020.

Bensimon, Dean's Professor in Educational Equity, founded CUE in 1999, four years after joining the USC Rossier School of Education faculty. Speaking at the event, she revealed how she founded CUE as a response to a "personal and professional crisis."

"I was a traditional academic doing all the traditional things to advance my career," she said. "I don't regret having done those things, but in 1999 I began to question what my current work had to do with the advocacy work of my 20s."

Under Bensimon's direction, CUE has worked with nearly 700 organizations, including California's community college system, the Coast

Guard Academy and the state of Rhode Island.

Bensimon noted CUE's accomplishments, including the institutional reforms brought about by its Equity Scorecard process. CUE also helped shift language from focusing on "diversity" to centering on a race-specific form of equity, introducing the concept of being equity-minded.

"We changed how problems are framed," Bensimon said. "Instead of focusing on student performance and failure, we have taught practitioners to frame problems of racial inequity as institutional performance dysfunctions."

Provost Professor Shaun R. Harper, who leads the USC Race and Equity Center, praised Bensimon (who is also a recipient of the 2020 McGraw Prize in Higher Education and was appointed as a University Professor by USC President Carol L. Folt, see p. 9) and expressed his admiration. "You have given me the gift of your trust," Harper said. "You are trusting me with your staff, your legacy, with the tools and resources that CUE has created. ... I promise you that we will honor your legacy." —R



WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO

In a new podcast called *Office Hours with Allen, Noguera, Howard, and Harper*, UCLA professors Walter Allen and Tyrone Howard talk shop with USC Rossier Dean Pedro A. Noguera and Provost Professor Shaun R. Harper. Hosted by UCLA PhD candidate Jaleel Howard, the foursome tackle the biggest issues facing education with candor, expertise and humor.

'An Equitable Restart: Back to School, Not to Normal'



In July, as schools across the country considered how to go back to school in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, USC Rossier scholars, Dean Pedro A. Noguera, Provost Professor Shaun Harper, and Professor of Education Psychology and Neuroscience Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, along with Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Austin Beutner and Glendale Unified School District Superintendent Vivian Ekchian EdD '19, discussed the high-level equity issues involved in restarting America's schools. The panelists considered the students who are most likely to be overlooked and how to begin to understand the psychological and social-emotional needs of students.

Visit rsoe.in/equitablerestart to view the webinar.

PHOTO COURTESY OF USC ROSSIER / ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS GASH

EMBRACING THE NARRATIVE

By Kianoosh Hashemzadeh

FROM AN EARLY AGE, Marcel Hite, a student in USC Rossier's Master of Education in Enrollment Management and Policy program (EMP online), often told his mother he was born in the wrong state. He grew up in Detroit, but despite there being much to love about the city—from its famed Coney dogs to his high school's vibrant drama department—he never liked the cold. So, when it was time to start thinking about college, Hite thought, "Look west."

It wasn't just the sunshine that brought Hite to the Golden State: California's liberal-leaning politics also attracted him as he sought a place more closely aligned with his own beliefs. Hite landed at Claremont McKenna College. Although he describes the school as "the most conservative of the five" Claremont colleges, he says his experience there "pushed me into my values even more, especially as they relate to LGBTQ+ issues and issues of gender identity and expression."

Hite was a first-generation college student and one of only about 40 Black students at Claremont McKenna. He attended a private, predominately White high school, and at

Claremont McKenna, he found himself again "trying to fit in by not finding community among other Black folks."

He was also one of the few students on financial aid. As his peers planned exciting spring break trips, he would either return to Detroit or stay on campus. "It really hit home for me just how low-income I felt on a college campus," he says.

Following his passion for compelling narratives—sparked by his exposure to theater in high school—Hite majored in literature; he still counts *Beowulf* and the novels of Toni Morrison among his favorites. At the insistence of his mother, he also majored in psychology.

Throughout undergrad, Hite took a variety of campus jobs—from tour guide to senior interviewer in the admissions office. After he graduated in 2014, he was offered an interim position as an admissions counselor, and he's been in admissions ever since.

Hite found himself drawn to the stories of prospective students, and his psychology background encouraged him to meet applicants "where they're at." After stints at schools throughout California, including USC, he is now the senior assistant director of admissions at Stanford University.

Hite's ultimate goal is to land a role as a dean or director of admissions, and to reach it, he wanted to further his education and learn more about the ins and outs of enrollment management. When he found USC Rossier's EMP program, he was hesitant about it being online, but soon realized it would provide him with "a lot of the information and flexibility I needed."

In particular, Hite cites Professor DeAngela Burns-Wallace's diversity course as especially eye-opening. "She pushed me," he says, to look past what he already knew about enrollment, to "think deeper about how to effectively make change, and to be more equitable and inclusive in [the admissions] process." Hite has also gained valuable tools to weigh timely issues such as how possible changes to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals will impact admissions and an important measure on the Nov. 3 California ballot that could restore affirmative action.

While the pandemic didn't significantly disrupt Hite's online courses at USC Rossier, it



did change how he and Stanford's admissions team conduct their day-to-day work. They had to pivot quickly in terms of how they conduct information sessions and potential-student outreach, shifting these activities to the virtual realm.

As with many admissions leaders, issues of racial and social justice are at the forefront of Hite's mind these days. While measures such as waiving SAT and ACT scores for applicants can reduce inequities in the admissions process—a step that many schools, including USC, have taken for the Class of 2025—Hite still believes there's plenty of work to do. "Universities need to adapt to the ever-changing landscape," he says. "[They] need to understand how they've perpetuated systemic racism, particularly anti-Blackness, on their campuses."

Hite urges enrollment leaders to prioritize a holistic approach and use "noncognitive variables" to evaluate applicants—to give them the chance to share their stories, some of the challenges they've faced and how they've overcome them. These narratives, Hite believes, can exhibit applicants' critical thinking skills in ways that a standardized test score cannot. —R

PHOTO BY LYDIA DANILLER

Founded by eight USC Rossier EdD students, JENGA grows its mission and membership

By Kianoosh Hashemzadeh

“WRITING IS A SOLITARY JOB.” These words were penned by William Faulkner, but the sentiment is something that many ABD (all but dissertation) students can relate to. However, like Faulkner, Airies Davis EdD ’16 didn’t think writing needed to be a lonely act. In fact, as she entered the dissertation writing phase, she went out of her way to ensure that it was not.

Davis came to USC Rossier School of Education from the business sector—she earned her MBA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—and early on, she became involved with a number of organizations at USC. But one thing was missing: “support for people of color, and others, towards completing their degrees,” Davis says. So, she sought to change that.

“My original intent,” Davis says, “was to build a mastermind group,” a peer-mentoring group that helps members navigate and discuss professional and personal milestones. Davis started by pulling together several women from her cohort. They didn’t all know one another but quickly created a community.

The founders, Davis and seven other USC Rossier doctoral students—Crystal Adams EdD ’16, Bathsheba Brutus EdD ’16, Mercedes Butler EdD ’16, Rosalind Conerly EdD ’16, Marquisha

Flowers EdD ’16, Brenda Green EdD ’16 and Khalisha Jefferson EdD ’16—named the group “JENGA,” Swahili for “to build.” It officially became recognized by the Graduate Student Government in 2016. Evelyn Felina Castillo EdD ’11, doctoral support specialist at USC Rossier, serves as faculty adviser.

During the process of founding JENGA, each woman chose an adinkra symbol that embodied “where we were at the moment, as a marker, almost, of our experience,” Conerly says. Adinkra symbols, which originated in West Africa and represent concepts or aphorisms, are commonly found on fabrics and decorative items. The group wanted to incorporate this imagery in recognition of their African diaspora identity. Butler chose the *Fawobodie*, symbolizing how independence comes with responsibilities, “because it reminds me of the importance of being self-sufficient while being in the position to help others out.”

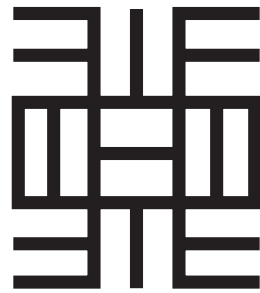
“The ultimate goal of the organization,” Butler says, “is persistence to graduation and getting through the dissertation process, as



MARCEDES BUTLER EdD ’16 selected the *Fawobodie* symbol which represents independence and emancipation.

we know that 50 percent of doctoral students will drop out.” Through JENGA she found robust social support from her peers, something that is essential when it comes to graduation persistence.

The work of JENGA was not over after the founders graduated.



MARQUISHA FLOWERS EdD ’16 selected the *Obu* symbol which represents knowledge and lifelong education.

They are still close and get together often to offer one another career advice, write articles together and collaborate on business ventures. JENGA also continues to thrive on the USC campus and has expanded to include doctoral students throughout the university. Butler, Conerly and Davis are current alumni advisers on JENGA’s board.

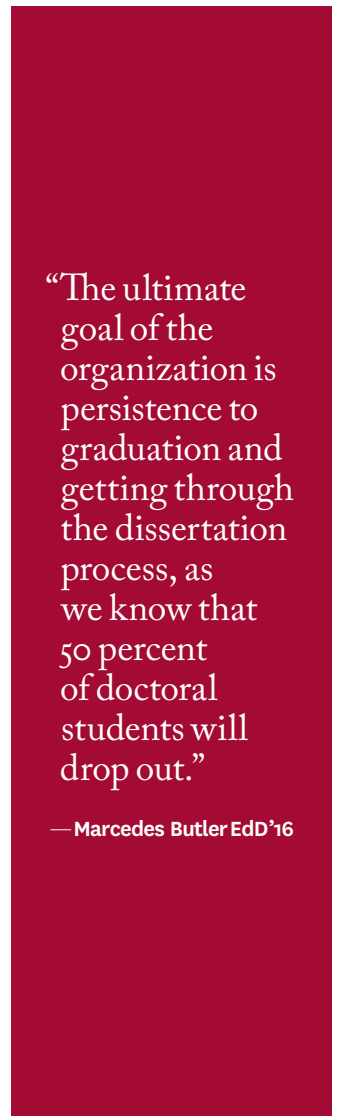
As JENGA grows, it continues to provide a support network for those writing dissertations, but it also offers guidance for students before and after the dissertation, and this includes sharing information about funding opportunities.

“We’re trying to make sure that we create a conglomerate environment where people can figure out, based on where they are, what they should be doing, and who they should be getting connected with,” says board President Kendrick Roberson, a PhD student in political science and international relations at USC. “One of the things that we know for a fact is that there are opportunities out there, but you have to apply, and the only way to apply for an opportunity is to know that that opportunity exists.”

Like many organizations, JENGA has shifted activities to the virtual realm because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Panel discussions and meetings are now conducted via Zoom, and past president Virginia “Ginny” Linenberger mailed the annual JENGA

dissertation awards instead of presenting them to graduates in person. A focus for the upcoming year, Roberson says, is recruiting first-year doctoral students so that, early on, they can become part of the supportive network JENGA provides.

For the founders of JENGA, the future holds more collaborations, including a book publication, a lecture series or conference to share guidance for creating peer support networks and facilitating necessary conversations on cultural exchange and equity, and expansion beyond the USC campus to create a network for doctoral students across the globe. —R



— Mercedes Butler EdD ’16

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

CENTER EDGE has received multiple gifts including \$100,000 from the Marc and Eva Stern Family Foundation, \$50,000 from The Khayami Foundation and \$98,000 from the Driving Force Institute. Center EDGE also received a \$75,000 Baylor Technology Innovation Grant for its “Levering Games, Character Education and Sports” project and was awarded funds for its L.A. Education Open initiative, including a \$75,000 award from Great Public Schools Now and \$50,000 from the Joseph Drown Foundation.

CENTER FOR ENROLLMENT RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE (CERPP) was awarded a \$1,303,168 grant by the national College Advising Corps, a \$300,000 two-year grant from the California Community Foundation’s Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund and a \$75,000 grant from the Joyce Foundation. CERPP was also awarded multiple service agreements for the 2020-21 school year, including \$100,000 by the California Community Foundation to provide a college-advising hotline for all LAUSD students and L.A.-area seniors, \$476,000 by Long Beach Unified School District, \$144,000 by Lynwood Unified School District, \$72,000 by Glendale Unified School District and \$66,000 by Paramount Unified School District.

USC RACE AND EQUITY CENTER, which is directed by Shaun R. Harper and recently merged with the Center for Urban Education (CUE, see p. 6), received multiple grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: two grants (with CUE) totaling \$800,000, \$250,000 (with John Pascarella, associate professor of clinical education) for the Teacher Education Racial Equity Academy, \$750,000 for “Enhancing Racial Equity in Postsecondary Service, Design, and Delivery” and \$500,000 for the project, “State Policy Racial Equity Experts Institute.”

ESTELA MARA BENSIMON, Dean’s Professor in Educational Equity, has been awarded the 2020 McGraw Prize in Higher Education. Bensimon was also appointed a University Professor by USC President Carol L. Folt.

SHAUN R. HARPER, Provost Professor, was named editor at large at *Time* magazine. Harper was also appointed to the California Higher Education Recovery with Equity Taskforce by California Gov. Gavin Newsom’s Council for Post-Secondary Education.

DEAN PEDRO A. NOGUERA was appointed a Distinguished Professor by USC President Carol L. Folt, and received an EXCEL Award, Gold for Best Magazine Feature, from Association Media & Publishing for his article, “Why School Integration Matters,” which appeared in the April 2019 issue of *Educational Leadership*.

JULIE A. MARSH, professor of education policy, received an additional \$347,000 supplement from the Institute of Education Sciences to focus on COVID-19 response.

GALE M. SINATRA, professor of education and psychology, was appointed chair of the American Psychological Association’s Task Force on Climate Change.



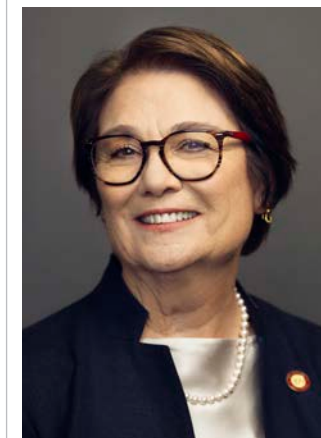
ADAM KHO, assistant professor of education, and his colleagues at the University of Nevada Las Vegas were awarded \$174,975 to study the implementation and impact of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework.



MORGAN POLIKOFF, associate professor of education, received \$362,435 from the Los Angeles Education Partnership to be evaluator for 21st Century California School Leadership Academy, funded by the California Department of Education. In addition, Polikoff won the Outstanding Public Communication of Education Research Award from the American Educational Research Award, and, with Anna Saavedra, a research scientist at USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research, \$200,000 from the National Science Foundation for the project “RAPID: Exploring COVID and the Effects on U.S. Education: Evidence from a National Survey of American Households.”



JULIE R. POSSELT, associate professor of higher education, received an \$80,397 supplement to the National Science Foundation grant that supports the California Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Education. With this supplement, Posselt and C-CIDE will build organizational infrastructure within and across the six participating campuses for sustainable systems of faculty development to equitably select and serve doctoral students in science and engineering disciplines.



KAREN SYMMS GALLAGHER, Veronica and David Hagen Chair in Women’s Leadership and former dean of the USC Rossier School of Education, was awarded the Presidential Medallion, the university’s highest honor. To view Gallagher’s remarks during this year’s Faculty Honors ceremony, please visit rsoe.in/facultyhonors2020.



In the media

“After slavery ended in this country, the emancipated formerly enslaved people pursued education, created colleges and universities, passed the first laws in the South for public education that universally allowed White kids as well as Black kids to go to school. The drive to pursue education was based not on any guarantee that it would lead to a job, but because we knew that education was the key to freedom and empowerment in this country. It still is.”

—Pedro A. Noguera, Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education and Distinguished Professor of Education, in *The New York Times Magazine*

“College has unfortunately been more of a privilege for wealthier students, and institutions haven’t set up structures to help first-generation students who often come from lower-income backgrounds.”

—Adrianna Kezar, Dean’s Professor of Leadership, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

“Perhaps conversations about identity are ‘difficult’ not because they are inherently uncomfortable, but because they have been deemed ineffable. ... what if these conversations are not actually difficult, but simply unpracticed? ... Perhaps faculty members need not fewer conversations about identity but more.”

—Derisa Grant, assistant professor of education, in *Inside Higher Ed*

“Kids are learning every minute of their waking hours. It’s important to recognize that whatever alternatives parents are choosing [to distance learning], they’re thinking about the everyday activities their children are engaged in as opportunities for learning.”


