

USC Rossier

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A young student plays a game as part of Professor Darnell Cole's SEEDS (Student Engagement, Exploration and Development in STEM) program. Read the story on p. 39.

DEAN'S BYLINE

Dear Friends,



We are at a crossroads in American education. The pandemic exposed the deep inequities embedded in our system. For a moment during the crisis, there were calls for change and reform, but as schools reopened and life returned to normal, that sense of urgency faded.

But the crisis has not passed for our students and society. Given the significant gaps in learning opportunities that exist throughout our nation, it's hardly surprising that test scores show that children in every state have fallen behind. Academic challenges are now compounded by increased concerns about mental health, severe economic hardships and a growing shortage of teachers.

In this special double issue, we'll examine what's happening in our schools here in L.A. and across the country and introduce you to some of our faculty, students and alumni who are working to address these troubling trends.

At USC Rossier, we have a proud legacy of conducting research, preparing educators and creating learning opportunities. But to respond effectively to the current challenges facing education, we must commit ourselves to working in new and different ways. In November, we announced the USC Rossier Educational Equity Initiative. This ambitious agenda consists of five projects we believe will enable USC Rossier to respond effectively to many of the challenges facing schools and colleges, locally and throughout the nation:

- USC Rossier will partner with Los Angeles Unified School District schools in south and east L.A. to bring the best of USC to historically under-resourced neighborhoods. These schools will promote innovative and comprehensive teacher preparation, training in social-emotional learning for both teachers and students, a laboratory space for education researchers, and a focus on the individuality of students.
- We will expand our highly successful Teacher Residency Program. The program provides full scholarships and financial support to students who have committed to working in L.A. public schools after graduation. Our goal is to expand this program to other schools and districts, and to increase the number of teachers trained, particularly in math and science.
- This spring, we are launching the USC Rossier STEAM Teaching and Research Center. This will serve as a research and practice hub focused on reimagining, improving and sustaining high-quality STEAM teaching and learning in K-12 classrooms in a way that authentically connects to students, including through the arts. Access to a robust and rigorous education in these areas is critical to expanding opportunities for children and addressing the challenges facing our nation and the world in the 21st century.
- Next year, we will launch the Los Angeles Education Policy Solutions Hub. Under USC Rossier's leadership, the L.A. Hub will bring together researchers, local education leaders, policymakers and elected officials to examine issues and inform decision-making from early childhood through higher education. The L.A. Hub will combine the rigor of university-based research with rapid in-person and web-based briefings, providing policymakers with the evidence they need in a format they can use, when they need it.
- This fall, the USC Democracy Project began piloting a curriculum that will give teachers the support they urgently need to address controversial topics in the classroom. The goal is to give teachers tools to help students learn about complex issues—the pilot curriculum covers immigration—while simultaneously teaching them how to do independent research and engage in civil discourse.

In the coming months, we will tell you more about these projects. We hope you will join us in advancing equity for all learners.

Fight On!

Pedro A. Noguera, PhD

Distinguished Professor of Education
Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean
USC Rossier School of Education

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Creating solutions to elevate equity across education

USC Rossier revised its mission in 2017 to emphasize equity, not only to better capture the work that our faculty, staff, students and alumni were already doing, but to make a commitment that future scholarship would directly focus on improving outcomes for all students. At USC Rossier, equity is more than a buzzword: It is the underlying framework that informs everything we do.

As a school of education, our faculty is dedicated to conducting research that advances educational equity and access, and to bringing research-based ideas into classrooms, schools and colleges. We are developing, testing and scaling solutions that meaningfully increase equity at every level of education, from transitional kindergarten to graduate school. In this special double issue of *USC Rossier Magazine*, we will look at how USC Rossier research projects are being put into practice to create equitable learning environments where all students can thrive.

You'll read about the nationwide problem of learning loss by students during the pandemic and how we can get back on track; the ways in which USC Rossier faculty are helping universities educate and train diverse students who want to pursue graduate studies; how schools can embrace the field of social-emotional learning (SEL); and about new Professor Chris Emdin, an impassioned advocate of educational equity who incorporates hip-hop music and culture to transform science teaching.

Kianoosh Hashemzadeh and Landon Hall, Editors



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↑
Darnell Cole (third from right), USC Rossier professor of education and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice, leads the SEEDS program that pairs USC mentors with middle-school students learning STEM content.

STORY IDEAS? FEEDBACK?

Please write to us at communications@rossier.usc.edu



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ILLUSTRATION BY EDMON DE HARO

PHOTO BY REBECCA ARANDA

What we're listening to

The “Lessons in Leadership” podcast produced by USC Rossier’s Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice. For information and to access the episodes, visit Buzzsprout.com/1976842.

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)’s Presidential Podcast, with the theme of “Humanizing Higher Education.” Royel M. Johnson, a USC Rossier associate professor and director of student engagement at the USC Race and Equity Center, co-hosted the podcast with Felecia Commodore, an associate professor at Old Dominion University.

The pair welcomed a series of accomplished guests to engage on topics like “Humanizing a Post-COVID World” and “Humanizing the Fight for Racial Truth-Telling in Schools.”

Find details at Ashe.ws/podcasts2022.



Alumna Kim Kircher MAT ’20 Named LAUSD Rookie of the Year

She credits lessons learned at USC Rossier in preparing her for the honor.

By Adriana Maestas

KIM KIRCHER MAT ’20 CREDITS USC ROSSIER for helping her build a foundation for success in the classroom. That preparation led to her being named one of Los Angeles Unified School District’s Rookie of the Year recipients for the 2021–22 school year.

Kircher, who teaches sixth graders at Sun Valley Magnet School in the San Fernando Valley, says USC Rossier’s Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) teacher residency program made her a stronger teacher. The program was established by Professor Emerita Margo Pensavalle and former Dean Karen Symms Gallagher.

Kircher says Associate Professor Debra Danner also was an immense influence in terms of the instruction she received about assessing the needs of students and problem-solving to address those needs.

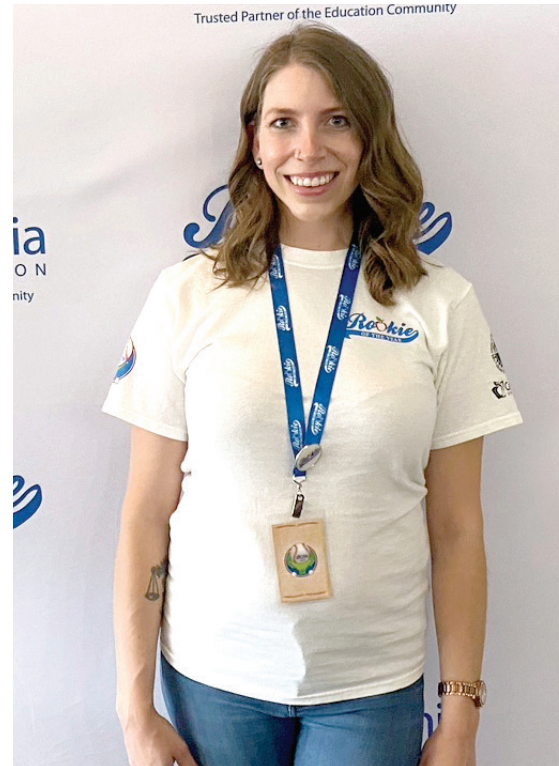
“Dr. Danner highlighted the type of teacher I wanted to be for my students by making her students feel the energy and care that she radiates during her classes, and how welcoming she is to other perspectives and conversations,” Kircher said. “I respected her for being the kind of instructor who cares, while encouraging us to examine ourselves and who we are as educators.”

In the MAT program, Kircher learned about teaching for equity, equal access to resources, lesson-plan development, strategies to manage a classroom, fundamentals of pedagogy, and how to create a culturally responsive and welcoming classroom.

At Sun Valley, Kircher’s colleagues visited her to observe her classroom management. She was among 17 first-year teachers honored by LAUSD for performance, based on factors that included effectiveness in preparing and delivering instruction, providing a positive classroom climate with strong routines and procedures, adopting a dynamic and engaging teaching style, and level of professionalism.

Kircher says she wants to stay in the classroom a while longer but is open to returning to school to complete a doctorate and to help train new teachers.

“I want to continue to grow as an educator and not aim to be perfect, but rather further develop and improve upon my practice,” she said. “I believe that I would like to go into the administrative route in the future. I would also be interested in training teachers and possibly becoming a professor so I can teach what has made me successful in the classroom and incorporate that knowledge into the university setting. USC helped me build a foundation for my pedagogy, and I would love to help future educators in the same way.” —R



↑ Kim Kircher MAT ’20, an LAUSD Rookie of the Year for 2021–22.

How Did Schools Respond to the Pandemic?

PACE study led by Julie Marsh examines how districts dealt with a unfolding health crisis and growing structural racism.

By Nadra Kareem Nittle

A NEW REPORT BY JULIE MARSH, PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION at USC Rossier and co-director of the USC Center on Education Policy, Equity and Governance, examines how seven California school districts served their communities during a turbulent 14-month period in 2020 and 2021. Massive demonstrations following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May 2020 meant that districts were expected not only to meet the challenges posed by COVID-19 but to address systemic racism as well.

Crisis Response in California School Districts: Leadership, Partnership and Community, published by the Stanford Graduate School of Education’s California Education (PACE), found that partnerships with community, labor and board leaders helped schools serve the complex needs of students and families during this tumultuous time. The researchers began tracking the unnamed districts, which varied in size, location and grade range, via the internet and social media starting in March 2020.

The school systems quickly suspended in-person instruction to protect students and staff. They purchased personal protective equipment and implemented safety measures. Air-filtration systems were later updated. District leaders also ensured that students—and often their family members—had access to school meals. Giving students access to technology, including laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots, was another major priority for the districts early on. As the COVID crisis continued, districts also made efforts to meet the mental health needs of students, personnel and families, providing access to teletherapy and wellness centers.

“People started realizing the real trauma that some families had been facing, and also the kind of exhaustion that the adults in schools were facing, so that became big,” Marsh said.

Just two months after the first pandemic lockdowns began, Floyd was killed. The urban and suburban school districts the researchers studied recognized the hurt and outrage that followed. They released statements in support of their African American students and other youth of color, and they organized trainings and committees focused on systemic racism. In rural districts, though, some district officials resisted addressing Floyd’s death.

“We heard folks telling us that there really wasn’t an issue for them to be addressing, that because, in one case, most of the community was

White, they didn’t necessarily think they needed to address it,” Marsh said. “There was a sense in the rural districts that individuals were very uncomfortable talking about issues of racism.”

The districts may not have agreed on the best approach to discuss racial injustice, but they all emphasized the importance of relationships in

→ A group of elementary students wait to have their temperatures checked before entering school.

PHOTO BY ALLISON SHELLEY FOR EDUIMAGES

times of crisis. Superintendents got personal with the communities they serve, at times passing out computer devices and meals directly to students and their families.

“For me, it’s not surprising,” Rudolph Crew, a USC Rossier professor of clinical education and former chancellor of New York City Public Schools, said of the superintendents’ behavior. “I’ve always known that that was the capability of folks who do this work. I think people just don’t realize the value proposition that they bring to building community and sustaining a quality life through schooling. The pandemic ... made people see that, wow, teachers, principals and superintendents do more than most people give them credit for.”

At the same time, COVID-19 tested relationships between districts and their teacher unions. School personnel experienced burnout amid the pandemic and a polarizing political climate. As the pandemic wore on, districts grew frustrated with what they considered to be inconsistent state guidance: Officials complained that the state left health-related decisions around closing and reopening schools to local leaders instead of taking responsibility and making those calls.

Nearly three years after the first COVID-19 lockdowns began, the challenges school districts face continue. The study authors suggest that a number of policies could help schools during what remains a stressful time. These policies include stabilizing state funding for schools and strategizing around teacher and staff shortages. The state should also take action to provide robust social welfare to communities, including public and mental health services and food security, broadband access, employment and affordable housing programs, the study found.

The researchers recommend that the state help districts overcome the “steady drumbeat of disinformation” about COVID-19 protocols and school curricula, which has led to book bans and limits on the teaching of race, gender and related topics.

“The kind of polarization that we kept seeing emerge out of the early phases of this points to the need for building broader support for public education,” Marsh said. “How do we ensure that we have better information, more civil discourse in our meetings and our board meetings? The state could play a role in providing some real targeted support for districts to counter the ugly politics and disinformation that’s out there.” —R



Lessons of pandemic are focus of first Melbo Lecture

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges for the nation’s school superintendents. It also created opportunities for change. That was one of the takeaways from the first USC Rossier Melbo Lecture in August.

“It takes courage to embrace change and confidence in one’s ability to navigate forward,” said Professor of Education Maria G. Ott, the Irving R. and Virginia A. Melbo Chair in Education Administration. “If we are honest, we have to admit that there was a need to do things differently before this pandemic, and radical change was made possible by its disruptions.”

Featured speakers for the event, titled “Leading in Times of Radical Change: An Invitation to Lead for a New Future,” were Daniel A. Domenech, executive director, American Association of School Administrators (AASA); Ben Drati, superintendent, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District; Paul Gothold EdD ’17, superintendent, San Diego County Office of Education; and Ruth Pérez, deputy superintendent, Riverside County Office of Education. Pedro A. Noguera, the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education, and Edgar Zazueta EdD ’18, executive director of the Association of California School Administrators, moderated the lecture, which is to become an annual event.

What was learned? How did leadership evolve? What keeps superintendents motivated to perform their jobs? The panel shared perspectives and offered practical advice:

- Build a coalition and empower teams
- Take advantage of the opportunity to become a leader
- Invite the community into the conversation
- Stay motivated and remember the impact on students

The lecture series is named for Irving R. Melbo, who was dean of USC Rossier from 1953 to 1973.



Learning From, and Problem Solving With, the Best

USC Rossier alum Wendy Birhanzel named 2023 Colorado Superintendent of the Year.

By Ellen Evaristo

“LIKE A TYPICAL TEENAGER, YOU SOMETIMES DON’T WANT TO DO what your parents think you should do,” said Wendy Birhanzel EdD ’07, superintendent of Harrison School District 2 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Since both of her parents were educators, being a teacher initially was not a career goal. “But I needed to be with people where I can make a bigger difference. ... I just wanted to impact kids and make a difference and impact a larger group of kids not just in the classroom.”