—Artineh Samkian, associate professor of clinical education, on *KPCC’s AirTalk*

“If school leaders have historically been willing to enforce routine dress-code violations that have little to no positive impact on the learning environment, there should be no issue with implementing and enforcing a mask requirement that could quite literally save the lives of vulnerable faculty, staff, students, and their families.”

—James Bridgeforth, PhD candidate, in *Education Week*

Lectures in mathematics education

THE 2020-2021 LECTURES IN MATHEMATICS Education lecture series kicked off in September and will run through March 2021. Sponsored by the Herman + Rasiej Mathematics Initiative and the USC Rossier School of Education, the lectures highlight research targeted at improving teacher effectiveness in mathematics education. The series has a roster of leading scholars in the field and some presentations feature co-presenters (in-service/pre-service teachers) who can speak to the impact of the research from a teacher’s point of view.

 Paul Cobb Vanderbilt University September 17th	 Beth Herbel Eisenmann Michigan State University / National Science Foundation September 30th
 Miriam Sherin Northwestern University October 8th	 Alan Schoenfeld University of California, Berkeley October 22nd
 Marta Civil University of Arizona November 5th	 Tonya Bartell Michigan State University November 18th
 Chandra Orrill University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth December 3rd	

For more information and to view recordings of the lectures, please visit rsoe.in/lecturesinmath20-21

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS GASH & HEATHER MONAHAN

Combating anti-Asian racism in the classroom

By Tracy Poon Tambascia, Professor of Clinical Education



↑ SAYING NO TO RACISM

A rally that took place in San Francisco’s Chinatown in February called for communities to unite in the fight against COVID-19.

AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC swept through the country and the world in early 2020, a sharp increase in discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) mirrored the spread of the virus. Fueled by racist rhetoric, the characterization of COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” or the “Wuhan flu” has created an environment of blame and xenophobia. Students have now returned to school, and whether classes are held in person or online, it’s important for educators to be aware that such rhetoric can create traumatizing, unsafe and damaging environments for AAPI students.

There are a number of things educators can do to address anti-AAPI racism. First, educators should acknowledge the use of biased language. It is important to recognize the damage of such language without shaming students. Terms like “Wuhan flu” and “Chinese virus” are intentionally used to signal othering and blame, and they need to be directly addressed and disavowed. Educators cannot be neutral and need to develop the ability to turn a phrase into a learning moment. For example, instructors can say: “We have heard such slurs and phrases used, and they are hurtful and damaging to

the AAPI community. Why might people choose to use language like this?” They can then “unpack” or deconstruct how the use of words can intentionally signal blame. This is also an opportunity to discuss allyship and the importance of having non-AAPI people from all backgrounds engage in social justice by calling out bias and racism.

In addition, educators should deliberately normalize the presence of non-White authors, researchers and other contributors in teaching materials, such as course syllabi, assigned readings or online lectures. Educators should use examples, case studies and other learning materials that include identities that reflect the full spectrum of American society, including AAPI individuals. This strategy is not necessarily about teaching culture or histories, but about including AAPI people when we talk about teachers, entrepreneurs, innovators and people in our community.

Educators may need to learn about AAPI communities and unlearn common misperceptions. They can also bring their own knowledge of the AAPI community to classes, making sure to recognize the diversity of experiences, values, cultures and languages among people of Asian descent. This conversation is not just about national origin, but also about the impact of migration, the diaspora, intersecting identities (race or ethnicity and gender identity, for example) and the complex histories of colonization and geopolitics. Educators can highlight the different practices and languages of various AAPI groups, just as no one assumes everyone of European descent shares a common language, history or cultural practices. The bottom line is that educators need to push against the common perception that Asian Americans represent a monolithic whole. —R

PEDRO A. NOGUERA

Is Reimagining

EDUCATION

WITH PRAGMATISM AND BIG IDEAS, USC ROSSIER'S NEW DEAN
URGES US NOT TO RETURN TO NORMAL

Story:

Kianoosh Hashemzadeh

Photos:

Bethany Mollenkof

PEDRO A. NOGUERA IS NOT AFRAID TO SPEAK HIS MIND.

He attributes this candor and gumption to his mother, a Jehovah's Witness who would take him and his siblings with her preaching, door-to-door.

To knock on strangers' doors, "you have to be unafraid," Noguera says. And while the hardest part was living in constant fear that "a kid from school would see me," the experience helped him develop a deep sense of conviction about his core values and beliefs.

He left the religion around age 15, but "the idea of standing up for what you believe in was already in me and has stuck with me ever since."

The standing up has been less literal this year, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted most interactions to in front of a computer. But the assertiveness remains, perhaps at odds with the calm of what has become Noguera's signature Zoom background: a world map cast in earth tones, green fronds of potted palms flanking either side of him.

On July 1, Noguera started his new role as the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education. That same evening, he appeared on MSNBC's *All In With Chris Hayes* to discuss the challenges of reopening schools. This would be one of many media appearances over the course of an anxious summer as the nation's educators grappled with the transition to online learning and longstanding equity issues brought into sharp focus by the pandemic and civil unrest.

Long hours are nothing new to Noguera. In graduate school at UC Berkeley, he juggled his studies with a full-time job as executive assistant to the mayor of Berkeley while raising two small children. After he graduated in 1989, he managed a load that included serving as board president of the Berkeley Unified School District, high school teacher at a continuation school, and raising two more of his five children, all while becoming a new assistant professor at UC Berkeley's School of Education.

He's been prolific in his scholarship all the while, writing or editing 15 books and publishing over 250 articles and book chapters. He's been on the faculty at UC Berkeley, Harvard, New York University and UCLA. "Before this whole concept of 'public intellectual' had its most recent rebirth," a former colleague at UCLA, Professor Walter Allen, says, "he was functioning in that capacity."

Noguera has emerged as a leader among a battalion of educators who have long been calling for a paradigm shift in how we educate. Now that the pandemic has turned life as we know it on its head and the movement for social and racial justice is demanding real change, the moment is ripe.

"We can't return to normal," Noguera told listeners during a webinar in June. "We have to return to something much better."

By better, Noguera means more challenging and engaging, more responsive to student needs, and, fundamentally, more equitable. While some believe the answer to the inequities that plague schools is to throw money at the problem, Noguera notes that many well-resourced schools often don't have great outcomes for students of color. While many schools certainly need resources, it's not so simple.

For Noguera, just as important as examining where things go wrong is looking at success stories. Schools where "Black and Latino kids are succeeding" offer solutions, Noguera believes. He urges educators to "learn from what works," and to closely examine "positive deviance"—low-income kids of color who succeed despite the odds they face. Noguera was once one of those kids, and he believes the key to helping more children succeed lies in creating schools where a holistic approach to education that addresses the cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs of students is at the forefront.



WHY EDUCATION?

Ron Dellums, the late congressman and former mayor of Oakland, encouraged Noguera early on to consider running for Congress. “Who knows if he was serious or not,” Noguera says humbly, but he did consider going into politics. In fact, Noguera was the student body president at UC Berkeley, where he helped organize the anti-apartheid movement, which led the university to divest more than \$4 billion in South African investments. This experience taught him that broad movements for social change can lead to real changes in institutions and society. However, Noguera realized as he was serving on the board of Berkeley Unifed and working

SEEING ALL SIDES

Pedro A. Noguera believes in the importance of respectful debate over important policy issues. When Proposition 209 was passed in California, effectively banning affirmative action, he invited Jack Citrin, a well-known political scientist, to his class to debate him.

“I felt it was not good enough for [my students] to hear my point of view; they had to hear the other side from someone who could articulate it well, and then make up their own minds,” Noguera says. “You have to convince people not based on sophistry but on the strength of the ideas and evidence.”

Noguera has debated those with opposing viewpoints time and again, and in early 2021 will publish a book, *A Search for Common Ground*, an exchange of letters between himself and Frederick Hess, a conservative thought leader in education.

“The ability to engage in civil debate must be central to the democratic process,” Noguera says. “You have to appeal to people’s ability to reason and understand issues, and then, hopefully, they’ll come up with the right decisions.”

In 2016, shortly after one of the most divisive elections in U.S. history, he spoke before a group of school board members in Oregon. Despite making a direct appeal for equity in educational opportunity before an all-White, largely conservative audience, he received a standing ovation. “I was speaking about values that many of them at least claim to believe in—fairness, justice, giving everyone a chance through education,” he says. “Those kinds of values resonate across the political divide.”

as chief of staff to Mayor Loni Hancock in Berkeley that, “I didn’t like raising money or telling people what I thought they wanted to hear.” He wasn’t cut out for politics.

Noguera’s early years of scholarship were dedicated to studying adult education and political change in the Caribbean, a curiosity fueled in part by a desire to explore his Caribbean heritage. In the early ’80s, he read the work of the Brazilian educator/philosopher Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Noguera deeply admired Freire’s work, and it has had a strong influence on his thinking and scholarship throughout his career.

In 1982, shortly after he started his doctoral studies, Noguera, joined by Patricia Vattuone, who would become his first wife, left California for Grenada, the 133-square-mile tropical island in the Caribbean. There, the couple had their first son, Joaquin, and Noguera carried out his doctoral research. (Tragically, Vattuone passed away in 2006 from cancer.)

“At the time, I was primarily interested in the political changes that were occurring in the country,” Noguera says. “I wanted to know how ordinary people were being affected by it, and to what degree literacy was serving as an avenue for democratic participation.”

Drawing on Freire and his experiences in Grenada, Noguera came to believe that “education must be central to any movement for change, otherwise people can be manipulated by politicians who appeal to their fears.”

While he had earned his teaching credential at Brown University, in addition to his bachelor’s and master’s in sociology, Noguera initially did not envision pursuing a career in education. He went to UC Berkeley to study sociology and viewed teaching as a “way to get to learn about the Oakland community” and earn extra cash to support himself and his family while in graduate school.

But after two years in Berkeley’s mayor’s office, working on some of the most difficult and complex problems facing the city—crime, homelessness and economic development—Noguera felt frustrated. When he took the job, he thought he was “in a position to make things happen,” he wrote in his 2003 book, *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education*. Noguera always knew he wanted to be a force for good. (His Twitter bio lists “changing the world” among his interests.) But he soon realized that “perhaps I had been too naïve,” he wrote. “Why should I

have thought that crime and poverty could be solved by one city, even as it plagued communities throughout the United States?”

Noguera was turned off by the grotesque amount of money involved in politics, and how changes pursued in a liberal city like Berkeley were often only symbolic. “The closer I got to the politicians,” he says, “the more cynical I got about politics. I truly believe that most politicians don’t lead; they follow public opinion, and, too often, work on behalf of the interest groups that fund them.”

When a friend and principal paid Noguera a visit from East Campus, an alternative school in Berkeley that had “become a dumping ground for troubled kids,” Noguera’s political pursuits abruptly ended. The principal brought with him a

“PEDRO RECOGNIZES THAT WHERE THERE HAVE BEEN MOMENTS OF PROGRESSIVE CHANGE, IT’S BEEN BECAUSE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THOSE PRESCRIBED ROLES HAVE PUSHED THE ENVELOPE AND THE ACCEPTED BOUNDARIES.”

— Walter Allen, UCLA Distinguished Professor of Education and Sociology

bright, charismatic Black student and thought Noguera might be able to help persuade him to run for student body president. While some might have dismissed the teen based on his appearance and background, Noguera and the principal saw potential.

Noguera, so moved by the visit, left his job for a position at East Campus, where he was tasked with educating students who had been labeled as too challenging and disruptive for traditional public school.

Noguera’s experience in the Berkeley mayor’s office had shown him how minimal the police’s impact had been in dealing with the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s, and he realized that a lot of his students were involved in the drug trade. Part of the issue, Noguera says, was about survival. They needed money, but there was more to it than that.

“While the police were focused on arresting the kids selling drugs on the street, I saw com-



HOME BASE

Noguera at work in his home office shortly after being appointed dean of USC Rossier.

plicity at the highest levels,” Noguera says. “The Black community was feeling the burden of the crack cocaine epidemic, but lots of people from other communities were buying the drugs and profiting off the sales. Lots of people and businesses were involved, and that wasn’t seen.”

This experience was one reason why Noguera has focused much of his scholarship on the educational and social issues facing males of color, inspiring such work as his 2009 book, *The Trouble With Black Boys . . . And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education*. “Sadly,” he writes in the introduction, “the pressures, stereotypes and patterns of failure that Black males experience often begin in schools.” Noguera wanted to change that by redefining the issue as an American challenge rather than a Black problem.

“My interest in education,” Noguera says, “has always focused on getting people to see how what’s happening outside of school impacts what happens inside of schools.” And his training as a sociologist has no doubt influenced his approach to education, Allen says, “and also his determination to achieve positive change within education, and to move the field, the practice and society towards social justice.”

Allen says that Noguera understands systems—especially bureaucratic ones. He has the ability to place schools within their historical

context, Allen adds, and understands “the political factors that are operating that sometimes move people to positions that, personally, they don’t even embrace.”

This is not to say that Noguera believes educators are just cogs in the wheel. Quite the contrary, Allen says: “He has a great appreciation for individuals operating within those spaces. He doesn’t give you a pass of simply saying, well, you’ve been swept along by the machine.” Instead, “he recognizes that where there have been moments of progressive change, it’s been because individuals within those prescribed roles have pushed the envelope and the accepted boundaries.”

MADE IN BROOKLYN

Like many of us at USC Rossier, I first met Noguera over Zoom. He wore a T-shirt with “Made in Brooklyn” across the front and spoke from his garden, where he cultivates a bounty of kale, peppers, tomatoes and onions.

Casual, yet attentive. Serious, yet quick to laugh. A true “*mensch*,” says Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Boston and former dean of UCLA’s Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, where Noguera was a Distinguished Professor of Education before joining USC Rossier.

Born in New York City in 1959, Noguera is the second of six children. His father, Felipe Noguera, the son of Venezuelan and Trinidadian immigrants, was a taxi driver and police officer. Millicent Noguera, his mother, is from Jamaica and stayed at home with the kids, a full-time job with no limit on overtime. “People often would ask my father, ‘How did you manage to send all six of your kids to college—and to such good ones?’” Noguera recalls. “And he’d say, he doesn’t know, ‘it must be their mother.’”

In Noguera’s early years, before they moved to Long Island, the family lived in Brownsville, a Brooklyn neighborhood Noguera describes as a place that “still hasn’t been gentrified.” Neither parent graduated from high school, but they deeply valued education. His father, once a member of the U.S. Merchant Marine, traveled extensively and loved reading; he believed that with a library card, you could get a free education.

The teenage Noguera was both an athlete and “accused of being a nerd” in school, experiences that exposed him to peers from all backgrounds. He made friends easily with a variety of students from his mostly White high school.

When it came time for his older brother to apply to college, an 11th grade teacher who saw his potential encouraged him to aim high. That brother was accepted to Harvard. “I just

“WE HAVE TO GO BEYOND CRITIQUE TO PROVIDE REAL GUIDANCE ON WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.”

— Pedro A. Noguera, USC Rossier Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean

assumed that I could go to a similar school and only applied to top schools myself,” Noguera says. He attended Brown University, where he studied American history and sociology, played rugby and attended apartheid protests alongside the likes of John F. Kennedy Jr., and found a mentor in the late Professor Martin Martel, a “chain-smoking” sociologist who took an interest in him during his sophomore year.

“Despite my working-class background,” Noguera writes in a recent essay, reflecting on his time at Brown, “attending racially integrated schools had provided me with a valuable form of social capital that made it possible for me to advocate for myself and others, navigate rules and barriers to pursue my goals, and form strategic alliances with mentors, friends and associates based on recognition of our common interests.”

A DEAN FOR PRACTICE, POLICY AND RESEARCH

Even over Zoom, Noguera is a man you want to listen to. “He’s the light of the room,” says his daughter Naima Noguera, a photographer and camera loader living in New York City. Allen, who has seen him in many settings, echoes this sentiment, describing him as an “authentic guy” who can “connect with people across lines [and] statuses.”

A Google search of “Pedro Noguera” will return over 100,000 results. He is incredibly active in the public realm and, in an interview with Erin Gruwell, host of the *Freedom Writers Podcast*, Noguera describes this as a “blessing.” A former trustee for the State University of New York, Noguera also advises many public officials on K–12 educational policy, including Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Austin Beutner and New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

“It’s not good enough to sit and critique,” Noguera says. “We have to go beyond critique to provide real guidance on what should be done.”

Though cynical about politics and impatient with the policy process, he’s not without policy suggestions. In a 2019 article published in *The Nation*, where Noguera is a member of the editorial board, he outlines seven suggestions to transform schools: funding special education; building capacity in failing schools rather than shutting them down; focusing on children’s physical and mental health; using standardized tests as a tool instead of a weapon; treating parents as partners rather than consumers; addressing the underlying issues that cause discipline problems; and shifting from top-down accountability to mutual accountability from a variety of stakeholders.