After 20 years in education, serving in capacities from teacher to principal to superintendent, Birhanzel was named the 2023 Colorado Superintendent of the Year. “Now, I can impact 13,000 students that we have in our district,” she said.

Birhanzel received her bachelor’s in elementary education and reading from Valley City State University in North Dakota, and a master’s in education administration in diverse school settings from California State University–Dominguez Hills. She pursued her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership in Urban School Settings at USC Rossier and graduated in 2007. After teaching in South Central Los Angeles, she joined Harrison District 2 as principal in 2009.

“All the professors in the doctorate program in education are the people writing the books,” Birhanzel said. “Not only did I get to learn from the best, but I got to talk to the best and problem solve with the best.”

She applies the skills she learned at USC Rossier regularly, and often relies on her Trojan Family for guidance. At the onset of the pandemic, she said, “I reached out to some of my colleagues who I graduated with from USC, who were in leadership roles across the country, and asked, ‘Hey, what are you guys doing?’” After rebounding from the pandemic, she used her USC resources to establish an Equity Council in her district to research what did and did not work.

Harrison District 2 is one of the most diverse districts in the state, with a 74% minority student population and 75% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. In addition, Birhanzel’s district outperformed others in Colorado, with an 81% graduation rate and a 1.2% dropout rate. She attributes her success to the beliefs that were instilled in her while pursuing her doctorate.

“It’s not just talking the talk, but ‘How do we get this done?’ and we’re really making it happen here,” she said. “A lot of that is due to my education and support from my USC Trojan Family.” —R

Wendy Birhanzel EdD ’07

PHOTO BY TARA PATTY



Master Class Series Launched

Dean Noguera, Professor Immordino-Yang lead sessions to explore education’s global impact and the science of learning.

By Ellen Evaristo

THE INAUGURAL SEASON OF USC ROSSIER’S MASTER CLASS, co-hosted by USC Rossier Dean Pedro Noguera and Professor Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, explored education’s impact on global issues and the cognitive science of learning.

The fall 2022 Master Class sessions were created to be a catalyst for broader discussions among USC Rossier’s students, faculty and staff that are central to the school’s mission. Over the five sessions, Noguera and Immordino-Yang examined questions from multiple perspectives, including sociological, historical, developmental and neuroscientific.

“This first class is focused on what really is at the core of what we do—teaching and learning,” Noguera said. “What does it mean to teach at this time in the world?”

In that first session, titled “Teaching and Learning to Advance the Needs and Interests of Humanity,” Noguera discussed how education can be used as a resource for

addressing the major challenges facing the world. Drawing on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, author of the landmark 1970 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the class explored how teachers can use listening, dialogue and empathy to engage students in an educational process based on collective inquiry and learning.

Immordino-Yang led the second session, “Solving the Frankenstein Problem: Why All Learning Is Social, Emotional, Cognitive and Cultural to the Brain.” She outlined new discoveries in how people learn and the possibilities that can be unlocked when teaching.

The third session, “Teaching to Empower and Disrupt,” was led by Noguera, who discussed how impactful teaching can advance our common humanity. Guest speaker Kori Street, interim director of the USC Shoah Foundation, explained how sharing stories can connect teachers and students.

Session four, “Building Meaning Builds Teens’ Brains,” led by Immordino-Yang, was a follow-up to her earlier session. The session focused on the patterns of learning that produce growth of the brain over time.

The fifth and final session, “How to Approach Teaching and Learning in Ways that Generate Insight, Impact and Inspire,” featured both Noguera and Immordino-Yang and was moderated by Professor Alan Arkatov. The session examined how educators are teaching, the science of learning and the possibilities of teaching to advance equity and justice.

Videos and slide presentations for the sessions are available at <https://bit.ly/USCRossierMasterClass>. —R

➤ Professor Mary Helen Immordino-Yang talks with Professor Alan Arkatov, the moderator, during the fifth and final USC Rossier Master Class session on Nov. 28.

PHOTO BY TARA PATTY

Global EdD Student Commits to Retelling the Story of the Alamo—the Good, the Bad and the Ugly

As executive director of the Alamo Trust, Kate Rogers is putting her research on contested histories into practice.

By Elaine Woo

DURING A WHIRLWIND SUMMER OF RESEARCH TRIPS, USC Rossier doctoral candidate Kate Rogers was struck by one sight in particular: a small handprint in a brick wall at Thomas Jefferson’s Virginia plantation, Monticello.

The tour guide said the handprint was probably left by a child—one of the more than 400 enslaved people who helped build the grand house. The teachers in Rogers’ group pressed in close to take pictures, which they vowed to share with students when the topic of slavery came up in the curriculum.

Their excitement confirmed for Rogers “the power of place” in preparing teachers to teach history, especially contested history.

“Teachers are on the frontlines of the culture wars in America,” said Rogers, whose work as executive director of the Alamo Trust in San Antonio involves broadening the story of Texas’ beginnings, including reconciling conflicting views of the part slavery played in Texas’ war for independence from Mexico in the 1830s.

“Giving teachers the language and tools to open up a real dialogue with students, versus just getting them to memorize dates and facts, is so important,” Rogers said. “Historic sites and museums can help support teachers at a time when they desperately need it.”

The role of “institutions of informal learning” in professional development has been Rogers’ consuming interest since she entered USC Rossier’s Global Executive Doctor of Education program in 2021. Her dissertation examines the ways these sites can strengthen history education by providing teachers with resources to deepen students’ appreciation of history and develop empathy and critical thinking skills.

“We have many contested spaces and histories in the United States, and we struggle as a society to find common ground on how to teach those histories,” said Professor of Clinical Education and History Mark Power Robison, who chairs the Global Executive EdD faculty steering committee. “Kate’s dissertation asks how historic sites and museums can help teachers convey the richness of our history to their students.”

Besides Monticello, Rogers has conducted research at Gettysburg, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, and the

National World War II Museum in New Orleans. She also visited the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa, with her cohort. Her experiences at those sites have kept her mindful of the needs of educators as she oversees a \$450 million Alamo redevelopment plan, which includes 10,000 square feet of exhibit space opening in early 2023.

She hopes to create classroom materials and in-service programs that foster inquiry-based instruction and help teachers lead honest classroom dialogues on emotional issues like slavery and the pervasive effects of racism. She envisions featuring primary source documents, including accounts of an enslaved Black man named Joe who was one of the few survivors of the 1836 Battle of the Alamo, as well as such priceless items from the Alamo’s collection as a sword that belonged to Mexican General Antonio López de Santa Anna.

The redevelopment of the Alamo site has stirred impassioned debate. Traditionalists want the focus to remain on the heroism of those who fought for Texas’ freedom. But others have pressed for recognition of the Indigenous people who built the Alamo for Spanish missionaries and for acknowledgement that Alamo defenders such as James Bowie were fighting in part to uphold their rights as enslavers.

Rogers said she is committed to telling the full 300-year history of the site—the good, the bad and the ugly. “Our big goal,” she said, “is to push visitors to think about things they hadn’t considered before because the story is more complicated than it has traditionally been told.” —R



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATE ROGERS

Fighting Scientific Misinformation

NSF grant will fund Gale Sinatra’s research on instructional methods to improve students’ evaluation of online sources.

By Max Dickstein

A SEVENTH-GRADE STEM TEACHER is packing materials after class when a student approaches with a question.

“Did dinosaurs and humans live at the same time?” she asks.

Replies the busy teacher: “Well, you know, you can Google that to find out.”

The student pulls out her phone, types in her question and finds a surprising “fact”: They did coexist.

Gale M. Sinatra, the Stephen H. Crocker Chair and a professor of education and psychology at USC Rossier, explained that this theoretical example demonstrates the harm caused by search engine algorithms that push the most clicked-on examples (not necessarily the most scientifically accurate information) to the top of an online search.

However, with a 2022 Pew Research Center report showing that 22% of Americans profess little to no confidence in scientists, Sinatra is in the fight against science denial. In 2021, she co-authored a book on the subject, *Science Denial: Why It Happens and What to Do About It*. And now, a \$690,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (\$165,000 of it going to USC Rossier) will fund the development of new tools to show teachers how to instill sound scientific thinking in their students.

“We are using a system of ‘lateral reading’ developed by colleagues at Stanford to help students source and vet online information, much like a fact-checker,” Sinatra said.

Her collaborators include University of Maryland researchers Doug Lombardi (Sinatra’s former doctoral student) and Sarah McGrew, who, along with Sam Wineburg at Stanford, developed the lateral reading technique, in which students open a new search window and look up who is providing the information in the top hits. Students are taught to ask, Is it a credible source? Is it trying to sell something or make a political argument?

In the dinosaur example, the student would learn via lateral reading that the source claiming “available evidence shows that man and dinosaur coexisted” is an organization dedicated to proving the accuracy of biblical teaching.

“The likelihood of getting accurate scientific information by googling is not high,” Sinatra said. “What pops to the top is the most clicked-on, advertised and, often, least accurate content.” Many students who get this instruction catch on quickly, Sinatra said.



Combining science and social studies

The NSF support came on the strength of the team’s instructional scaffolds for teachers to help students parse “socioscientific” issues such as water security or climate change. Along with evaluating sources using lateral reading, the evaluation of alternative explanatory models will also be a vital part of the strategy.

Model-evidence link (MEL) diagrams are a technique that Lombardi has used for years. Students use them to analyze evidence and decide on the plausibility of a particular scientific model for issues such as climate change or extreme weather in light of alternative, non-scientific explanations. The combination of lateral reading and the MEL diagram in this grant has the multidisciplinary benefit of drawing on literacy concepts from science education and social studies.

The researchers will work in tandem with science and social studies teachers. They will also test the teachers’ students on how they are assimilating the fundamental scientific, social and civic phenomena at play in the socioscientific topics they study. The ultimate goal is to sharpen the evaluation skills of middle and high school students to help them develop as citizens in a functional democratic society.

What’s next?

In future work assessing kids’ ability to evaluate online information, Sinatra and her colleagues may explore TikTok and other social media where Generation Z increasingly gets news—and, to a degree, misinformation.

“There is a lot of reliable information you can find on the internet, so we don’t want kids to be so skeptical that they don’t believe anything,” Sinatra said. “I’m not going to measure ice cores in Antarctica, but that doesn’t mean I can’t accept that human factors cause climate change.”

At some point, you have to trust the science, she said: “A better understanding of science helps our health and well-being and increases the probability of creating an environment that we can survive in.” —R

ILLUSTRATION BY SONIA PULIDO

→ Kate Rogers, executive director of the Alamo Trust and a doctoral student in USC Rossier’s Global EdD program, stands in front of the iconic Alamo Mission in San Antonio.

Pullias Center Partners with LACCD and Researchers from Harvard’s CEPR to Study COVID-19 Recovery

The three-year study, funded by a \$2.9 million grant, will examine how technology can remake the student experience.



THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED why students choose to enroll in the Los Angeles Community College District, how they attend classes, and what they go on to do. Now, the Pullias Center for Higher Education is partnering with Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) and researchers from the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University to evaluate how the system is using technology to respond to the pandemic’s challenges and reimagine how students access learning.

The three-year study is funded by a \$2.9 million grant from the Institute of Education Sciences, the statistics, research and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education. The project is part of the Community College Recovery Research Network, a novel national program funded by the American Rescue Plan. The network will bring together researchers and community college systems to provide evidence-based recovery activities that address the declines in postsecondary enrollment and academic progress that occurred during the pandemic.

“When COVID hit, LACCD took decisive action—the system offered students food support and other emergency aid, provided them with technology support and offered online alternatives to keep people safe,” said Tatiana Melguizo, a co-principal investigator and a professor at USC Rossier. “This project is a recognition by system leaders that recovery doesn’t mean going back to 2019 but creating a better model that serves students today and tomorrow.”

↑ Tatiana Melguizo, professor at USC Rossier and a co-principal investigator of the study.

With nine campuses, LACCD is the largest community college district in the Los Angeles area, serving a diverse range of students who enter the system with a wide array of goals. However, the system’s 2021 enrollment of nearly 92,000 students was down from more than 100,000 before the pandemic.

LACCD offered some online courses prior to the pandemic but had to shift classes fully online for more than a year. As part of its recovery efforts, the system is using technology to engage students in different ways, including creating “hy-flex” courses that allow students to choose whether they want to attend class in person or online on a session-by-session basis. The project will examine the effect of these formats on student learning.

The study will examine students’ enrollment decisions; the effectiveness of in-person, hybrid and online courses; and the potential costs and benefits—in both money and student experience—of scaling hybrid and online course formats.

Researchers will also explore how the increased number of online and hybrid courses has changed the workload for faculty and what supports these instructors need to move classes online.

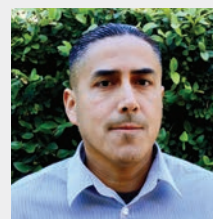
“We are proud that the Pullias Center will be working with the teams from LACCD and Harvard’s CEPR to explore new ways to support student success and help community colleges increase their enrollment,” said Adrianna Kezar, director of the Pullias Center.

The Center promotes equity in higher education and advances innovative, scalable solutions to improve college outcomes for underserved students and enhance the performance of postsecondary institutions. —R

Welcome new faculty!



SHANTA M. SMITH
Associate Professor of Clinical Education
Concentration: K-12 Education Policy
Expertise: Amplifying student agency, equity and STEAM; culturally responsive radical self care; culturally sustaining professional development for Black female educational leaders



NASSER CORTEZ
Assistant Professor of Clinical Education
Concentration: Teacher Education
Expertise: Teacher education; special education

PHOTO BY USC PHOTO / DAVID SPRAGUE

About the 2021–22 USC Rossier/PACE Poll:

The 2021–22 academic year was profoundly challenging for California schools. Eight critical issues emerged as serious threats to student learning, the operation of schools, and even the very institution of public education: 1) gun violence, 2) politicization of and support for public education, 3) controversy over what is taught in schools, 4) student learning and well-being, 5) declining enrollment, 6) teacher shortages, 7) college affordability, and 8) long-term funding inadequacy and instability.