“He’s very collaborative and inspiring,” says USC Rossier Professor of Education Policy Julie A. Marsh, a member of the USC search committee that helped select the new dean. “There’s an excitement about the kind of energy [he brings]. He’s connected to the problems

that we’re facing but maintaining some optimism. I think we all need that right now.”

When the search for a new dean began in 2019, “we wanted to make sure that we found someone who had leadership in the three key areas our school focuses on: practice, research and policy,” Marsh says.

Shaun R. Harper, Provost Professor of Education and Business at USC Rossier and USC Marshall as well as director of the USC Race and Equity Center, has known Noguera for nearly 20 years. Throughout this span of time, Harper has found him to be “a warm person, serious scholar and courageous leader.” Noguera’s appointment, Harper says “is a significant win for our school and university. He embodies educational equity. We couldn’t have possibly found a better, more mission-aligned dean.”

Noguera’s years of public engagement made him an ideal fit for USC Rossier’s equity-focused mission, as did his extensive



GREEN THUMB

A longtime gardener, Noguera picks a pepper from his home plot.

research on such topics as urban school reform, the conditions that promote student achievement, and race and ethnic relations. His decades in the classroom have given him both practical experience and influenced his research.

“A big problem in our schools is that we don’t teach kids the way they learn,” Noguera said at a keynote address at the Buck Institute for Education in 2019. “We expect them to learn the way we teach. And when they can’t do it, we say there’s something wrong with them or their parents.” Noguera’s teaching style embodies this student-centric approach.

Shelby Kretz, a UCLA PhD candidate and advisee of Noguera’s, notes the inquisitiveness and curiosity that Noguera cultivates in the classroom, which Kretz believes “fuels his research ... because he truly is interested in understanding education from so many different perspectives.”

Earl Edwards, a doctoral advisee and teaching assistant of Noguera’s at UCLA, emphasizes how Noguera “actually focused on learning, rather than what was supposed to be taught.” Edwards also deeply appreciates Noguera’s openness for debate, and how he’s “willing to see you as an equal.”

“I’ve seen Pedro over the decades as a brilliant academic, a convener, a peacemaker,” Suárez-Orozco says. “I’ve also seen him as a truth-teller, and he always does it with no drama and with a big heart, which I think is very uncommon.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

Not just father to five, but also grandfather to four and uncle to a gaggle of nieces and nephews—family has always been central to Noguera. It’s easy to imagine, in pre-COVID times, the family’s back porch filled with loved ones, conversation and easy laughter.

Despite such a large extended family, plants outnumber the people at his home at a staggering ratio. In every nook and cranny, there is greenery.

One plant Noguera adores is the banana tree in his front yard. A school near his Culver City home gave the tree to him when it was just a sapling, barely a foot tall. In the four years since, under Noguera’s care, it has grown to more than 15 feet and borne fruit on two occasions. A fitting metaphor.

Starting a new position is never easy. Starting a new position during a viral pandemic and months of social unrest is even

harder. While Noguera has met many in the USC community via Zoom, “it’s not the same as interacting directly,” he says. “I’m a people person, and I feed off of interaction.”

Noguera and his wife, Allyson Pimentel, a psychologist, meditation teacher and incoming associate director of Mindful USC, have an 8-year-old daughter, Ava, whose adjustment to

online school hasn’t been easy. Like many parents, Noguera and Pimentel juggled their own work with that of home-school teacher in the spring and saw Ava struggle. She is now in a learning pod.

One blessing, Noguera notes, is that former Dean Karen Symms Gallagher left USC Rossier “in great shape.” The next challenge, he believes, “is to take [the school] to an even higher level of impact on the field of education.”

He sees the role of a dean as a “kind of a facilitator. ... I want to work with faculty, students and staff to make the school influential in the field.”

One of his first initiatives is a webinar series that will bring USC Rossier scholars together with other top education thinkers to consider the transformation of schools from a variety of angles. “I want Rossier, as a whole, to be in the mix of figuring out how to address the complex challenges facing schools,” Noguera says.

In addition to the webinar series, in his first year, Noguera plans to provide funding for a research initiative to uncover how racial injustice is perpetuated through education, launch a civic education initiative with a focus on fostering constructive debate skills, and begin an examination of USC Rossier’s degree programs to see if they are truly advancing equity. Reveta Franklin Bowers, chair of the USC Rossier Board of Councilors says that, “Given the challenges COVID-19 has imposed on our schools, faculty and students, combined with the disproportionate impact financially, racially, emotionally, it is critical for Rossier to be lead by someone with Dr. Noguera’s experience, skill set, conviction and voice.”

He will have lots of help, from faculty, staff and students, as well as USC leadership. “Dean Noguera will draw on his deep expertise as he assumes responsibility for upholding and advancing USC Rossier’s mission to strengthen urban education through cutting-edge research and real-world experience,” USC President Carol L. Folt says. “I know he will build on the school’s strong foundation to chart new paths in education and tackle the profound challenges that must be overcome if we are to advance our society. We are eager to support him as he hits the ground running.”

More than anything, Noguera believes in the power of educators.

“When the door closes, the teacher has a lot of power,” Noguera says, “but they don’t realize how much. We have to remind teachers that they do have power. And they have to use it for good.” —R

EDUCATION MUST LEAD THE WAY

When Pedro A. Noguera was installed as dean on Oct. 1, he shared a story from the late Israeli schoolteacher and child psychologist, Haim Ginott. Each year, Ginott received a letter from his principal, recounting the horrors he witnessed while imprisoned in a concentration camp:

My eyes saw what no person should witness: Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education. My request is this: Help your children become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths or educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

It’s this commitment to “create an educational system that teaches and reminds children of what it truly means to be human and humane” that Noguera believes USC Rossier must strive toward. Noguera urges us not to “allow the dismal realities of the present or the threats of the future to overwhelm us, to drive us toward rugged individualism, or to diminish our optimism about creating a better future.” For Noguera, the key is education, and its purpose is twofold: “to impart the skills and knowledge needed to function in society as it is” while “cultivat[ing] the creativity, critical thinking and curiosity that future generations will need, so that they have the ability to solve the many problems they will inherit.”

To view Dean Noguera’s installation remarks visit rose.in/NogueraInstall.

BRENDESHA

Associate professor of education and psychology and director of the Center for Empowered Learning and Development with Technology on growing up in Detroit, the digital equity gap and the effects of videos depicting racial violence on Black and Brown youths.

Interview:
Kianoosh Hashemzadeh
Illustration:
Heather Monahan

TYNES

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted many schools online, which has exacerbated existing digital equity problems. What are some of the problems, and how has the pandemic made them even worse?

It's been well-documented that across the country we have inequities with respect to access to devices and internet connection. A Pew Research Center study from 2018 showed that 25 percent of Black teens often or sometimes are unable to complete their homework because they do not have a device at home or an adequate internet connection. This is compared with about 13 percent of White teens and 17 percent of Latinx teens. My center conducted a survey of remote learning experiences in spring 2020 and saw similar findings. Though 94 percent of the sample of 11- to 19-year-olds had an internet connection, only 82 percent had a high-speed connection that allowed them to complete their schoolwork. Of those who reported not having sufficient high-speed internet access, 37 percent were Black, 27 percent were Latinx, 18 percent were White, 2 percent were biracial, 12 percent were East Asian and 3 percent were South Asian. When we look at cities across the country, we see similar patterns with engagement. Los Angeles Unified School District, for example, reported a 20-point gap in participation on the Schoology platform for Black and Latinx students compared with White students.

We also see problems on a host of other indicators, including exposure to challenging school materials. For example, our remote-learning survey showed White students found their schoolwork challenging more frequently than did Black students in the areas of English and math, and Latinx students in the areas of English, math, government and science. We've had similar findings with respect to participants seeing themselves represented in school materials. Whites are much more likely to endorse questions about representation across subjects than students of color.

Other troubling developments include the policing of Black and Brown bodies in online classrooms. There needs to be more research on this, but we've seen articles reporting students being disciplined for not engaging in remote learning, including not having their videos on. One teen in Michigan was sentenced to juvenile detention for not completing her assignments.

These are just a few problems on a very long list of inequities.

What are some of your current research projects, and how has the pandemic affected your work?

We have a project on anti-racist remote and online learning where we are looking at what middle, high school and college students say about their experiences during the pandemic, including their sense of online community: whether they were represented in the materials online, the quality of the work they were assigned, whether they had to just do worksheets instead of more meaningful kinds of activities that are culturally sustaining or interest-driven.

There's also the Lyle Spencer Award to Transform Education. It's a first-of-its-kind, nationally representative, longitudinal online survey of 11- to 19-year-olds' critical digital literacy skills. We're specifically trying to understand participants' general skills, as well as how they are able to critique race-related material. We've had to develop the digital literacy assessments we're going to use along with new scales because there are none that exist that account for the skills young people need to navigate a post-2020 digital landscape.

Viral videos of Black men and women dying at the hands of police ignited the Black Lives Matter movement, and you've been studying the impact of these videos on Black and Brown youths. What are your findings so far?

We're finding among a sample of Latinx and Black students between ages 11 and 19 that exposure to viral videos and images of police racial violence—and that includes seeing immigrants in cages, seeing police killings—is associated with PTSD. We are currently analyzing data to help us understand whether police racial violence or online racial discrimination is also associated with suicide ideation. This is the first study, to my knowledge, to explore these associations. The idea is to use our pilot data to get funding to further examine the role of technology in Black youth suicide, as there's been a dramatic increase.

With a lot of educators now teaching online, they don't have in-person interaction with students. Is there anything that you'd suggest they look out for?

If they have a new class, it's going to be important for them to get to know their students as individuals and know something about their

parents or families and their cultures. It's important to have one-on-ones with the kids and families to get to know their strengths and interests. The more you know about this amazing human being sitting in front of you, the more you can anticipate and recognize their needs, even if it's through the screen.

It's also important to create an engaging learning environment, to give students assignments where they see themselves represented in the materials. Teachers have to give students space to talk about current events. Their

“Once we deal with anti-Blackness, and we allow more of these Black, brilliant minds to create technologies, we will see technology live up to what people claimed it would be early on.”

lives should be a part of the curriculum. We also need more mental health staff so students will be able to connect with a culturally competent therapist if they are having problems.

Are there any recent technological advances that you're excited about in terms of their potential to be used in education?

Yes, one of my own apps that we're working on. It's called CRITmetric, and it's designed to teach kids to think critically about general and race-related messages they encounter online. It gives them a toolkit to critique and evaluate a range of digital materials. There's actually nothing out there—not a single program—that would prepare kids for this post-2016 landscape that specifically targets Black people and conservatives. This app would help them to recognize how foreign countries can spread misinformation for economic and political ends.

We thought technology was going to make the world more equitable, but we haven't seen that yet. Do you think we ever will?

I think once we deal with anti-Blackness, and we allow more of these Black, brilliant minds to create technologies, we will see technology live up to what people claimed it would be early on. But you have to let Black people compete, give them equal opportunities and watch how the field is transformed. —R

THE FUTURE OF POLICE IN SCHOOLS

Research shows officers don't make schools safer, but how do we create secure campuses without them?

Story:

Liz Dwyer

Illustration:

Chris Gash

Graffiti-covered walls, trash-strewn hallways and gun-toting Black and Latino students who are so violent that they bash open the head of a White teacher on the cafeteria floor during lunchtime.

That's the infamous beginning of the 1989 movie *Lean on Me*—and in case viewers don't feel scared enough by the visual onslaught of buck-wild juveniles, it's all set to the sonically jarring screams of Guns N' Roses front man Axl Rose belting out "Welcome to the Jungle."

What does it take to turn around such an out-of-control school? In the film, bullhorn- and bat-wielding Eastside High principal Joe Clark, portrayed by Morgan Freeman, relies heavily on campus security officers. In one early scene, Clark announces to the faculty that a newly hired dean of security "will be my avenging angel." Soon thereafter, a small army of these officers escorts a bunch of teenagers whom Clark deems "drug dealers, drug users and hoodlums" off an auditorium stage and out of the building.

The film's "based on a true story" depiction sent a clear message about what it takes to ensure safety and boost student achievement in a high school attended by students of color: zero-tolerance policies and a large law enforcement presence. America, it seemed, agreed. The film was a box office smash.

“Everyone needs to be safe in schools. No one can learn, nobody can work in an unsafe environment,” says Pedro A. Noguera, the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education, who has written extensively on racial disparities in school disciplinary practices.

However, the hiring by school districts of more police officers to patrol urban campuses serving mostly Black and Latino kids, Noguera says, “was always tied in with the idea that these schools were unruly and that you needed extra measures to ensure safety.”

Nowadays, that seems to mean keeping schools safe from 6-year-olds who are having a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

In February, body-camera footage released by the Orlando Police Department of the September 2019 arrest of Kaia Rolle went viral. The Black first-grader had thrown a tantrum because she wanted to wear her sunglasses inside the classroom.

“I don’t want handcuffs on, no, don’t put handcuffs on,” Kaia sobbed on the video. “Help me, help me, please, help me,” she cried.

“Defund the police’ is a starting point for reconsidering how we address security in schools,” Noguera says. “We should ask, ‘What supports do those schools need?’ In L.A., we have a 500–1 counselor-to-student ratio. Let’s address that. Let’s get more counselors, more social workers. In neighborhoods where there are issues of safety, let’s work with police to ensure kids can get to and from school safely. But their job is to protect, not to police the campus.”

HOW WE GOT HERE

In 1999, two high school students—teens who did not fit the description of whom America had been taught to fear—forever changed schooling in the United States. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, White 12th-graders at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, murdered 13 people, wounded 24 others and then turned their guns on themselves.

The epidemic of school shootings that started with Columbine got people scared, Noguera says. “So several states adopted

(SROs) or sworn law enforcement officers who have a presence in schools.

Adrian H. Huerta, an assistant professor of education at USC Rossier, says he published research in 2019 about the kind of violence that Latino boys experience in schools, and a consistent theme emerged: the role of school resource officers.

“Often, they’re the perpetrators and instigators who push boys of color to react,” Huerta says. “From what the students shared, school resource officers would provoke them and call them out to elicit a response. So what happens when you’re 16 or 17, getting called out in front of friends? You respond. And then what happens? You get arrested. And then what happens? You go to juvie. And then you have a record.

“It’s the perfect storm to get them on that school-to-prison pipeline,” Huerta says.

The very first standardized, districtwide SRO program began in the 1950s in Flint, Michigan, says Akua Nkansah-Amankra, a PhD candidate and research assistant at USC Rossier whose areas of focus include school discipline, restorative justice and critical race theory. However, she’s found that records going back as far as 1939 show that major cities like Indianapolis and Los Angeles were using police officers in schools.

“From my research and what I know about police officers being used at that point in time, it seems like a huge part of that was around controlling students with disabilities,” Nkansah-Amankra says.

“The system of policing has always been used for people who are considered deviant in some ways,” she says. “For the longest time, it was considered absolutely normal to exert force on kids with disabilities.”

Around the time when the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was illegal through the *Brown v. Board* decision, “it was important to perpetuate a narrative of Black people, especially Black students, being dangerous and having the potential to cause harm to White students,” Nkansah-Amankra says. Then, “White parents could say, ‘It’s not about race. It’s about keeping my child safe.’”

“The popularizing of police officers in schools is directly tied to the Reagan era and the Clinton era,” Nkansah-Amankra adds. “Democrats and Republicans were basically competing with each other to see who would be the toughest on crime.”

“IT WAS IMPORTANT TO PERPETUATE A NARRATIVE OF BLACK PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY BLACK STUDENTS, BEING DANGEROUS AND HAVING THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE HARM TO WHITE STUDENTS. [THEN] WHITE PARENTS COULD SAY, ‘IT’S NOT ABOUT RACE. IT’S ABOUT KEEPING MY CHILD SAFE.’”

— Akua Nkansah-Amankra, USC Rossier PhD candidate

In the aftermath of nationwide protests and calls for defunding the police, following the killing of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement officers in Minneapolis, students, parents, teachers and community members are fed up with the arrest-a-Black-first-grader approach to school safety. Instead, they’re demanding that school boards reevaluate the use of police in schools, and in some cases, cancel contracts with police departments altogether.

zero-tolerance policies. And with the zero-tolerance policies, you started to see more districts bringing police in.”