These issues also present a threat to equity because they disproportionately affect the most marginalized communities, exposing long-standing systemic inequities in education and creating new gaps in opportunity and access. It is against this backdrop that PACE and the University of Southern California (USC) Rossier School of Education fielded our annual poll of California voters in July 2022 on their opinions of and priorities for public education.

Our top findings related to major threats facing public schools included the following:

- **Gun violence in schools.** For the fourth consecutive year, “reducing gun violence in schools” was the top-rated education issue for California’s voters.
- **Politicization of and support for public education.** More than 68% of voters reported that “public education is under attack in the United States.”
- **Controversy over what is taught in schools.** In California, 64% of respondents stated that schools should spend more time teaching grade-appropriate lessons about the causes and consequences of racism and inequality.
- **Student learning and well-being.** California voters reported strong concerns over the pandemic’s impact on students’ emotional and mental health, about students falling behind academically, and about the unequal impact of the pandemic on students of different economic and racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- **Declining enrollment.** The main reason parents cited for switching schools is wanting a different educational experience for their children (38%).
- **Teacher shortages.** Voters in households earning less than \$35,000 were the most likely to report this as a top priority (54%), versus voters in the top income bracket (27%).
- **College affordability.** Fifty-seven percent of parents are worried about having enough money to pay for their child’s college education.
- **Long-term funding inadequacy and instability.** “Improving school funding” was among the top concerns for voters overall, with 40% of voters (and 50% of parents) reporting it as a top concern, a 5-point increase from last year.

In the Media

“We’re expecting teachers, who are already burdened by the responsibility of addressing the academic needs of kids, to do something they’re not trained to do, which is to address the mental health needs of kids.”

— PEDRO A. NOGUERA, dean of the USC Rossier School of Education, in a CNN.com story about school shootings.

“Teenagers are not just capable of, but are driven to make deep meaning of complex issues and to really be visionary and connected to stuff that is deep, that’s about identity, that’s about reputation, that’s about who I could be. And we cut them off at the knees. It’s overly scheduling kids and it’s telling kids where to sit in class and what to do and when. All these very tight restrictions where everything that counts as achievement is defined by somebody else.”

— MARY HELEN IMMORDINO-YANG, professor of education, psychology and neuroscience, in a Newsweek story about the rising levels of teen loneliness and alienation.

“School boards are really the epicenter of the broader culture wars that we’re seeing, and they’re valuable for building political momentum nationally. I recall seeing Steve Bannon say on a podcast, ‘This is the path to save the nation. It’s very simple: It’s going to go through the school boards,’ he says.”

— JULIE MARSH, professor of education, to KCBS Radio: On-Demand.

“If you’ve moved to a neighborhood because of the ‘good public schools’ but you’re not satisfied with how public schools are handling COVID — and you can afford to — then you would be more likely to move your kid to a private school.”

— MORGAN POLIKOFF, associate professor of education and co-author of the annual USC Rossier/PACE Poll, to the website LA School Report.

Artineh Samkian Conducts Workshops in Research Methodology for Scholars in Armenia

USC Rossier partners with the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies to offer the Research Methodology Workshop Series.

By Margaret Crane

ARTINEH SAMKIAN HAS A KINSHIP with fellow educators and researchers in Armenia. “I have a connection because it’s sort of my motherland,” she says. “Even though I wasn’t born there, these are my people.”

Samkian’s family is from Iran but of Armenian descent. Those ties made it an easy choice for her to lead the Research Methodology Workshop Series, in partnership with the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies. Reflecting the institute’s research focus on contemporary Armenian studies, the workshop was presented through the USC Tacori Center, an academic facility located outside Yerevan, the capital of the Republic of Armenia.

Samkian, a USC Rossier associate professor of clinical education, called the series an “Intro 101 of methodological approaches for humanities and social science researchers, offering qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodologies.” She conducted six virtual sessions in April and May 2022, then followed up with in-person sessions at the Tacori Center in June. In November and December, the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies partnered with Samkian again to provide a second workshop series, diving deeper into methodological concepts not covered in Phase 1.

Distinguished in their fields, the students who participated in the workshops are affiliated with various Armenian institutions of higher education, including Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia, and Slavonic University, along with think tanks and public- and private-sector professions. Most are faculty and researchers at those institutions.

“These are some of the best minds in the Republic of Armenia,” said Shushan Karapetian, director of the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies. The workshop marked the first partnership between the institute and USC Rossier. “What makes this collaboration so special is that not only is it an interdisciplinary and inter-school connection within USC, but also with institutions in Armenia.”

Under the Soviet Union, humanities and social sciences in Armenia were ideologically and politically driven; independent research languished. The 1988 earthquake, Nagorno-Karabakh wars, and economic collapse also delayed substantive research. Now, trailblazers in academia and the nation’s burgeoning tech industry are calling for exploration in these disciplines.

“There’s a gap in knowing how to develop research and engage in sampling and data collection for contemporary issues within Armenia and how to teach these processes,” Samkian said. “We need these approaches to show us what questions to ask. What are the tools we need? How do we decide which tools to use?”

In a session on data collection, she presented options for discussing interviews, documents, artifacts or surveys. “We ended up going with interviews, documents and artifacts,” she said, “reflecting this particular group’s focus in the humanities.” In this way, Samkian is adapting the workshops to the needs of her students.

A unique challenge to leading a workshop of established professionals is to teach without appearing to patronize. “Working within Rossier has been perfect training for that very sensitivity,” Samkian said. “My USC students have been, for the most part, educational leaders in their own right. I was already positioned to teach these amazing scholars.”

During her last weekend in Armenia, Samkian observed the Armenian scholars and faculty (her students) teach a group of MA and PhD students. It was exciting to see the methodological concepts be translated into Armenian with examples and case studies relevant to their Armenian students. After observing the workshop series, Samkian provided feedback on her students’ andragogical strategies, suggesting revisions to the workshop structure and encouraging the use of more active learning strategies over lecture.

Samkian says there’s further interest in more workshops. “There is desire, on both sides, so I hope to go back.” —R



→ USC Rossier Associate Professor of Clinical Education Artineh Samkian (far left) with students in Armenia in June 2022.

FACULTY



STEPHEN AGUILAR was selected to receive the AERA Motivation in Education SIG Wilbert J. McKeachie Early Career Award. Aguilar also was awarded a \$23,700 grant from the USC James H. Zumberge Faculty Research and Innovation Fund Diversity and Inclusion Grant program, for activities related to the project “Education Technology Use by Teachers Serving Low-Income Students: An Experience Sampling Approach.” Aguilar and his colleagues received a grant of more than \$690,000 from the National Science Foundation for support of their project “Determining Community Needs for Accessibility Tools that Facilitate Programming Education and Workforce Readiness for Persons with Disabilities.”

ZOË CORWIN has joined a team of researchers from the schools of social work at USC and Washington University in St. Louis as a co-principal investigator on a \$3.2 million grant from the National Institute for Health, for the Proud and Empowered project, designed to create safer, more empowering high school environments for students who identify as LGBTQ+ to enhance social justice and behavioral health.