What policing a campus looks like varies from school district to school district, as does who’s even doing the job. The most recent Indicators of School Crime and Safety report from the U.S. Department of Education defines school security staff as security guards, security personnel, school resource officers

In 1983, L.A. Police Chief Daryl Gates co-founded the Drug Abuse Resistance Education, or D.A.R.E., program with the Los Angeles Unified School District. The war on drugs-era initiative regularly brought into schools police trained under Gates’ aggressive, paramilitary style leadership. Once on campus, officers talked to students about drugs using a zero-tolerance framework—they could even report to officers if a parent or guardian had any drugs in their home. Since then, D.A.R.E. has become a staple of schools nationwide.

To students, the work that an officer does in that setting—or even just standing in a hallway during a passing period—is very similar to what they do in the community. “Which is to remind them that they’re being surveilled. That they’re being watched,” Nkansah-Amankra says. Well-meaning people may want to see SROs or other security staff in schools as “Officer Friendly,” but “that hasn’t necessarily stopped cops from engaging in active violence against students,” she says.

After Columbine, school security “got

more state and federal funding and focus,” Huerta says. And in the years after 9/11, additional funding for security personnel and military-grade weapons poured into districts. LAUSD made headlines in 2014 after public records revealed that the district had a mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicle made for combat in Iraq, as well as grenades, rocket launchers and assault rifles.

“When I hear law enforcement agencies are collecting military weaponry, it makes me think they’re preparing for a war on the streets with young people,” Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors MFA Art ’19 told the *Los Angeles Daily News*. “If you are relating to students in K–12 as a potential criminal, then when you see them get into a fight in a school, instead of thinking, ‘This is a kid in a fight, they need to go to the principal’s office,’ they’re going to see a crime.”

“We have to ask, ‘What creates a safe and orderly environment?’” Noguera says. “And it’s not the presence of men with guns. In fact, it has the opposite effect. I see a bunch of people

with guns, I don’t feel safe; I feel like, ‘Wow, why do we need so many men with guns here?’”

According to the Indicators of School Crime and Safety report, 61.4 percent of public schools said that during the 2017–2018 school year, they had one or more security staff members present at least one day per week. That’s up from 41.7 percent during 2005–2006.

The data also show that security staff are more likely to be concentrated in schools with higher minority enrollment. During the 2017–2018 school year, 67.4 percent of campuses where students of color were more than three-fourths of the student body reported having security staff.

In comparison, 58.3 percent of campuses where students of color were less than one-fourth of all students had security staff.

RACIAL BIAS IN SCHOOL POLICING

Noguera went to Columbine after the shooting and spent some time talking to the staff.

“How come no one noticed these boys in



PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES / AL SEIB

← L.A. PROTESTS

Students, teachers and community members marched to LAUSD headquarters this summer to urge the district to defund school police.

LAUSD CUTS SCHOOL POLICE BUDGET BY 35 PERCENT

IN LATE JUNE, after pressure from a coalition of organizations including Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, United Teachers Los Angeles and the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, the Los Angeles County Unified School District voted to reduce the school police budget from \$70 million to \$45 million. Sixty-five officers of the Los Angeles Schools Police Department's 471 employees have been laid off, and police presence at schools has been reduced.

In a statement, UTLA President Cecily Myart-Cruz credited "the power and passion in the streets across L.A. and this country, uplifting the voices of Black students, educators and families [for making] this happen."

Calls for reducing and eliminating police in schools are not new, and evidence shows an overwhelming racial disparity in the number of Black youths who come into contact with police in L.A. schools. A study from UCLA's Million Dollar Hoods Project, which tracked the activities of the Los Angeles School Police Department from 2014 to 2017, found that of the department's 3,389 arrests, 2,724 citations and 1,282 diversions, "Black youth comprised 25 percent of the total arrests, citations and diversions, despite representing less than 9 percent of the student population."

The budget cuts will be reallocated to hire more counselors, social workers and other staff. A special committee, the Reimagining School Safety Task Force, was also convened earlier this summer and is expected to offer new solutions for creating safe campuses.

FEATURE

the trench coats and doing Nazi salutes?" he says he asked. The reply: "Yeah, we just thought they were strange. It didn't fit our definition of what an at-risk youth was. They had good grades. They came from middle-class families."

"So much of it is rooted in assumptions about where the threat lies," Noguera says. "You look at the evidence. The people most likely to shoot up a school are White males. You don't see Black males or females shooting up schools—or White females. But no one is targeting White males based on some profile."

"We know there's a racialized context to the presence of police in schools and how aggressive they are with students of color especially," Huerta says. "I say Black and Latino, but it's also Native youth. It's also Southeast Asian youth. It's also Pacific Islanders that bear the brunt of overpolicing in K-12."

Indeed, Parkland, Florida, school shooting survivor and March for Our Lives co-founder David Hogg recently wrote on Twitter, "Putting cops in schools is a threat to school safety that endangers the lives of millions of black, brown and indigenous children."

It's not unusual to see news stories of what happens to children of color who interact with school resource officers or other security staff on campus.

In November 2019 at John C. Fremont High School, a majority-Latino campus in L.A., more than two dozen Los Angeles Police Department officers responded to a fight on campus by using pepper spray. This wasn't the first time police had used the potent inflammatory agent on students. In June 2016, police responded with pepper spray to an altercation between students; at least 16 students



and one officer were exposed to the spray. "I was just in the crowd and the cops just started pepper-spraying everyone," one bystander told reporters after the incident in 2016. "They pepper-sprayed, like, 30 kids."

And in December 2019, footage of a school resource officer at Vance County Middle School in Henderson, North Carolina, also went viral on social media. The now-fired officer can be seen picking up and repeatedly body-slammings an 11-year-old Black boy to the ground.

"I don't care what happened," the boy's grandfather, Pastor John Miles, told local reporters. "My grandson should never have been attacked by a grown man that we trust in law enforcement."

"Study after study after study tells us school resource officers don't work in schools," Huerta says. "From the youth that I've interviewed, [SRO's are] the ones body-slammings kids. They're the ones spraying Mace in the cafeteria when there's a fight. They're the ones searching kids, grabbing them everywhere and trying to find a weapon when these kids have nothing on them."

Students carry that anger with them, Huerta says, "and then they pop off in class."

Most people "don't realize how this results in criminalization," Noguera says. "Kids are now being arrested for offenses that were never criminal before. An argument with a teacher gets heated. Next thing you know, a police officer is called. Then the child is being arrested for resisting arrest when it could have been de-escalated. It should never have gotten to that point."

WHAT DOES A SAFE SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?

Historically, big school districts invest "millions and millions of dollars into campus police," Huerta says. Instead of buying military-grade equipment, we have "an opportunity to reallocate those funds into education, into health care in the community and into other community service programs."

So, what would an ideal school look like staffing-wise if that money went elsewhere?

Change can't happen in a vacuum, Huerta cautions. "Instead of fixing the individual issues, we need bigger solutions—like bigger anti-poverty solutions," he says. "How do we as a society really take care of and invest in people and families and community in a real way? I think those are bigger questions that schools cannot answer by themselves."

That said, along with expanding the number of school counselors, "we need a social worker in every school or we need a social worker that rotates between two or three schools to build relationships," Huerta says.

Or, what if master of social work students were put in schools? "I would love for it to be five or six interns," he says, and they need to be a sustained presence at a school several times per week. Otherwise, "it turns into how school nurses might be at one school one day a week and that person is doing triage for kids all day."

Keep in mind, Noguera says, "if the school is staffed by a bunch of adults who don't know the kids, then just bringing in counselors and social workers is not going to be good enough. They need to actually know the community where they are."

Nkansah-Amankra says whatever staffing or policy changes are made, it's critical schools use an intersectional, holistic approach. "Even when school districts change their policies to not use physical force against students—or they may reduce the number of incidents for

FEATURE

which a student may get suspended for—oftentimes those rules don't apply to students with disabilities," she says. "Or there's some kind of loophole that still makes it OK to use that type of force against them."

And, if that holistic, relationship-building approach isn't taken, Huerta says, a social worker might just "interact with students and say, 'Oh, this family is dysfunctional. Those kids need to go foster care.' And then that changes the trajectory of these kids."

"You would have adults present on campus with—and this is the key—moral authority," Noguera says. "You need adults around that the kids will confide in. If they trust the adults, they'll let them know, 'There's going to be a

the foresight to realize she could do the job.

"That's what I mean by moral authority," he says. "You have to recruit with that kind of goal in mind—people who have that kind of connection to the community. That's who you're looking for."

Huerta says we also need moral courage from school leaders and superintendents to set "very clear expectations of when to call school resource officers or school police or even a local police department."

"If it's two kids fighting because someone made a pass at someone's girlfriend or boyfriend or whatever, do we really need to call the police? Do we really need to cite them for assault or battery? In the past it used to be like,

"IF IT'S TWO KIDS FIGHTING BECAUSE SOMEONE MADE A PASS AT SOMEONE'S GIRLFRIEND OR BOYFRIEND OR WHATEVER, DO WE REALLY NEED TO CALL THE POLICE? DO WE REALLY NEED TO CITE THEM FOR ASSAULT OR BATTERY?"

— Adrian Huerta, USC Rossier Assistant Professor of Education

fight after school; someone should come talk to this girl because she's upset.' The kids will tell you—that's why I say safety is a product of relationships."

And there are people in the community who can help.

"Typically, at a middle school, the security guard is a big man because the theory is you want someone who is physically intimidating to keep the school secure," Noguera says. But at a middle school Noguera worked with in West Oakland, California, the school made an unexpected choice.

"This school decided to hire a 63-year-old grandmother to be the security guard," he says. "And the reason why is because she had worked before as a parent liaison and they knew she knew the community, she knew the kids, she knew the staff. And so, they knew that was the kind of person they needed, not someone physically intimidating. I give the school credit for having

go home for two days and cool off."

The broader community also needs to have the moral courage to recognize that the way school resource officers and other security staff have interacted with students is not the answer—even if something horrible happens.

"All it takes is one incident—someone coming with a gun or someone getting shot," Huerta says. "Or someone getting beat up really bad. One viral video will make parents pause and respond and be like, 'Well, now we need police again, because look what happened at that school. Is my kid next?'"

"Fear should not guide our policies," says Noguera. Instead, we need to "break the cycle of violence by asking different questions. That's why I say you ask, 'OK, where do we see safety in schools, and what makes those schools safe?' It's not about ... [having] the best metal detectors and the biggest guards with guns." —R

‘YOU HAVE TO LEAD WITH HEART AND EMPATHY’



USC President Carol L. Folt

USC President Folt in conversation with Dean Noguera

Pedro A. Noguera’s appointment as the USC Rossier School of Education’s new dean was among the first dean appointments made by USC President Carol L. Folt since she assumed her role in 2019. Shortly after Noguera’s term began, Folt interviewed him. In the interview below, the two swap roles, with Noguera asking the questions. Here, they discuss leading USC during a pandemic, the importance of keeping dialogue open and how her experiences as a community college transfer student shaped her perspective on college access.



Dean Pedro A. Noguera

Interview by:
Pedro A. Noguera, Emery Stoops and
Joyce King Stoops Dean
Illustration:
Chris Gash



PEDRO A. NOGUERA: The pandemic is having a far-reaching impact on society generally and education specifically. The focus has largely been about reopening, but how are you thinking about the possibilities that will be created as a result of the pandemic, particularly for higher education?

Carol L. Folt: As a dean and as a president, you and I both want to make sure that all that we’re doing now has a positive effect today and is an enabler for ideas ahead.

Here are three examples. First, the pandemic is making us focus even more on disparities in educational access. It’s critical that we find a way to make sure people are not being left behind by the technological explosion that is happening in education. We can continue to build these fabulous online learning experiences, but we have to be deeply mindful that not all students may be able to access them. If schools don’t ensure students have access, we could see an increasing gap between haves and

have-nots. At USC, we need to make it our mission to fight that gap in our own programs and help K–12 schools in our communities in that fight, as well.

Second, the pandemic is intensifying trends that are already happening—including high-octane technological and scientific innovation, and changes in how and where people work. People say 40 percent of the jobs of today are going to be technologically changed in just four years. This is our moment to prepare students so that they can leave USC not only ready to be part of this new workforce, but ready to help create it.

Third, the pandemic is allowing us to evaluate where learning takes place. I’m excited that we are creating universities that go with us in our pockets. We’re asking question such as, “What is telelearning going to look like?” and “How can we use telelearning to bring in and educate people from different backgrounds, bring in students that never thought they’d make it to a university?”

Before becoming a university president, you were a scientist, and I imagine you did work in the lab. How do you do collaborative work online?

I still think of myself as a scientist and still do some research. As a field biologist, I spent a lot of time in my waders, sampling streams and throwing nets. But, for every day I spent in the field, I spent maybe six months doing the chemical and data analysis with my team of collaborators—students, postdocs and other faculty. Scientists are learning how to do many things in new ways—even to collect data using remote sensing and databases. Scientists are very collaborative and have

“I’ve been so excited to hear that Dornsife is mailing out home laboratory packages to students. The good news is a lot of science begins before the high-tech and the hands-on experience.”

worked online for years. That, of course, is getting easier every year.

But teaching science online is difficult because so much of the learning comes from hands-on laboratory work. I’ve been so excited to hear that Dornsife is mailing out home laboratory packages to students. The good news is a lot of science begins before the high-tech and the hands-on experience. It involves the conception of the problem and the design of the experiments, and that type of collaboration can be done quite effectively online. Experiments don’t need to be high-tech to be deeply challenging. Residential education will be necessary, but you can do a lot before you get there.

One of the features that distinguishes USC is its innovative approach to higher education. We also live in Los Angeles, and we're surrounded by schools that are serving very low-income kids and are struggling. How do we make sure that USC, as an institution, is contributing to the educational life of the city?

I like to think that USC is a private university with a public heart. Our mission is deeply rooted in the collective good. We get the best faculty and students, not because they want to go into an ivory tower that doesn't have responsibility to communities, but because they think by coming here, they may have more flexibility so they can act quickly and innovatively in communities. Rossier is a great example of one of our schools that has never separated itself from Los Angeles. It's always been in partnership with L.A., with L.A. County and with Southern California.

We need to turn to leaders like you, and the programs that Rossier is already developing, and give you the help you need. That's exactly what a great university will do if it truly wants to be an anchor for a major urban center like Los Angeles.

I've often wondered why it is that university towns don't have the best public schools. I think it's because there's a separation, so figuring out how we engage the local community is really important.

Your question brings to mind the USC College Advising Corps, which I know is a big initiative at Rossier. The program takes talented graduates, trained by our staff, and places them as counselors in local schools that would otherwise have virtually no college counseling. The results are phenomenal. For example, when one of these advisers is brought in, schools that might have had 30 to 40 percent of their students applying for college can more than double their applications and help the students successfully apply for financial aid in the next year. These results tell you that every one of those kids wants to go to college. So, more of those programs and more programs like USC's Neighborhood Academic Initiative are desperately needed.

There's so much political polarization these days. I've written a book with a conservative writer on education, touching on all

the controversies of the last several years, and we did it to demonstrate that we can disagree in a reasonable manner without degenerating to name-calling and attacking each other. I'm hoping that that spirit lives in the university. How do we keep dialogue open?

I honestly think you have to lead with heart and empathy. When you're a president or a dean, everyone's going to want you to denounce things. I don't think our job is to denounce. Our job is to hold the line on important issues while always making sure that we create a space for reasoned debate. For this to work at a university, everyone has to embrace this mission and treat each other with respect when they are debating across different viewpoints.

When you arrived at USC last summer, seven universities were in the middle of an admissions scandal, and USC was one of the universities implicated. How do we ensure that we continue to keep the university accessible to students of the highest caliber, but from all backgrounds, and make sure that something like this is part of our past?

One of the most damaging things was the idea that only certain people get into top universities. We need to continue to demonstrate that that is not true at USC. To begin with, what does our student body look like? How do we distribute financial aid? What are we doing to make sure students can come? Are we truly need-blind? One of the first things I did was start the program that said if you come from a family with an annual income less than \$80,000 a year, you get free tuition at USC. That program launched this semester.

Today, two-thirds of USC undergraduates receive some form of financial aid. In 2019-2020, the university provided nearly \$295 million in need-based grant funding from all available sources, and we expect to award financial aid to over 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students by the end of this academic year. Our need-based grants have increased by 38 percent over the last five years, far outpacing tuition increases. Overall, the university has one of the most generous financial aid pools in the country and is a nationally recognized leader in recruiting, enrolling and supporting low-income students.

In addition, the USC transfer program is

one of the strongest ways we bring in students from all backgrounds. About one of every four transfer students who attend a private Association of American University-member university enrolled at USC. We need to keep pushing those programs and ourselves further, to get out into neighborhoods where kids may not be thinking they could ever come here and help them believe that USC could be a place for them, too.

I heard you say you were a community college transfer.

I was. I dropped out of Ohio State. I worked in a bank and then as a waitress on the pier in Santa Barbara. I put myself through school at Santa Barbara City College and then at UC Santa Barbara. My own experience taught me that students who come in from less traditional backgrounds bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, and that's one of the reasons I try so hard to open those doors. —R



THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN LIGHTLY EDITED FOR LENGTH AND CLARITY.

Cars line up at Palm Springs Desert High for one of the school's tech depots in early September.

MOVING K-12 ONLINE

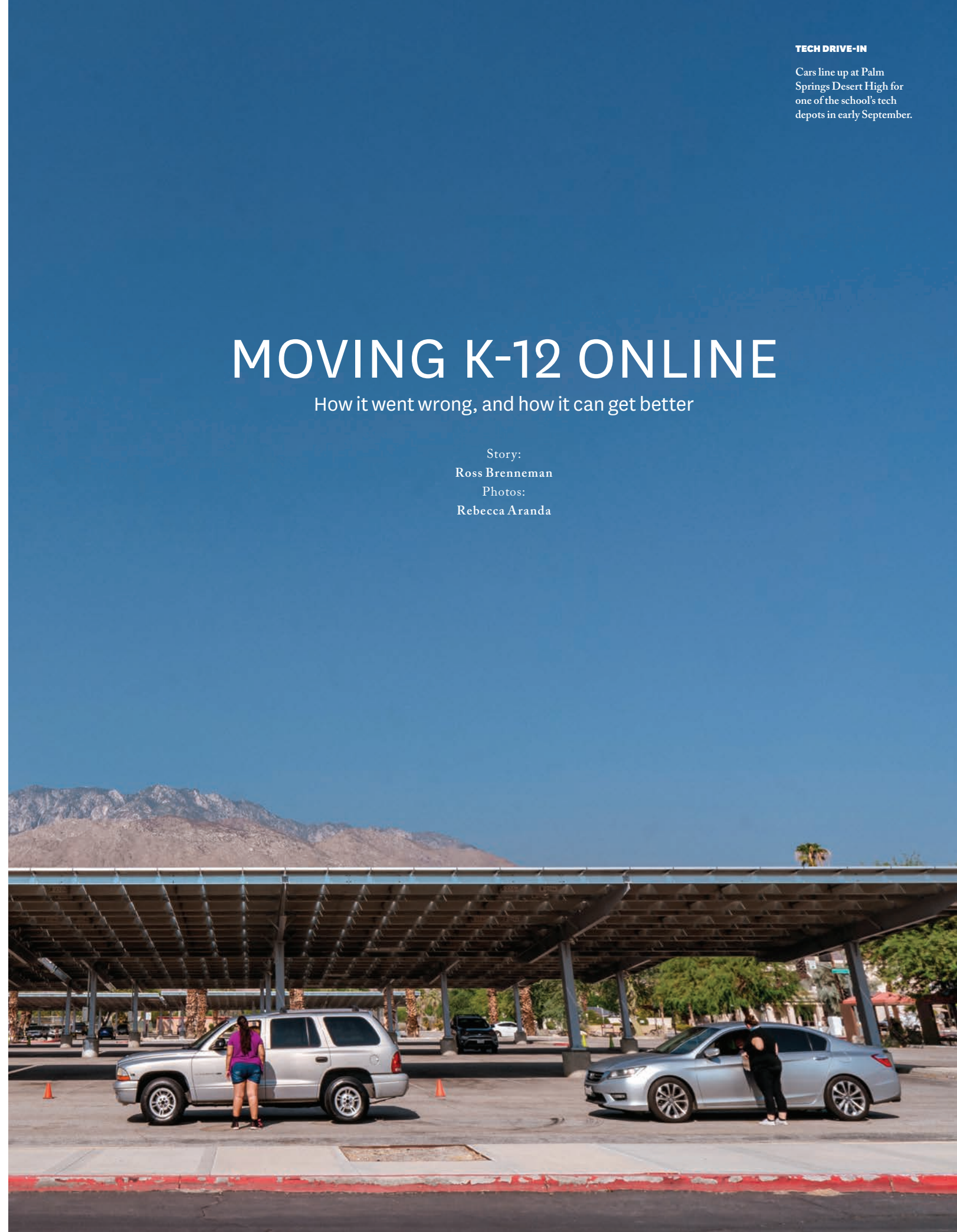
How it went wrong, and how it can get better

Story:

Ross Brenneman

Photos:

Rebecca Aranda



As ever, the sun is shining on Palm Springs, California. In the parking lot of Palm Springs High School on an early September morning, a small line of cars waits under a perfect blue sky.

School staff members venture out from under the shade of parking covers, greeting the cars of parents and students, providing them with laptops for the coming school year.

Palm Springs Unified School District is a 1-to-1 district, where each student receives some kind of digital learning device. Those devices are more central than ever this year, as a way to ensure continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parent Emiliana Perez is back in line for this “tech depot” because the microphone on the first Chromebook she borrowed didn’t work. Her son is going into his sophomore year, but he’s optimistic the pandemic will be over by his senior year.

Rommel Lopez is in line to get his youngest son a laptop because his oldest son needed the family Chromebook for college.

And Juan Flores says his children have been using his personal laptop sometimes, “but I don’t like that because it has less restrictions and they get distracted.”

Amid the varied and difficult problems that education leaders faced in the spring of 2020, perhaps none have posed and continue to pose as great a challenge as technology—connecting teachers and students for the sake of learning. In the aftermath of a wayward semester, district leaders are taking away lessons from what went wrong, but also what went right.

“One of my frustrations as an administrator over these years is how behind we’ve tended to be in technology as school districts,” says Palm Springs Superintendent Sandra Lyon EdD ’17. “It’s not something that has been targeted or funded.”

The mismatch between what districts have wanted to do and what they’ve been able to do has left many administrators, educators, parents and students frustrated. Along the way, it’s further exposed the vulnerabilities of the American education system.



1

TECH FOR ALL

1 Rommel Lopez picks up a Chromebook for his youngest son. The family has a laptop at home, but Rommel’s oldest son needs it for college work.

2 Joziah, who came to the tech depot with his mother, says “this year has been tough.”



2

A TECHNOLOGY DESERT

Forty-five thousand people live in Palm Springs year-round. But Los Angeles elites and other tourists flock to this desert resort in the winter, more than doubling the population for the season. Spread over nearly 100 square miles, Palm Springs is otherwise a sparse city in the shadow of the San Jacinto Mountains.

Though Palm Springs is not a big city, the school district that serves it is relatively large. Because it takes in several surrounding cities, Palm Springs Unified has an enrollment of about 23,000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income in the area, at \$50,361 per year, falls more than \$10,000 below that of Riverside County, in which it is located. About one in six residents lives below the poverty line.

As the pandemic forced schools shut in March, the district mobilized to deliver devices

and more than 4,300 internet hot spots. The district runs tech depots three times a week to continue meeting demand.

But like in many areas, supplies have dwindled. The electronic sign outside a Desert Hot Springs High School tech depot notes the current unavailability of hot spots. Lyon is aware of how badly these supplies are needed, that there are racial disparities in access to technology and that low-income households often have to share technology. Some homes have several generations of families, or multiple families, living under one roof. Many either share the same computer, or have several computers accessing the household’s network and dragging down internet speeds.

“I was stunned by how fewer than half the districts in our county had devices before the pandemic,” Lyon says. “Think about the inequities of how a student can go home and the only way to access the internet is on their mom’s phone.”

The Riverside County Office of Education Foundation launched an “All for One” initiative to help raise money to help get devices and internet hotspots to more students, but Lyon is adamant that the federal and state governments need to do more.

“Closing the digital divide needs to be more than a slogan,” she says, “but that we’re still raising money through foundations says a lot.”

DIGITAL EQUITY

On Jan. 21, 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed the United States’ first known case of COVID-19, the sickness caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.

For the next month, the U.S. had no more than 15 known cases. Leaders at the federal and state level repeatedly urged calm. So the nation got on with life.

On Feb. 25, director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Nancy Messonnier advised parents and schools to consider the possibility of internet-based learning in the event that COVID-19 did spread. In a press conference the next day, President Donald Trump said that, “We’re very, very ready for this.”

Just over two weeks later, on March 13, with 565 reported cases of COVID-19 in the U.S., most of America shut down. Not only did the pandemic catch districts off guard, but knowing what kind of resources to commit early on proved frustrating amid a jumble of public-health advice, and sometimes no advice at all, from regional, state and federal leaders.

“While people expected us to deliver high-quality distance learning at the drop of a hat,” Lyon says, “we didn’t have the infrastructure to do that.”

And it wasn’t just Palm Springs that experienced difficulties. In North Dakota, there were schools that couldn’t get laptops. Maryland students that couldn’t log in to classes. Cyber attacks in New Jersey.

A nationally representative March 2020 survey of school and district leaders by *Education Week* found that 41 percent of districts reported that they “[could] not productively provide remote/e-learning activities to every child in the district,” while only 22 percent of respondents said they could.

A June 2020 report from education non-

“One of my frustrations as an administrator over these years is how behind we’ve tended to be in technology as school districts. It’s not something that has been targeted or funded.”

—Sandra Lyon EdD ’17, Palm Springs Unified School District Superintendent

profit Common Sense Media and Boston Consulting Group found that of 50 million American students, 30 percent of students lacked either reliable internet or a home device with which to stay connected to school. Nine million students lacked both.

Thus, communities with more resources were better able to cope with the changes to the school year, says Stephen J. Aguilar, an assistant professor of education at USC Rossier who studies digital equity.

“Often, people think of technologies in terms of products, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technol-

RESOURCES

WATCH
SOLUTION EXCHANGE: ACCESS TO ONLINE LEARNING

USC Rossier’s Center EDGE brought together experts in broadband and online learning to discuss how to expand internet access to all students. edge.usc.edu/resources

READ
“GUIDELINES AND TOOLS FOR PROMOTING DIGITAL EQUITY”

In this report, Assistant Professor Stephen Aguilar contextualizes the digital equity crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and offers solutions. rossier.usc.edu/how-colleges-can-face-the-digital-equity-gap

“We live in a time where technology has formed an interconnected ecosystem. You can’t just give [products to] communities in need without first attending to how a given technology can or can’t be imbedded into their infrastructure or environment.”

—Stephen J. Aguilar, USC Rossier Assistant Professor of Education

ilies to adapt: Do they have a quiet room? Do they have multiple computers? Is their internet fast enough? Can they watch their child while they’re “attending class”?

A multitude of media and scholarly reports demonstrated a widespread failure to reach and engage students with special needs as well as students living in difficult economic situations.

“When you have something happening like this, without a federal plan or regional plan, there was this patchwork of approaches,” Lyon says. “One county was doing something different than a neighboring county.”

ON THE OTHER SIDE

Monrovia, California, makes for a strong visual contrast to Palm Springs, even if both sit in the shadow of mountains. A verdant suburb just northeast of Los Angeles, Monrovia has a much smaller enrollment than Palm Springs—just over 5,000 students.

Monrovia’s median income is also well above that of Palm Springs. It has one-third of Palm Springs’ poverty rate. By most economic measures available through the U.S. Census, the average Monrovia family also does better than the average family in the rest of Los Angeles County.

And yet here, too, reliable computer and internet access has been an ongoing issue.

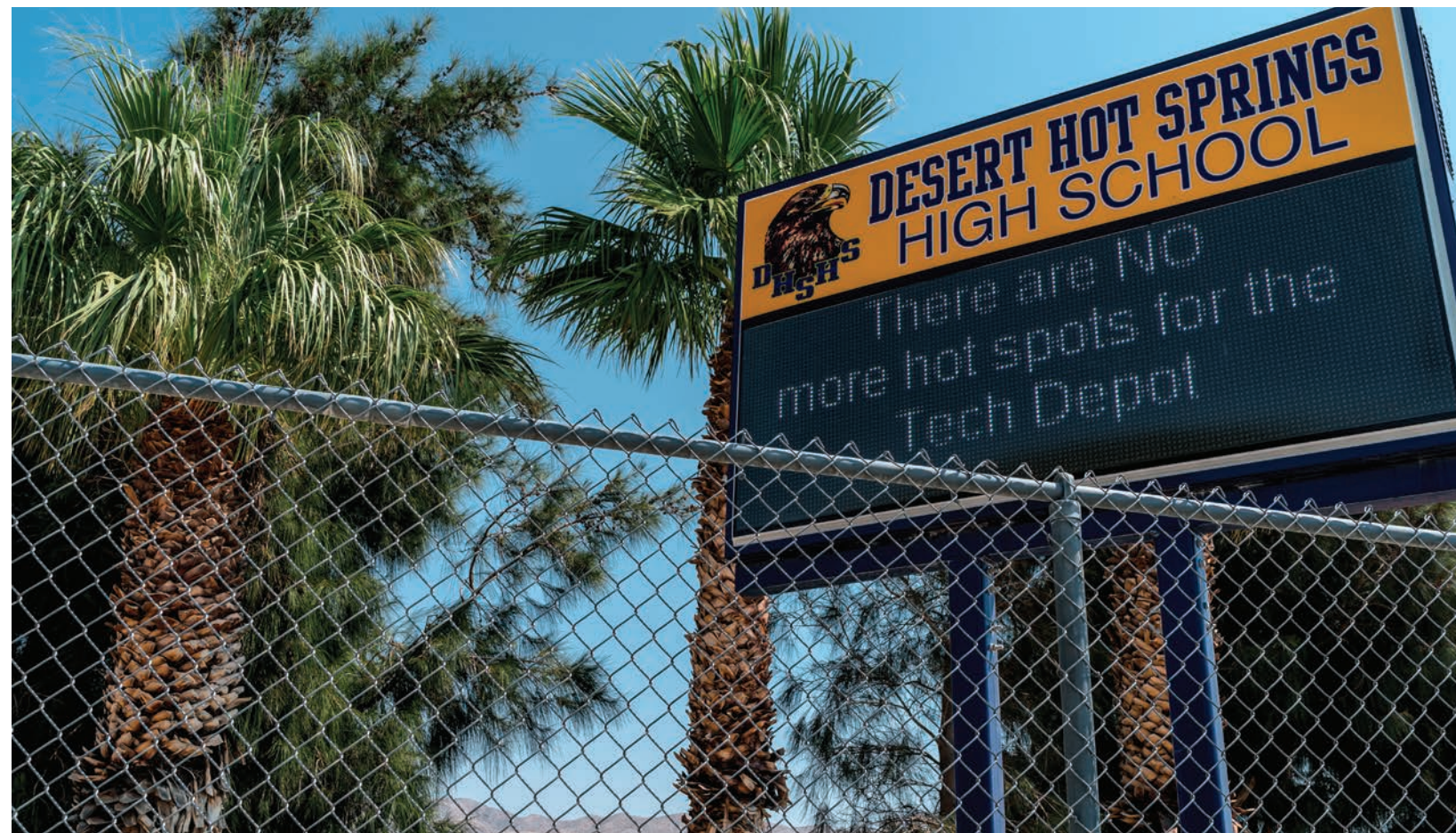
“So many families tried signing up for internet for the first time,” says Monrovia Unified School District Superintendent Katherine Thorossian EdD ’09. “The company would ask for something they didn’t have—a Social Security number or a credit card.”

In order to secure internet for all students last spring, the district negotiated with a local company, Giggle Fiber, and put it on the district’s tab. The costs have been high, but the consequences of inaction might have been higher.

As if to illustrate that, Thorossian describes an all-staff meeting she held this summer where she urged flexibility and adaptability, especially when there were so many technology issues likely to occur. In the middle of that speech, her internet cut out.

As metaphors go, it’s a bit much.

Inauspicious as that might seem, Monrovia has rallied to the occasion, Thorossian says. One of its biggest successes came over the summer: The district initiated a summer school trial effort geared toward below-grade-level readers and English-learners in elementary school.



They looked at where engagement dropped off to learn where communication with families needed to improve and where to create more student agency. A pre-test/post-test model showed signs of success.

“No one wanted to go into the year believing we wouldn’t be able to make a difference,” Thorossian says. “To have proof in front of us that we could be effective on a small scale meant we could do it on a large scale, and that was powerful.”

Parent engagement has also soared, she notes. Parenting and counseling support groups that had started before the pandemic were able to be sustained and grown because of the newfound familiarity with videoconferencing.