SHAUN HARPER was awarded two honorary doctorates from Georgetown University and Whittier College in the spring of 2022, and the first-ever honorary degree from Compton College. Harper also was awarded a Kresge Foundation grant for \$400,000 for his proposal “Advancing Racial Equity for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” Harper was reappointed by USC Provost Charles Zukoski to lead the University of Southern California Committee on Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure. And with **BRANDI JONES** and **KENDRICK DAVIS** of the USC Race and Equity Center, Harper has been awarded a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant for \$1.2 million for their proposal “Campus Racial Climate Research Translation and Postsecondary Institutional Improvement Tools.” Harper also was appointed by President Biden to the National Board for Education Sciences. In addition, he was awarded the 2022 Research Achievement Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education, and an ECMC Foundation grant of more than \$1.8 million for his project “Institutional Transformation for Community College Men of Color Success.”

ADRIAN HUERTA has been awarded the prestigious Early Career Award for 2022 by the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). The Award was established to recognize an individual whose work embodies “an emerging, significant, and potential for the future of a body of scholarship” in higher education research and practice. Huerta also was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Leonetti/O’Connell Family Foundation to study student parents in community college. Huerta partnered with UCLA and UC Davis and received a \$275,000 grant from the

College Futures Foundation to develop a racial equity-centered framework for the California Community College Baccalaureate Degree program.

ROYEL M. JOHNSON was appointed to the leadership team of the National Research Collaborative (NRC) for Foster Alumni and Higher Education (FAHE) and the Lumina Foundation’s Black Student Enrollment Expert Advisory Board. Johnson also was selected to receive the 2022 AERA Division G Early Career Award and the 2022 Carlos J. Vallejo Memorial Award for Emerging Scholarship from AERA’s Multicultural/Multiethnic Education SIG. He also was awarded \$35,000 from the American Education Research Association/National Science Foundation for his study titled: “Measuring the varying effects of juvenile arrest on college enrollment: the role of school-level factors.” And in his role as the USC Race and Equity Center’s Director of Student Engagement, he is on a team that has been awarded a \$1,533,384 grant from the United States Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Johnson was awarded a research grant from the American Education Research Association, funded by the National Science Foundation for his study “Examining the Varying Effects of Juvenile Arrest on College Enrollment for Racially/Ethnically Diverse Youth: The Role of School Level Factors.” He was appointed to the *Journal of Higher Education*’s Editorial Board and to the Los Angeles Unified School District’s Research Advisory Board.

ADRIANNA KEZAR and **KC CULVER (PULLIAS)** were awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to develop and pilot a national survey that will provide a contemporary understanding of postsecondary faculty in the United States.

ADAM KHO, DEAN PEDRO A. NOGUERA, ERIKA PATALL, JULIE MARSH and **LAM PHAM** were awarded a Reducing Inequality Grant of \$600,000 from the William T. Grant Foundation for their proposal “Hattie’s Influences on Student Achievement Under an Institutionally Racist System: What Works for Black and Brown Students?” Doctoral students Isabel Clay, Margaret Dawson-Amoah, Michael Fienberg, Shelby Smith, Tong Tong, Amanda Vite and former student Nikki Yates also contributed to the ongoing project. **KHO, TASMINE DHALIWAL, ADRIAN HUERTA** and **JULIE MARSH (CEPEG & PULLIAS)** received \$25,000 from the Western Justice Center to examine the implementation and impact of their conflict resolution education program in the Azusa Unified School District. Kho was awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Fordham Foundation for his proposal “Do Charter Authorizer Evaluations Predict School Success? Evidence from North Carolina,” and a \$35,000 AERA Research Grant for his proposal “A Teacher Similar to Me: The Role of Student-Teacher Race.”

JERRY LUCIDO was awarded a \$300,000 grant from the California Community Foundation to support its USC College Advising Corps (CAC) program; \$151,374 to support the USC CAC program in LAUSD high schools through the Partners for Student Success program; and \$10,000 from the CTBC Bank for the professional development of college advisers serving in the USC College Advising Corps program. Lucido and fellow research team members were

recognized with a National Student Clearinghouse Best Research Presentation Award at AACRAO's Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) 2022 Conference in Toronto.



EUGENIA MORA-FLORES was awarded the USC Mentoring Award for Faculty Mentoring Faculty, Postdoctoral Scholars, Medical Residents, and Fellows, recognizing exceptional individuals who go above and beyond what is expected, fostering an engaging, supportive, and inclusive academic environment through their mentorship of colleagues, graduate, and undergraduate students.

Dean **PEDRO A. NOGUERA** was appointed to the Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics by President Biden.

TATIANA MELGUIZO received a \$299,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to study community college STEM opportunities. She will work with researchers from LACCD's Pierce College, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Melguizo and the USC Pullias Center for Higher Education partnered with LACCD and researchers from Harvard's CEPR for a three-year study on COVID-19 recovery and have been collectively awarded a \$2.9 million grant from the Institute of Education Sciences, their study will examine how technology can remake the student experience.

MARIA G. OTT is serving on the Ethical Educator Panel for the AASA's *School Administrator Magazine*. Maria submits ethical advice in response to scenarios submitted by superintendents across the U.S. Maria's first submissions will be published in the September issue.

ERIKA PATALL was awarded the "Best Article of 2021" from the American Psychological Association for her article titled "Implications of the Open Science Era for Educational Psychology Research Syntheses."

JULIE POSSELT is working with the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE) in the United Kingdom to further equity in graduate education work began with the California Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Education (CCIDE) and expanded with the national rollout of the Equity in Graduation Education Resource Center.

MORGAN POLIKOFF and **ANNA SAAVEDRA** were awarded \$200,000 from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for their work in "Understanding America Study 2022: Civic Education and NSF RAPID3 Administration Supplement," and \$200,000 from the National Science Foundation for their work in "RAPID: The Impact of COVID on Children's Well-being in 2022: Continued Evidence from the Understanding America Study." Polikoff also has been awarded a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant for \$170,000 for his collaboration on "Neighborhood Characteristics and Neurodevelopment: Risk and Protective Factors, and

Susceptibility to Stressors and School Disruption During the COVID-19 Pandemic." In addition, Polikoff was awarded a \$139,872 grant from an anonymous foundation (their grant requirements are that they not be named) for his book project *Miseducated: How bad ideas are undermining education, and what parents can do about it*.

ROBERT RUEDA was inducted into the Reading Hall of Fame, which honors individuals who have been actively involved in literacy work for a minimum of 25 years.

MARITZA SALAZAR was selected as a University Council for Educational Administration 2022-24 Jackson Scholar.

GALE SINATRA was awarded a \$165,097 grant from the National Science Foundation for her project titled "Collaborative Research: Scaffolding Middle and High School Students' Scientific Evaluations of Sources and Alternative Claims in Earth and Environmental Sciences." She also was awarded the General Education Teaching Award for her contribution to the USC GE Program in the Fall 2020 through the Spring 2021 academic year and a \$50,000 grant through the Wrigley Institute's 2022 Faculty Innovation Award.

RESEARCH CENTERS

CENTER EDGE has received a \$190,000 grant from the educational technology company GoGuardian to collaborate on a variety of activities. As part of this grant, **ERIKA PATALL** will serve as the lead principal investigator and receive \$135,000 to create the 2022-23 State of Engagement report in collaboration with GoGuardian researchers.