“If I had three in-person presentations, I would not have had 1,000 people show up,” Thorossian says.

PLANNING AHEAD

Likewise, adapting to the pandemic has led to improvements in Palm Springs.



TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

1 A sign outside of Desert Hot Springs High School notifies parents and students that they have run out of hotspots. Students, however, can get on a waiting list for the devices.

2 A sophomore in the Palm Springs School District exchanges his malfunctioning Chromebook for a new one.

“People have new skill sets and new pathways,” Lyon says. “How we deliver instruction will change forever.”

Noting the inflexibility of large institutions, Lyon says that her district has nevertheless re-examined a lot of traditional attitudes. She points to her athletic directors, whom she says once scoffed at the idea of students in the district’s online learning academy participating in sports at a sister brick-and-mortar school. And yet, on a recent Zoom call, when the notion of playing sports came up, the same administrators welcomed such participation.

“People have different expectations now,” Lyon says. “It’s helped us see the forest for the trees.”

Education leaders will also, eventually, have to envision what comes after. The pandemic has made it clear that states and districts have not matched investments in technology with investments in online learning as its own kind of pedagogy.

Districts will also need to confront the consequences of the digital equity gap, the fact that some students have the benefit of reliable internet access at home while others do not.

Aguilar says that districts can use the lessons learned to better understand how to take advantage of technology going forward. He recommends districts start by asking some basic questions: If we try to use certain technologies to help kids learn, are those technologies compatible with their environments? Can they take full advantage of them? Will they have an opposite effect and actually place burdens on families?

“We have a new lexicon, we have new platforms, we have new resources,” Thorossian says. “Success would be incorporating those into what we do best so that teaching and learning is improved. What we’re learning now will help us better if we sustain them.”

Lyon points to the fact that it’s not just that districts know what’s possible, but parents now understand—and expect—the good things to last, like frequent communication and the use of videoconferencing when parents can’t come to meetings in person.

No one knows how this school year will end. But district leaders are hopeful.

“Teachers, administrators and educational staff of all types always make lemonade,” Lyon says. “What they have been able to do in such a short period of time is nothing short of remarkable.” —R

A RECKONING WITH RACISM STARTS WITH LEARNING THE UNVARNISHED TRUTH—AND TOLL—OF SLAVERY

As protestors march for Black lives, the classroom offers hope

Story:
Elaine Woo

“What would you rather be: a White baseball player or a Black baseball player?” a fifth-grade teacher asked her students after they read a story about Jackie Robinson, the fabled Black athlete who endured years of racist abuse to break Major League Baseball’s color barrier in 1947.

The teacher’s principal, Patricia Brent-Sanco EdD ’16, who observed the class more than a dozen years ago in the Paramount Unified School District, cringed at the thought of it. “I had to witness my students of color raise their hands and say, ‘I’d rather be a White baseball player,’” Brent-Sanco recalled.

What should have been an opportunity for meaningful reflection devolved instead into a painful reminder of the challenges schools face in teaching Black history. Textbooks and curriculum standards that sanitize, oversimplify or misrepresent the hard history of slavery and civil rights struggles are a big part of the problem, but so are underprepared teachers and the institutions that support them.

“It was a wake-up call,” Brent-Sanco, now the director of equity, access and instructional services in the Lynwood Unified School District, said recently.

Such moments of reckoning have exploded in the wake of the brutal killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery at the hands of police or armed vigilantes. As their deaths continue to spark protests around the globe, many Americans are questioning why they were never taught about events such as Juneteenth, the day in 1865 when the last enslaved Black people in Texas learned they had been freed, and the 1921 massacre in Tulsa, Oklahoma, one of the nation’s worst incidents of racial violence.

Other deficiencies have been exposed in studies such as a 2018 survey by the Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) Teaching Tolerance project, which found that only 8 percent of high school seniors could identify slavery as the main cause of the Civil War.

Students are demanding that schools teach a more com-

plete history of the United States that doesn’t gloss over the racial inequality present since the country’s founding. A petition on Change.org, “Get Real Black History Into American Schools,” has more than 87,000 signatures.

“All students should know a lot more about Black history,” said Assistant Professor of Clinical Education Akilah Lyons-Moore MAT ’10, EdD ’14, who taught history in the Antelope Valley Union High School District before joining USC Rossier’s faculty in 2018.

“It’s such a foundational piece to how the country started and transformed over time,” she said. “Without that knowledge, there’s more than just a gap in people’s

“All students should know a lot more about Black history. It’s such a foundational piece to how the country started and transformed over time. Without that knowledge, there’s more than just a gap in people’s knowledge but a complete denial of the factors that have brought our country to where it is today.”

— Akilah Lyons Moore MAT ’10, EdD ’14, USC Rossier Assistant Professor of Clinical Education

← LEADERS FOR CHANGE

Clockwise from top left: Black Students Matter demonstrators march to the Department of Education on Juneteenth (Courtesy of AP Images); Nobel prize winning novelist Toni Morrison (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons); Professional baseball player Jackie Robinson (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons); Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. (Courtesy of Getty Images).



How Is White Supremacy Taught?

White supremacy is rarely mentioned in the K–12 curriculum. To teach it well, educators can turn to an array of online resources.

PBS Learning Media offers a lesson plan for high school students that begins with a video of historical footage showing White resistance to desegregation. It concludes with students analyzing a flyer for a Ku Klux Klan meeting held 13 days before the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. The lesson’s objective is to help students understand White supremacy as “an organized system of repression.”

Another popular resource is “Teaching Hard History,” a guide to learning about slavery from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).

Among the 10 essential concepts the SPLC says students in grades K–5 should learn is the idea that White supremacy “was both a product and legacy of slavery.” For students in grades 6–12, the SPLC encourages teachers to connect the legacy of slavery and White supremacy to contemporary American life by examining issues such as housing segregation.

As USC Rossier Assistant Professor of Clinical Education Akilah Lyons-Moore notes, teaching through the lens of equity means ending educators’ silence on White supremacy. “It may not be written in the educational standards,” she said, “but it cannot be separate from history.”

Visit rose.in/teachingwhitesupremacy for these and additional resources.

knowledge but a complete denial of the factors that have brought our country to where it is today.”

That denial comes in many forms, from textbooks that describe the enslaved as “workers from Africa” to President Donald Trump’s assertion that there were “very fine people on both sides” of the violent clash between neo-Nazis and counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. Historians and educators say that until Americans learn the unvarnished truth about slavery and its enduring costs—including racial disparities in income, health, academic achievement and incarceration rates—a true reckoning with racism will not be possible. “It is essential that teachers—and, therefore, their students—understand the legal dehumanization and racist beliefs created and sustained by the American slave system,” Lyons-Moore said.

The effort to include Black history in the K–12 curriculum goes back to 1926, when Black scholar Carter G. Woodson successfully lobbied for Negro History Week, which later became Black History Month. His hope was that the program would become obsolete as Black history entered the mainstream social studies curriculum.

But progress has been slow and the results imperfect.

MORE THAN HEROES AND HOLIDAYS

According to a 2015 study by the National Museum of African American History and Culture, U.S. history classrooms devote only about one or two lessons, or 8 to 9 percent of total class time, to Black history. And that instruction “is sometimes lethargic, too celebratory, and lacks complexity,” LaGarrett J. King, a University of Missouri authority on Black history in the K–12 curriculum, wrote in 2017.

With no national history standards, what and how students are taught remains in the purview of states, which vary widely in their requirements. In 2014, the SPLC found that 12 states did not require any instruction on the civil rights movement. Fewer than half covered Jim Crow laws. The center gave only three states—Georgia, Louisiana and South Carolina—an A grade for their efforts. Twenty states received F’s.

California was one of eight states that earned a B grade for its standards and supporting resources.

California’s standards were adopted in 1998 and provide an overview of what the state considers essential knowledge in history and social studies. The framework, last updated in 2016, provides a far more detailed, grade-by-grade roadmap for curriculum and instruction. These documents guide schools to introduce Martin Luther King Jr.’s story in kindergarten in the context of learning about the national holiday named for him. In second and third grades, students learn about Harriet Tubman, the most famous “conductor” in the Underground Railroad. Fifth grade brings a deeper dive into slavery, with the framework encouraging schools to help students “use their growing sense of historical empathy to imagine, discuss, and write about how these young men and women from Africa may have felt, having been stolen from their families.”

In eighth grade, teachers are encouraged to discuss resistance by enslaved people and the critical role of slavery in the politics that shaped the Constitution. The SPLC study found that California’s framework “is refreshingly clear about slavery as the central cause of the Civil War.”

The deepest dive into slavery comes in 11th grade. Students analyze the development of federal civil and voting rights legislation and landmark cases including *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Regents of*

BRINGING BLACK HISTORY INTO THE CLASSROOM

Clockwise from top left: A student in a Black studies class in 1973 (Courtesy of Getty Images); Black History Month founder Carter G. Woodson (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons); Civil rights icon Rosa Parks with grade school students in 1983 (Courtesy of Getty Images).



“We are looking to provide a well-rounded education so that students see themselves in history, are powered by it and see the relevance to today’s culture. That takes a lot of reeducating of adults.”

— William Gideon, USC Rossier EdD candidate

the University of California v. Bakke. They examine the roles of civil rights leaders including King, A. Philip Randolph, Thurgood Marshall, James Farmer and Rosa Parks.

USC Rossier PhD candidate Martin Gamboa agrees that California’s standards and frameworks rate above average compared with other states’ efforts. He has examined history content standards from around the country for his dissertation on how teachers’ social and racial beliefs affect the implementation of the standards. He finds California’s standards strong in many respects, including its emphasis on teaching with primary documents, such as King’s “Letter From a Birmingham Jail.” He also applauds California’s recommendation that teachers note the impact of the Black civil rights movement on the drives for equality by Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans.

Gamboa says one way the state’s guidelines could be strengthened is by incorporating discussions of White supremacy. That ideology was the primary justification for slavery and has continued to shape the course of the nation, yet it is not mentioned anywhere in California’s standards or its 855-page framework. California is not alone in this

neglect; according to a CBS News investigation earlier this year, only Maryland and Massachusetts cover White supremacy in their social studies standards.

Another improvement would be to place more emphasis on the role of grassroots activism in civil rights struggles. The tendency to emphasize the contributions of movement leaders and icons—sometimes described as the “heroes and holidays” approach to ethnic history—risks undercutting students’ sense of personal agency, according to Gamboa.

“We got where we are by social movements of people kicking and screaming for change,” he said. “If you just spotlight the leaders, it affects the way we engage in the political process. You can’t be a better citizen if your notion is, ‘I’ll wait for the next Martin Luther King.’”

Lyons-Moore finds California’s framework more valuable for teaching Black history than the content standards. The framework “has a lot of language about equity and recommendations for how to teach English language learners,” she observed. In a section outlining the elements of culturally responsive teaching, it urges teachers to “learn about their students’ lives and make connections between

students' experiences, backgrounds, and interests and the content learning in school."

While California's guidelines on teaching Black history are impressive on numerous counts, actual teaching practices often fall short. Troubling assignments on slavery routinely make the headlines, such as the lesson at a Cerritos junior high that reenacted a slave ship by having eighth grade students lie on the floor, wrists bound, while watching a clip from *Roots*.

Although some found the lesson highly insensitive, the problem more often is teaching that doesn't go deep enough.

"In my generation of teachers, Black history was seen as sort of an add-on topic," said Satinder Hawkins, adjunct professor in USC Rossier's Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, who taught social studies in the Los Angeles and Long Beach school districts. She finds this less true of today's teacher candidates, but she remains mindful of how difficult it can be to bring up race in the classroom.

"No one wants to talk about race in America," said Hawkins. "For new teachers it will be especially scary because they are already very vulnerable. So, we have these conversations in my classrooms at Rossier. I say, look at your student population. How will this particular lesson address the needs of different ethnic groups and special needs? It has to be done with intent and care."

Since last year, Hawkins has been working to make instruction in the Santa Monica–Malibu Unified School District more culturally responsive. As the district's coordinator of American culture and ethnic studies, she oversees an effort to infuse social justice standards from the Teaching Tolerance project throughout the curriculum. Those standards, which focus on identity, diversity, justice and action, will be integrated into the district's 11th grade history classes this year.

PREPARING FUTURE EDUCATORS

USC Rossier experts say that schools of education have an important role to play in bringing a more accurate, nuanced picture of Black history to K–12 classrooms.

"We have to do a better job in our teacher preparation programs," Brent-Sanco said.

"We focus on theoretical pedagogy. We focus on classroom management. We focus on understanding and being able to take the standards and prepare engaging lessons. We should be doing all of that. What we don't always focus on is how teachers view all students. Do teachers view students through a deficit lens based on a Eurocentric worldview and standard of excellence? Have we trained teachers to confront and manage bias? Do teachers know how to build relationships with kids who may not look like them?"

After she observed the disastrous Jackie Robinson lesson, Brent-Sanco, who is Black, sat down with the teacher, who was White. "I said, 'How do you think the students felt when you asked them to choose what they would rather

"We got where we are by social movements of people kicking and screaming for change. If you just spotlight the leaders, it affects the way we engage in the political process. You can't be a better citizen if your notion is, 'I'll wait for the next Martin Luther King.'"

— Martin Gamboa, USC Rossier PhD candidate

be, instead of honoring who they are? Do you understand how that question is troubling for any student?"

"She got very quiet," Brent-Sanco recalled. "In the end, she said, 'I could have done that better.'"

From the incident, Brent-Sanco realized "that I can have all the great curriculum in the world, but if I, as a teacher, don't manage my biases and educate myself on anti-oppressive ideologies ... it's not going to matter and kids will still be harmed."

"Why aren't we micro-credentialing on social-cultural issues?" asked USC Rossier EdD candidate William Gideon. A former high school U.S. government and economics teacher, he is now assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the Los Nietos School District, a K–8 district in Whittier, California.

"Districts can incentivize micro-credentials so that teachers can go back to school and get a more balanced Black history story," he said. "We are looking to provide a well-rounded education so that students see themselves in history, are powered by it, and see the relevance to today's culture. That takes a lot of reeducating of adults."

At USC Rossier, the principles of equity and inclusion drove major changes in the MAT program's redesign in 2016, with new textbooks, readings and projects—including the use of autoethnography and equity portfolio assignments—that seek to deepen the understanding of how race and racism have shaped K–12 policy and teaching. The curriculum for social studies candidates was redesigned to reflect "critical perspectives on the inclusion of Black, Latinx and Indigenous history," said Associate Professor of Clinical Education John Pascarella III, who was chair of the MAT program from 2015 to 2019. "We still have a lot more work to do."

MAT students are not required to learn how to teach Black history, but some courses address it. In her

"Applications of Curriculum and Pedagogy" course, Associate Professor of Clinical Education Paula M. Carbone touches on topics such as racial biases in textbooks and hegemonic curriculum. "It comes up inferentially as students work on constructing lessons," she said. "I think it would be ideal if we could take these topics on more directly."

Lyons-Moore said Black history instruction is a strong thread in USC Rossier's curriculum for teaching history and social studies.

"We talk specifically about slavery and how to teach it, and in general how to teach Black history," she said. "We go into specifics on slavery and the Civil War. We discuss Indigenous people and the taking of land. I will typically ask my students, regardless of what they're teaching, 'How could you have brought in the history of these folks or that group?'"

One course, "Context for Educational Equity, Access and Agency," engages students in an overview of K–12 educational history and philosophy, and covers ethnic history. "The class asks students to think about their own identities, including their racial identities, and to unpack a few experiences that have helped them to understand their identity and their positionality to students they may be teaching in upcoming semesters," Lyons-Moore said. "It's a precursor to being able to teach Black history from an authentic place and not from that heroes-and-holidays place."

"Personally, I think it should be a requirement" in Rossier's MAT program, she added.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

There are obstacles to improving Black history instruction.

For instance, while a micro-credential in teaching Black history could build teachers' competence in the subject, many districts might be hard-pressed to fund the salary enhancement such training would promise.

National history standards could help to eliminate conflicting versions of Black history, but the last attempt, in the mid-1990s, ignited a culture war that doomed them. Lynne Cheney, who headed the National Endowment for the Humanities when it provided major funding for the national standards, was incensed by a draft of the standards that mentioned Tubman six times, while Robert E. Lee made no appearance at all.

Despite the challenges, change can begin this fall if educators seize the opportunity to connect the past to the tumultuous present.

Gideon said he hopes teachers will ask students to share their thoughts and experiences during the recent protests over racism and social justice. He plans to hold similar conversations with teachers in his district.

"This is a pivotal time," Gideon said. "I will be asking [teachers], 'Do you know people who were affected? Do you see any way schools can help to contribute to a different outcome, or are we just part of the cycle?'" —R

Civil Rights Standards That Make the Grade

States seeking to improve students' understanding of Black history should look to South Carolina.

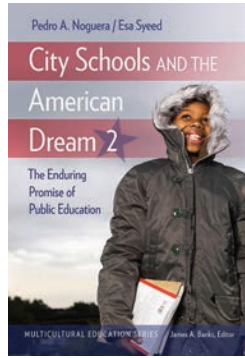
After examining the history and social studies curriculum in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) found South Carolina's guidelines on teaching the civil rights movement "the best in the nation" for providing a "remarkable degree of detail, support and nuance for teachers." South Carolina was one of only three states to earn an A in the SPLC's 2014 report *Teaching the Movement*.

In kindergarten, students learn not only about why Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday is celebrated but also how pivotal figures like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Rosa Parks "reflect the values of American democracy." Eighth graders study key court decisions on desegregation and the organized resistance that delayed the integration of public schools. High schoolers analyze movement strategies and politics, and how Black Americans' struggles for equality contributed to the rise of feminism and other movements.

South Carolina situates the civil rights movement in the long sweep of history. It says that it is important for third graders to understand "that the movement for civil rights for African Americans was an ongoing process," one that originated during the early abolitionist period and continued to build during the years immediately after World War II, when Black servicemen returned to a U.S. still mired in segregation.

South Carolina is due to adopt new social studies standards this year.

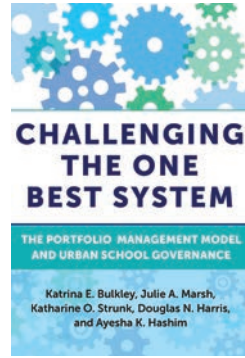
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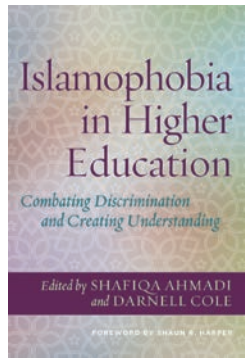
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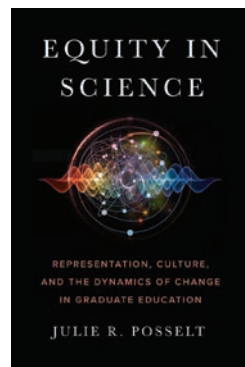
November 2020 / Harvard Education Press



Islamophobia in Higher Education: Combating Discrimination and Creating Understanding

Edited by [Shafiqah Ahmadi](#) (professor of clinical education at USC Rossier and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice) and [Darnell Cole](#) (associate professor of education at USC Rossier and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice.) Foreword by [Shaun R. Harper](#) (Provost Professor of Education and Business at USC Rossier and USC Marshall)

August 2020 / Stylus Publishing



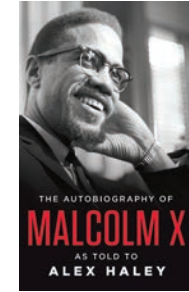
Equity in Science: Representation, Culture and the Dynamics of Change in Graduate Education

By [Julie R. Posselt](#) (associate professor of higher education at USC Rossier)

September 2020 / Stanford University Press

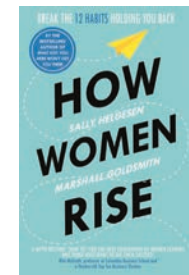
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Recommendations from Leadership Month speakers



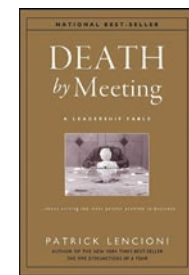
The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Malcom X and Alex Haley
“Even if you are not a Black reader, this narrative will cause you to think differently about the value and power of cultural perspective in leadership.” —*Michele Turner BS '81, EdD '14, Executive Director, USC Black Alumni Association*



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Sally Helgeson and Marshall Goldsmith
“As women, we can sometimes unconsciously limit ourselves. This is an excellent book for any woman who wants to identify behaviors that are holding her back from taking the next best step in her career.” —*Melissa Moore EdD '14, Superintendent, El Segundo Unified School District*



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MONUMENTS HAVE TOPPLED. BUT WILL HIGHER ED'S COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE LEAD TO CHANGE?



By John Brooks Slaughter

Professor of Education and Engineering, USC Rossier School of Education and USC Viterbi School of Engineering; Associate Director, USC Rossier Center for Engineering in Education; and President Emeritus, Occidental College

AS A RESULT OF THE BROAD, demonstrative public reaction to the brutal and senseless murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Eric Garner at the hands (and knee) of police officers; the killing of Ahmaud Arbery by armed vigilantes; and the mounting recognition of the longstanding practice of oppression and systemic racism against Black Americans, multiple institutions, including colleges and universities, have pledged to support diversity and equity initiatives. Many have expressed allegiance to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and an intent to eliminate any vestiges of racial discrimination in their organizations. Confederate flags and emblems have been banned, the names of known racists and slave owners that had been on buildings for decades have been removed, and statues of Southern Civil War generals have been toppled. But questions remain: How long can this emergent commitment to justice and inclusion be sustained, and will it lead to lasting improvement in the condition of Black Americans?

Higher education is amid a perfect storm consisting of a pandemic deemed to change forever the way colleges and universities operate, a society characterized by political



partisanship and social and racial divisiveness, and the presence and impending threats of catastrophic climate change. How it responds to these “wicked” manifestations, as well as to the accelerating racial and ethnic demographic changes occurring in the nation, will determine how it teaches and educates the leaders and productive citizens of tomorrow—and who will be the recipients of that education.

Although numerous encouraging transformations have taken place, I find many of the

“THE DEARTH OF UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY PERSONS ON THE FACULTIES OF OUR MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES IS HIGHER EDUCATION'S ACHILLES' HEEL, AND ITS SHAME.”

moralistic pronouncements by some of our most prestigious institutions, in the wake of the recent BLM demonstrations, to be disingenuous and off-putting. For too many years, these institutions have had the opportunity and the responsibility to address the structural racism that marginalizes Black Americans and deters them from the opportunities available to others. However, they have failed to do so.

I am unimpressed by those institutions that trumpet their success in attracting and enrolling African American and Latino/Latina undergraduates but have made little or no

effort to hire and retain members of those subpopulations in senior academic and administrative positions and faculty. Given the increasing presence of Black and Brown students in the college-age population, the concomitant decline in the proportion of White students as well as the potential decrease in international students due to the pandemic and changes in immigration policies, colleges and universities must diversify their undergraduate enrollees or ultimately close their doors. The same imperatives do not exist for graduate students and faculty.

The dearth of underrepresented minority persons on the faculties of our major research universities is higher education's Achilles' heel, and its shame. This is particularly true for the STEM disciplines. While the presence of Black tenure and tenure-track faculty in most large research universities hovers around 6 percent, it is 2 percent or less in science and engineering departments. Since in many engineering programs, for example, 75 percent or more of graduate students are nonresidents, these depressing figures are unlikely to improve. Our colleges and universities can and must do better. I hope they will develop the resolve to do so and will follow Martin Luther King Jr.'s mandate, “We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right.” —R

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS GASH

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.

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ALUMNI NEWS

1960s

DANIEL BASALONE BS '62 and Carmen Basalone celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on July 23. Before retiring in 2009, Dan served for 47 years in various positions in the Los Angeles Unified School District including school principal. In retirement, Basalone is currently serving as a founding board member for the Children's Museum of Idaho and completing nine years as a commissioner on the Meridian, Idaho, urban renewal board.

DON BRANN BS '68, EdD '82 is founder of California's Small School Districts' Association (SSDA) and the Da Vinci Schools. He recently stepped away from the El Segundo City Council after eight years, but still serves as board president of the Da Vinci Schools and past president of SSDA. He is also a search consultant for California district boards seeking new superintendents. Don was the state trustee in Inglewood Unified and served as superintendent of five other California districts spanning five decades. He is not retiring!

1970s

STEPHEN A. RALLS DDS '74, EdD '79 assumed the office of president of the American College of Dentists in September 2019. He earlier served as executive director of the organization for over 20 years.

WILSIE BISHOP MS '76 went on to earn her doctor of public administration from the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy.

1980s

MELANIE CRAWFORD BS '89, MS '91 is director of continuous improvement for the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education. She provides direct support to school and district leaders for continuous improvement of systems and supports for academics, behavior and social and emotional learning. Crawford also facilitates differentiated assistance for eligible districts.

1990s

PAUL GUNADI PhD '90 has been pastor of the First

Indonesian Baptist Church in Monrovia, California, since 2009. Upon his graduation from USC, he went back to Indonesia and taught counseling in a seminary for 14 years.

TRUDY ARRIAGA EdD '93 recently published her second book, *Leading While Female* with co-authors, Stacie Stanley and Delores Lindsey. *Leading While Female* draws on the research of feminism, intersectionality, educational leadership and cultural proficiency to break down the barriers and lead the way for future generations of women leaders.

RICHARD GILBERT PhD '97 has been included in *Marquis Who's Who* based on decades of expertise of international development and educational work with such entities as the Royal Government of Cambodia, the American University of Health Sciences and the National Science Foundation. As in all *Marquis Who's Who* biographical volumes, individuals profiled are selected on the basis of current reference value. Factors such as position, noteworthy accomplishments, visibility and prominence in a field are all taken into account during the selection process.

DANIEL MITAN MS '97 was recently promoted to the rank of full-time senior instructor at Florida International University in Miami. He teaches acting, stage combat, theatre and film in the Theatre Department.

AMY WILLERSON MS '97 is a clinical teacher supervisor at the University of North Texas where she supervises and evaluates student teachers in K-12 settings.

2000s

RACHEL MADSEN ME '02 is an associate professor of business administration and sport management at Ithaca College.

JOYCE PEREZ ME '03, EdD '09 is director of health and biomedical science education at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

HEATHER BRUNOLD ME '04, EdD '15 has spent her two-decade career as a thought leader in education specializing in identity development and empowering individuals. Over the last several years, she has curated, directed and produced more than 50 TED Talks, which have generated millions of views.

ALUMNI NEWS

Building on this skill set, she recently launched the nonprofit venture, WORDS2ACTION, which works to bring your unique story to life on the page or on the stage. Brunold guides workshops at schools, corporations, nonprofits and works one-on-one with private clients to help participants leverage their personal identities and craft stories that empower.

PAMELA AMAYA MA '07 is the magnet coordinator at Helen Bernstein High School in Los Angeles, where she oversees administration of the cinematic arts and creative technology magnet program. Pamela also teaches a computer science course.

THERESE BAGSIT ME '05 is senior associate director for student recruitment and admissions at TASIS The American School in England. She is responsible for student and family outreach, recruitment and enrollment management for day and boarding programs for students aged 3-18.

SARAH PEYRE MS '05, EdD '08 has been appointed dean of the Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development at the University of Rochester.

SHEILA BANUELOS ME '08, EdD '11 was recently hired as a full-time, assistant professor of teaching and curriculum coordinator at the USC Rossier School of Education after teaching part-time in USC Rossier's Master of Education in Educational Counseling and Master of Education in Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs programs for the past six years.

DYRELL FOSTER EdD '08 was named president of Las Positas College in the Chabot-Las Positas Community College District in Dublin, California. The college offers curriculum for students seeking career preparation, transfer to a four-year college or university, or personal enrichment. Las Positas College currently enrolls nearly 8,500 day and evening students. Foster recently served as the vice president of student services at Moreno Valley College. Previously, he served as an administrator at Rio Hondo College, Mt. San Antonio College, Evergreen Valley College and San Jose State University.

2010s

CHARLES FLORES EdD '10 recently published an article in the *California Association of Professors of Educational Administration Journal* that

he co-authored with Rebecca Cheung and Soraya Sablo Sutton, both former colleagues at the Principal Leadership Institute at UC Berkeley. The article, "Tipping the Balance: Social justice leaders allying with marginalized youth to increase student voice and activism," discusses the manner in which social justice school leaders tip the balance to disrupt the hierarchical relationships between leaders and students, in service of marginalized students.

MARTIN JAUREGUI ME '10, EdD '13 and Yolanda Jauregui MFT '12, EdD '15 welcomed a new member to the Trojan Family, a beautiful little girl named Camila May, born on May 2, 2019, at Kaiser Sunset Hospital.

M. EREZ KATS MAT '11 is an assistant coach for the ladies softball team at Evergreen High School in Seattle, Washington. He performs all duties of an assistant coach on a high school sports team (first aid/CPR & concussion/SCA certified).

REGINA ZURBANO EdD '11 became a resident of Menifee, California, last year and was fortunate to be given the opportunity to serve her new community as the proud principal and lead learner of Bell Mountain Middle School, one of four middle schools in the Menifee Union School District.

BRUCE ABNEY MAT '12 was honored as Teacher of the Year for the third time.

MATTHEW JELICK MAT '12 remains busy in Shenzhen, China, teaching at Southern University of Science and Technology. He recently won the Young Teacher of the Year Award (for the second time), and is currently trying to transfer that award-winning classroom pedagogy into a Zoom platform.

BRIANA WEILAND ME '12 married Luke Dillard on February 22, 2020, in Palm Springs, California.

OWYNN LANCASTER MAT '13 is an instructional designer for the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning (CETL) at California State University, Los Angeles. He is responsible for facilitating workshop-based programming in educational technology, teaching and pedagogy, and best practices for reading and writing. Lancaster provides individual consultations and walk-in support for academic technologies, including Canvas, as well as, iClickers, Camtasia and Zoom. He also supports faculty development and projects as they arise for the senior director of CETL and the director of academic technology.

Eight USC Rossier Trojans appointed school district superintendents

REBECA ANDRADE EdD '16
Superintendent, Salinas City Elementary School District

JILL BAKER EdD '04
Superintendent, Long Beach Unified School District

ELIZABETH EMINHIZER EdD '19
Superintendent, Covina-Valley Unified School District

ALFONSO JIMENEZ EdD '12
Superintendent, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District

JOHN LOPEZ EdD CANDIDATE
Superintendent, Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District

RAUL RAMIREZ BA '01, EdD '14
Superintendent, Mesa Union School District

JENNIFER ROOT EdD '17
Superintendent, Menifee Union School District

TIM STOWE EdD '03
Interim Superintendent, Torrance Unified School District

LEADERSHIP
MONTH GOES
VIRTUAL

USC Rossier's inaugural Leadership Month was held throughout the month of July as an alternative to the annual, half-day, in-person leadership conference traditionally hosted on campus. Designed to provide career and professional development for students and alumni through discussions and workshops facilitated primarily by USC Rossier alumni, attendees learn about the experiences of Rossier alumni and can expand their professional network and access mentorship opportunities. This year's virtual conference attracted nearly 1,000 unique visitors over 18 sessions.

To access the online archive of the panel discussions and to see a list of speaker-recommended books, visit rossiercareers.usc.edu/leadership-month.

TONANTZIN OSEGUERA EdD '13 has been appointed to serve as Cal State Fullerton's next vice president for student affairs. Oseguera, who has worked in academia for 20 years, was selected for the post following a national search. She joined the university in 2013 and has helped pave the road to academic success for countless Titans. Oseguera has held several positions in the Division of Student Affairs and became an associate vice president in 2016, where she first led student engagement overseeing the Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers, student life and leadership, the WoMen's and Adult Reentry Center and the Dean of Students Office. Her current responsibilities include admissions, outreach and recruitment, educational partnerships and financial aid, among others. She has served the university in various roles, including on the President's Commission for Equity and Inclusion and the Undocumented and Formerly Undocumented Faculty and Staff Association, and as co-chair of the Black Excellence Care Group. A first-generation college graduate, Oseguera was born and raised in Mexico City.

ELIZABETH ARIAS MAT-TESOL '14 is an EAL teacher at Jiaxing Nanhu Alliance Bilingual School in Jiaxing, Zhejiang, China. She teaches monolingual, Chinese primary school students.

PAMELA CHAIRES MAT '14, EdD '19 welcomed soon-to-be Trojan, Catalina Ariellah-Gloria Ramirez to the Chaires family. Catalina was born in Fontana, California, on June 3, 2019. She is a high-spirited and loving baby. Pamela looks forward to raising her with USC values and a servant leadership foundation.

GERALD CORPORAL ME '14 is director of alumni career engagement at the UCLA Alumni Association. He is specifically tasked with leading all student-facing career programs. These programs aim to bridge academic theory to professional practice, and connect students with UCLA alumni in a career readiness space. Programs include alumni guest lectures, panels, skills training programs and various fellowships.