CANDLE supported the research of three USC undergraduate students: **BRANDON HO**, **KRISTA NGUYEN** and **JEANNE HAGEMEISTER** in summer 2022, through the 2021-2022 Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program funds.

STUDENTS/POSTDOCS

TAYLOR ENOCH-STEVENS was awarded the Mellon Mays Dissertation Fellowship for the 2022-2023 academic year.

ÁNGEL GONZÁLEZ was awarded the 2022 National NASPA Community College Research and Scholarship Award. This award honors prominent research and scholarship in higher education and student affairs, in particular research supporting the community college sector. He also was selected as a Queer Trans People in Education Emerging Scholar at the University of Vermont; and was awarded a Student Debt Relief Grant from the Dru Project, an LGBTQ+ advocacy organization on a mission to spread love across the nation and promote gay-straight alliances.

EMILY GONZALEZ received AERA's Brain, Neuroscience, and Education SIG travel grant.

How Can Schools Better Serve the Needs of Secondary English Learners?

Professor Eugenia Mora-Flores on why supporting ELs is everyone's responsibility.

By Eugenia Mora-Flores, Professor of Clinical Education and Assistant Dean of Teacher Education

For almost 30 years, I have worked as a teacher or alongside teachers who work closely with students identified as English Learners (ELs). Most recently, I have focused on supporting secondary teachers at the middle and high school levels in meeting the language and content needs of their students.

I often get asked about the role of diverse content-area teachers in supporting ELs. There is a misconception that ELs need only strong English language development (ELD) and English language arts (ELA) instruction, and the work of supporting ELs is left to the ELD and ELA teachers. While explicit language instruction is taught in ELD and ELA, and students develop strong language skills from schools that prioritize designated classes in ELD and differentiated instruction in ELA, the work of supporting ELs relies on *all* teachers.

Recognize the language opportunities in content instruction

Language is a part of all content instruction and is directly connected to the thinking skill and content that students will use and learn during a lesson. The subject matter at hand drives the vocabulary they will need to make meaning of new content and express what they have learned. Teachers must anticipate how the thinking skill guides what language support ELs might need.

For example, students may be asked to describe or compare systems of the body, or evaluate the efficiency of a system based on



diet. The thinking skill needed for each task equates to a language function, or the purpose for using language in a scenario. If students are asked to compare body systems, they will need comparative language. If they are going to evaluate body systems, they will need the language of evaluation. Once we can identify the thinking skill and the content for a lesson, we can identify core language support ELs may need to access the content and express what they've learned.

Recognize the diversity of English Learners

California has a long history of leading efforts in how we educate ELs. With the largest EL population in the nation—35% of the overall K-12 population—myriad guidelines and resources have been developed to support teachers working with ELs. In 2020, the California Department of Education released a research-to-practice guide, "Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students," which reminds us of the importance of getting to know multilingual learners to best serve their needs. This means getting to know ELs as individuals.

The EL population is a subset of multilingual learners, who enhance the language and cultural diversity of our classrooms. Within the EL group there is great diversity and a variety of experiences that impact students' needs. For example, a high school-level EL who is new to this country and may have had interrupted schooling in their home country has different

needs from an EL who has been in U.S. schools since kindergarten. I have seen an average of eight typologies identified within the EL population, yet they are all given a generalized label of "English Learner." The needs of this group are vast and cannot be limited to a label that only captures the commonality that they are developing two or more languages. When you learn a strategy as a teacher for supporting ELs, you want to ask yourself, which need is it meeting, and is that aligned with the needs of the language learners in my class?

Let them talk!

The beauty of having a diversity of ELs in our classrooms is the opportunity for them to learn language from one another. If there is one thing I want to leave you with, it is to let them talk. Too often I walk through secondary classrooms that are quiet, with students completing independent tasks. Students cannot build fluency in a new language if we do not provide them with opportunities to use the language. If they are going to develop the ability to share what they are learning across all content areas, they need ample opportunities to use language in every class. —R

To learn more about Professor Mora-Flores' research on English Learners, check out her new book, co-written with Stephanie Dewing, *Teaching and Supporting English Learners: A Guide to Welcoming and Engaging Newcomers*, at teachercreatedmaterials.com.

PHOTO BY ALLISON SHELLEY FOR EDUIMAGES

DIVERSIFYING THE PIPELINE

How USC Rossier faculty are leading the way to bring equity-minded change to graduate education.

Interview: Adriana Maestas
Illustration: Sonia Pulido



WHILE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES have improved the diversity of the undergraduate student body—with about 45% of students identifying as people of color, representing a gain of 30% over two decades—much work remains to be done in diversifying graduate degree programs that train future professors and leaders. Approximately one-third of undergraduates go on to pursue graduate studies, while the pipeline narrows for students of color who opt to take the next leap in their studies post-bachelor's degree.

According to recent data from the Council of Graduate Schools, about 26% of all first-time graduate-school enrollees who were U.S. citizens or permanent residents were members of underrepresented minority groups in the fall of 2020. Financial pressure, spending excessive amounts of time in remedial education, and feeling isolated or unsupported are just some of the reasons why undergraduate students of color say they struggle and do not proceed in their studies.

Fortunately, USC Rossier faculty are applying research to practice, with the goal of better preparing universities to educate and train diverse students who intend to pursue graduate studies.

Some of the ways USC Rossier faculty are tackling the diversity problem in the professoriate pipeline include preparing undergraduates to be competitive applicants for graduate school, advocating for more equitable admissions practices, and providing resources for faculty and staff who work in graduate programs to foster a more supportive and welcoming environment for diverse students.

STEP 1: DIVERSIFYING THE PIPELINE

One of the first steps toward increasing access to graduate school is to better prepare upper-division undergraduate students for graduate study. One interdisciplinary training program that prepares underrepresented students, specifically Black and Latinx students, is the Research Institute for Scholars of Equity training program (RISE). Housed at a historically Black college, North Carolina Central University (NCCU), RISE counts USC Rossier Associate Professor Royel Johnson among its principal investigators and was the only HBCU to receive a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

Inequities for Black and Latinx students often begin with lower-quality pre-kindergarten, creating an equity gap that becomes challenging to close. RISE fellows—juniors and seniors who come from the communities impacted by these inequities—have an interest in social equity and con-

ducting research to improve the learning experiences and academic attainment of Black and Latinx students from pre-K through the university level. The RISE training program gives these undergraduate fellows an opportunity to conduct mixed-methods education research while receiving mentorship and support to prepare them for graduate study.

The next phase of the program, RISE 2.0, is a partnership between NCCU and USC. Students participate in a rigorous eight-week summer program, with sessions covering GRE preparation, applying to graduate school, and putting together a competitive application, said Johnson, who instructs RISE fellows. Funded with a training grant of \$1.5 million, the program “provides resources to develop undergraduate researchers to study issues in education, similar to what a McNair program does,” he said.

The program has funding to train about 60 scholars, with cohorts of about a dozen, Johnson added. The first cohort of scholars participated in the summer session on the NCCU campus in 2022. Recruitment for student participants in RISE 2.0 is national in scope.