JANNETTE FLORES EdD '14, dean of curriculum and assessment in the Dallas County Community College District, received a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award to India. In March 2019, Jannette visited over 20 Indian higher education institutions as part of a project to engage in dialogue about the issues in higher education. The institutions were located in Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, and Delhi.

Flores is one of over 800 U.S. citizens who taught, conducted research and/or provided expertise abroad for the 2019-2020 academic year through the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program.

DIEUWERTJE "DJ" KAST MAT '14 was chosen for a 2020 Science Outreach Graduate Fellowship from The National Center for Science Education. She is a current EdD student at USC Rossier. The fellowship is a yearlong course for six graduate students who work in areas of the country that are underserved when it comes to science. Over the course of the year, the graduate student fellows will focus on informal education pedagogy, science communication and outreach using hands-on activities they develop based on their own research. By the end of the course, the fellows will be equipped to provide effective community-based science throughout their careers.

CATHERINE KAWAGUCHI EdD '14, superintendent of Sulphur Springs Union School District in Santa Clarita, California, received the Marcus Foster Memorial Award for Administrator Excellence by the Association of California School Administrators.

RAQUEL RALL PhD '14 received the 2020 Stanford Award of Merit given for specific, significant acts of volunteer service. Rall received the award for serving as the co-chair for the 2019 Stanford Black Alumni Summit. Rall also co-authored two recently published journal articles: "Toward culturally sustaining governance: Best practices of theory, research, and practice" in the *Journal of Education Human Resources*; and "I, too, am a lead(her): The power and possibilities of women of color on governing boards of higher education in California" in the *Journal of Higher Education Management*.

ELOY LOPEZ ME '15 is programs manager at the UCLA Institute for Quantitative and Computational Biosciences (QCBio). He provides academic, administrative and analytic support for the institute and the QCBio Collaboratory, including soliciting financial support and budgeting.

STEVEN LORICK EdD '15 is chief executive officer of Hybrid Zone Performance Institute in Washington, D.C. He oversees the growth and development of a global company that leads the golf and fitness education industry in curriculum design, certification training, and the business of sports through fitness and recreation.

MICHAEL LOZANO EdD '15 graduated from

Harvard University with a second master's degree in management and is an aspiring school administrator.

BRITTNEY MCCLARY ME '15 and Spencer Hathaway welcomed Mylo Hathaway into the world on Jan. 10, 2020, in Tacoma, Washington.

MADELEINE MEJIA EdD '15 recently received two awards: the Outstanding Leadership Award from the Harvard Alumni Association in recognition for going above and beyond the call of duty to make exceptional contributions to the K-12 community and longstanding impact to volunteer leadership and the Excellence in Education Leadership Award from the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance in recognition for her leadership commitment, education and scholarship to support students, parents and educators at K-12 schools, colleges and universities across Southern California. Mejia also presented her research, "Creating and maintaining democratic classrooms: The role of students' voice in literacy instruction," at the Harvard Alumni of Color Conference in February.

PAUL JOSE NOLAN MAT-TESOL '15 is in Panama for Peace Corps Group 86. He teaches English language and life learning skills

TANIKO (NICKEY) WOODS EdD '15 was appointed to the assistant dean for diversity, inclusion, and admissions role in UCLA's Graduate Division after serving as a director in student affairs for the past four years. In this capacity, Woods will oversee outreach, recruitment and admission of prospective students, as well as Graduate Division programming and services to support the academic success of newly enrolled and continuing students. Her team will recruit at national conferences, regional diversity forums and minority-serving institutions; promote the success of faculty and student participants in the UC-HBCU initiative; coordinate summer bridge programs for prospective and entering doctoral students; provide expertise and support for programs seeking to advance graduate student diversity and inclusion; sponsor campus networking events for underrepresented graduate students; sponsor the UCLA Chapter of the Edwin A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society; and provide expertise and leadership on funded projects.

JOHN MORAN EdD '16 was named chancellor of education for Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa last July. He provides strategic leadership in Southern California for: Calvary Chapel Schools in Santa Ana; Lake

Arrowhead Christian Schools in Twin Peaks; Calvary Chapel Bible College in Murrieta Hot Springs; and Calvary Chapel School of Worship in Santa Ana. Moran has held senior leadership posts in Christian schools and colleges since 1990. He has pioneered applied math, science and engineering initiatives to foster the integration of faith and science. He has also fostered robust support for students with learning disabilities and other special needs in Christian education.

JENNIFER BURKS EdD '18, associate superintendent of technology and innovation of Poway Unified School District, was named 2020 Technology Administrator of the Year by the Association of California School Administrators.

DAVID EMERY EdD '18 finished his AmeriCorps VISTA National Year of Service and started a new position at Booz Allen Hamilton as senior data scientist in Washington, D.C. Emery also received patent (claims accepted) 10,500,316 for an odor neutralizing mask insert on Dec. 10, 2019.

TERRI HORTON EdD '18 was selected as a keynote speaker to discuss the implications of artificial intelligence on the future of work at the World Literacy Summit organized by Oxford University in April 2020. She was also featured as an expert in the PEW Research Center Study released in February 2020 on the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy.

DEMONTEA THOMPSON ME '18 married Marilyn Rodriguez on March 27, 2020. They met while both attended USC. Thompson is currently a PhD student in urban schooling at UCLA.

DONNA GALLUP EdD '19 has a co-authored journal article in publication for the *Journal of Social Work Education*, "Addressing a homeless sector workforce deficit through field education: A pilot program," which is based on research from a consulting project she led.

MJ MARGGRAFF EdD '19 is co-founder and principal investigator at Kinoo, a Silicon Valley team of entrepreneurs with success in technology, children's play and learning. Kinoo, a startup, has developed a new way for parents and grandparents to increase their participation and impact their kids' and grandkids' well-being and development. Marggraff is applying this technology to help astronauts participate in the lives of their young children when they are on long-duration space missions.

SIRIA S.
MARTINEZ
ME '04
SELECTED AS
ASSISTANT VICE
CHANCELLOR OF
STUDENT EQUITY
AND SUCCESS
AT CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY
COLLEGES

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES announced this spring that Siria S. Martinez ME '04 was named assistant vice chancellor of student equity and success. The largest system of higher education in the nation, California Community Colleges is composed of 73 districts and 115 colleges serving 2.1 million students each year. Martinez will lead the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative in deploying professional development and technical assistance aimed at advancing equity and success strategies. She previously was dean of student success & institutional effectiveness and interim dean of student services at Woodland Community College.

A Los Angeles native and raised in Compton, California, Martinez was the first in her family to attend college. She earned her bachelor's from UC Davis, her master's of education in postsecondary administration and student affairs from USC Rossier and a PhD in higher education from Claremont Graduate University.

→ **A LOVE FOR
PUBLIC SERVICE**

Georgia Steele Edd '18 was appointed chief performance officer at Georgia's Department of Revenue last year.



IN HER CLIMB UP THE PUBLIC-SERVICE LADDER, Georgia Steele Edd '18 rose from call-center agent to the executive suite of Georgia's tax collection agency—all before her 38th birthday.

Steele, who today is chief performance officer of the state's Department of Revenue, is among a growing number of leaders outside the field of education choosing to build their skill set through USC Rossier's online doctorate in Organizational Change and Leadership.

Born and raised in Spanish Town, Jamaica, Steele grew up feeling both challenged and supported, surrounded by family.

Her hardworking mom moved to New York City when Steele started high school, seeking better opportunities in the health care industry. Steele followed her to New York for college. She received her bachelor's in business information systems from the City University of New York in 2004 and a master of public administration from Long Island University in 2010.

During college, Steele took a job at 311, the call center that fields questions related to city services

"That's where I fell in love with government," she says.

Around that time, Mayor Michael Bloomberg set an outlandish new target for 311 calls to get answered within 60 seconds. Few imagined such ambitious efficiency goals could be achieved by a city-run agency, but Steele's department met the benchmark.

"It planted a seed in me," she recalls. "I wondered, 'Could we bring these private-sector customer-service concepts into other areas of government?'"

She worked her way up to team leader before moving to the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission as a supervisor in 2007. She was quickly promoted to a directorship and, upon completing her MPA degree, to assistant commissioner.

In 2012, Steele left New York for a position with more responsibility in Atlanta. She also wanted to be closer to family and to provide better opportunities for her son. When she took the \$45,000 pay cut to become assistant director of Georgia's Motor Vehicle Division (MVD), "family and friends said, 'You're crazy.' But I had a very straightforward conversation with God. I knew I had a greater purpose, and I had to listen to what my heart was saying," she says.

Within two years, Steele was named MVD director—supporting 200 offices that issue more than 10.2 million vehicle registrations statewide. At the time, Steele was the nation's youngest person in that role. She'd just turned 33.

She didn't need another degree to keep advancing. "But we all have that burning thing that we know we're supposed to do," she says. The doctorate in leadership "was calling."

Steele was interested in studying the management of a multigenerational workforce in government. "I wanted to understand how to best support people regardless of their generational cohort," she says.

The Edd, she knew, would be far more challenging than her master's—and she'd wept tears of relief upon completing that program. Balancing raising a teenage son, while beginning the work of implementing the largest technological system

FINDING HER CALLING

Rossier's Online Edd program helped Georgia Steele Edd '18 achieve organizational excellence

Story:
Diane Krieger

"The people who pulled me from the edge were my classmates. They knew my dreams and aspirations. They knew the things I was capable of, and they pushed me."

— Georgia Steele Edd '18

upgrade in over 20 years, and the demands of leading the day-to-day of a complex division left little free time.

With USC Rossier's program, Steele found a good fit: live classes she could attend without leaving home and a program with national stature and academic rigor. "USC was doing this revolutionary thing. No one else had an academic program structure that was this robust," she says.

Enrolling in 2015, she found herself embedded in a diverse learning community. Her cohort included education leaders, but also "police chiefs, counselors and classmates studying from as far away as Japan and Dubai," she says.

There were some "exceedingly difficult times" when she contemplated taking a leave of absence. "I lost one of my aunts to pancreatic cancer during the program," she says. Steele drove her 60 miles each way to receive weekly treatments. "The people who pulled me from the edge were my classmates," she says. "They knew my dreams and aspirations. They knew the things I was capable of, and they pushed me."

Last year, Steele was appointed the first chief performance officer in the Department of Revenue, which encompasses the MVD. The role is focused on strategically aligning the agency for the achievement of its goals and creating a culture committed to organizational excellence.

She's now focused on creative ways to incentivize customer-service excellence in a workforce operating remotely. It's a tall order to improve performance during a pandemic, but it's a task that Steele is more than prepared to take on. —R

IN MEMORIAM

Kevin Colaner Edd '06, longtime adjunct instructor (2004–16) for USC Rossier's Master of Education in Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs program and former USC Rossier Director of Admissions passed away earlier this year. Colaner earned his Edd from USC Rossier in 2006. At the time of his death he was associate vice president and chief of operations in the Division of Student Affairs at Cal Poly Pomona, where he had worked with students since 2008. He will be deeply missed by the Rossier community.

Ruben Zepeda II Edd '05, superintendent of schools for the Keppel Union School District and resident of Palmdale, California, passed away unexpectedly on March 6, 2020, at the age of 59. In Zepeda's 34 years in public education, his achievements were many; his primary focus was to improve student achievement and to promote student's social and emotional wellness. His life was dedicated to the students and their parents advocating for high-quality public education. His motto was, "Take a stand and have a backbone for kids!"

In the summer of 1978 at the age of 16, Zepeda found his biggest supporter, best friend and the love of his life at a leadership camp at the University of California, Santa Barbara. At the time, Ruben Zepeda II was the ASB President at Cerritos High School, and Sarah Angelina Magaña was the ASB President at North Torrance High School, both located in California. Ruben and Sarah were married in July 1984 after completing their college degrees. The Zepeda's developed an unwavering love for one another. Their relationship was built upon a foundation of trust, family, service to others and deep faith in God.

Zepeda is survived by his wife Sarah Magaña Zepeda Edd '17; his mother Martha Zepeda; brother Gilbert Zepeda, wife Julianne and sister Maria Merchant, husband Stephen. He is also survived by the hundreds of students he dedicated himself to over the last 34 years. Not to mention all the children who will not have the opportunity to know the person Zepeda was, and what he stood for. But fortunately, they will be able to benefit from what he was able to accomplish in the short time he was with us. —R

Amy King Dundon-Berchtold, real estate investor and longtime USC supporter, 74

The philanthropist and her family had strong ties to USC and supported student scholarships, USC Rossier, USC Athletics and many other university programs

By Eric Lindberg



PHILANTHROPIST, REAL ESTATE INVESTOR and treasured member of the Trojan Family, Amy King Dundon-Berchtold died on March 16 following a stroke. She was 74.

A 1972 graduate of USC Rossier, Dundon-Berchtold had deep family connections to the university. Her mother, Joyce King Stoops, earned her doctorate in education in 1966 from USC, and both she and Dundon-Berchtold's stepfather, Emery Stoops, were USC Rossier professors. Dundon-Berchtold met her first husband, Paul Edward "Ed" Dundon at USC Rossier, where he earned his doctorate in education.

Dundon-Berchtold and her family had a long tradition of making impactful gifts to USC. Her parents established the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Education Library, the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean's Chair in Education and 25 scholarships for USC Rossier students.

After her husband died in 2008, Dundon-Berchtold created the Paul Edward Dundon Endowed Scholarship for Doctor of Education students in the K-12 leadership concentration, honoring his 20 years of service as superintendent of the Garden Grove Unified School

District. In addition to their support of USC Athletics and medical research, Amy and her husband James "Jim" Joseph Berchtold endowed the USC Amy King Dundon-Berchtold University Club at King Stoops Hall in 2016.

"Amy had a special affinity for brick-and-mortar projects," said Karen Symms Gallagher, former dean and current Veronica and David Hagen Chair in Women's Leadership at USC Rossier. "Throughout her career, she demonstrated a remarkable ability to envision a building's full potential and bring it to life. In all her endeavors, Amy enlivened her surroundings with creativity, generosity and warmth. She is deeply missed by the USC community and all who knew her."

Born in Illinois, Dundon-Berchtold moved to California as a child. While at USC, she met and married Ed Dundon, a U.S. Marine Corps officer who worked as a school superintendent. He founded the Dean's Superintendents Advisory Group at USC Rossier.

Dundon-Berchtold also completed an MBA at the University of California, Irvine, and her real estate investment career grew out of observing her mother's own investments in rental properties. Her success enabled her to give back to her

alma mater, and she viewed endowing the USC Dundon-Berchtold University Club as a homecoming.

"When I came to USC as an undergraduate, that building was the education library," she said in a recent article on USC Rossier's centennial. "I majored in education, so I spent a lot of hours studying there and my favorite spot on campus was a tall tree right behind the building." That tree still stands, offering shade to the outdoor dining patio.

She and her husband also gave the lead gift to build Dundon-Berchtold Hall at the University of Portland, which opened in fall 2019.

Dundon-Berchtold is survived by her husband, Jim Berchtold, and numerous relatives. A memorial will be scheduled at a future date.

The family requests that donations be made to the Joyce King Stoops and Amy King Dundon Scholarship. To make a gift, visit rossier.usc.edu/giving, click "Make a Gift," select "Please direct my gift to a specific school or program" and follow the prompts.

PHOTO BY STEVE COHN

USC ROSSIER STUDENTS WILL CHANGE THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

USC Rossier students become classroom teachers, counselors and leaders. More than 70 alumni are sitting superintendents, overseeing the education of 40 percent of all students in California public schools.

More than two-thirds of USC Rossier students are from underrepresented minority groups. Most will graduate with more than \$70K in student loan debt. Only 20 percent receive scholarships.

Investing in USC Rossier means investing in a brighter future for our students and our schools.

USC Rossier
School of Education

For more information about how you can contribute to scholarships at USC Rossier, please contact the office of external relations at (213) 740-2188 or visit rossier.usc.edu/giving. The CARES Act provides special tax benefits for donors in 2020. Charitable deductions for cash gifts may offset up to 100% of a donor's federal adjusted gross income, or individuals can claim a charitable deduction up to \$300 in 2020 even if they do not itemize their deductions.

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**WHEN CHILDREN
ARE PRESENT**

A traffic sign outside of a school in the Palm Springs Unified School District cautions drivers to slow down. Like many of the nation's school districts, Palm Springs Unified transitioned to remote learning this past spring. Read more in "Moving K-12 Online," p. 29. *Photo by Rebecca Aranda.*

For more stories about USC Rossier faculty, staff, students and alumni, please visit rossier.usc.edu or follow us on social media:



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