“The RISE scholars have housing and a meal plan at NCCU for the summer program,” said Johnson, who also serves as director of student engagement at the USC Race and Equity Center. “It’s an excellent opportunity to expose students of color who are studying at predominantly White institutions to HBCUs. There’s definitely a cultural legacy embedded in the program.”

RISE fellows receive \$6,000 stipends, helping them focus on their studies instead of work. In addition, they benefit from an immersive experience focused on research methodologies, American schooling and educational laws, and policies and practices that impact Black and Latinx students. In addition to receiving 12 hours of GRE prep, fellows are also trained on human-subject research and can receive up to \$900 for research-related expenses.

RISE 2.0 is a unique opportunity to build a pipeline of scholars of color who are prepared to enter graduate school with research questions they have already started to explore. Its programming extends beyond the summer into the academic year, with monthly check-in sessions and online convenings so that the undergraduates continue to build relationships and community as emerging scholars.

While USC and NCCU are partnering institutions in RISE 2.0, collaborating institutions include Houston-Tillotson University, Jarvis Christian College, Paul Quinn College, Temple University, Texas College, the University of New Mexico, the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, Wiley College and Virginia Union University.

“It’s an excellent opportunity to expose students of color who are studying at predominantly White institutions to HBCUs. There’s definitely a cultural legacy embedded in the program.”

—USC Rossier Associate Professor Royel Johnson



Another promising California-based bridge program has the potential to move the needle on representation of scientists from underrepresented groups. The number of Latinx, Black and Native American students receiving STEM PhDs is about 14%, even though these groups make up more than 30% of the U.S. population. In the fields of physics and astronomy, the diversity problem is even more pronounced, with only 6% of PhDs awarded to members of underrepresented minority groups. While RISE focuses on scholars studying inequities in education, Cal-Bridge—a partnership of the University of California and California State University—creates opportunities for underrepresented students to increase their numbers in PhD programs in STEM fields.

USC Rossier Associate Professor Julie Posselt is a principal investigator for Cal-Bridge, which is designed for California State University (CSU) students interested in pursuing a STEM-related PhD with the goal of matriculating into a UC doctoral program. Through mentoring and professional development, the National Science Foundation-funded project helps underrepresented minorities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, disabled and first-generation students advance in STEM fields including physics, astronomy, computer science and computer engineering.

Cal-Bridge recruits students entering their junior year at a CSU campus and supports them for three years, through their first year of graduate school. There are four pillars of

support for Cal-Bridge students: 1) joint mentoring by two faculty, one from their home CSU campus and the other from a nearby UC campus; 2) need-based scholarships of up to \$10,000 per year so program participants can cut back on their work hours to focus on their studies; 3) professional development workshops that prepare students to apply to PhD programs; and 4) a summer research opportunity.

The Cal-Bridge summer program enables the undergraduate scholars to participate in research projects for eight to 10 weeks in the summer. To ease the financial burden for participants, students are paid a stipend, and housing and travel costs are covered by the program.

Posselt said Cal-Bridge has been so successful that the California State Legislature has allocated \$5 million into the state budget to support the program's expansion. In her capacity as co-PI, Posselt has used research findings to inform project strategy via discussions with the project's operational leadership. Posselt and her research team are using social network analysis and longitudinal departmental case studies to understand the progression of Cal-Bridge scholars pursuing graduate education in astronomy and physics. Data collection for Cal-Bridge began in summer 2019 and will continue for five years. Social network analysis can broaden the understanding of trust networks and how students who are historically underrepresented benefit from intensive mentoring and exposure to undergraduate research opportunities with their peers.

STEP 2: PREPARING GRADUATE SCHOOLS TO BETTER SUPPORT A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

Preparing underrepresented students for graduate studies is just one piece of the puzzle. Another major challenge to creating equitable access to graduate schools involves changing the schools themselves. One such effort, which seeks to improve admissions policies at graduate schools and better prepare them to support increasingly diverse student populations, is the Equity in Graduate Education Consortium. Led by Posselt, this research initiative initially started as a project to scale holistic graduate admissions practices to six California universities. The consortium works with graduate programs and leaders to align policies and practices to equity and inclusion commitments. One of the goals is to apply racial equity research to build supportive, sustainable infrastructure that transforms and reconfigures

structures that have excluded students of color and those from other underrepresented backgrounds.

Many of the underlying inequality issues with graduate education have roots in the challenges students face during their baccalaureate studies. Undergraduates from under-served backgrounds are more likely to have to work to support themselves during their studies than other students, and those from low-income families are more likely to work longer hours than their more affluent peers, cutting into time that could be spent studying or engaging in a research program that would help in determining an area of study for graduate school. Research shows that undergraduates who work more than 20 hours per week have lower grades and retention rates.

Excellent grades and experience in conducting research

are some of the qualities that have traditionally defined competitive graduate school applicants. Those qualities are biased against students who are underrepresented or from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, many of whom are students of color. Creating a more equitable graduate admissions process involves taking a more holistic approach to evaluating an applicant. This means implementing the kind of equity-minded organizational change that Posselt's research calls for.

For Posselt—who is also affiliated with the Pullias Center for Higher Education, a USC Rossier research center aimed at addressing major challenges in educational equity—these changes could include using new rubrics to evaluate prospective graduate students, improving diversity in a holistic review process. Other changes might include actively involving faculty to participate in recruiting students from racially minoritized groups, and learning from programs that have been successful in implementing designs for equity.

“Equity is more than closing gaps. It's doing what it takes to keep gaps closed, keep diverse scholars engaged at all levels of education, and re-create the broken systems, structures and cultures that contribute to inequalities,” Posselt said. “Every year, more and more people and organizations are ready to take on this challenge, and it's a privilege to lead research-practice partnerships that are helping them do so.”

Once these students arrive in graduate school, the institutions that accept them are often not wholly prepared to receive and support them. The Equity in Graduate Education Consortium, which Posselt directs and serves as principal investigator, offers professional and organizational development to change-ready universities, graduate programs and

faculty to transform graduate admissions and recruitment. This project has now scaled up to 13 universities nationally, including 84 PhD programs. The organizational change model has been so successful in diversifying applicants and enrollees in doctoral programs that it has also been replicated by a group of universities in England.

The consortium's workshops provide guidance on how graduate programs can begin implementing changes to policies and practices that have undermined the access and success of racially minoritized students. For instance, developing equity-minded mentoring relationships between faculty and graduate students is one area that can profoundly impact success. The workshops also teach faculty how to distinguish among mentoring, advising, supervising and sponsorship activities and train them on how to have culturally responsive conversations with mentees across social differences. Recognizing the overall well-being of minoritized students is also tackled in terms of how to have open conversations about mental health, wellness, and how racism and isolation can pose a risk to diverse graduate students.

STEP 3: DEMYSTIFYING THE PROFESSORiate

Graduates of master's and doctoral programs often go on to fulfill leadership roles in academia and other sectors and become faculty at institutions of higher education. One of the goals of diversifying graduate student bodies is also to diversify these very leadership roles and higher ed faculty.

Just as there are unwritten rules on the path to becoming an academic, from how grad school applications are prepared to entering a doctoral program with research questions identified, there are additional rules in the job-search process to seek a tenure-track position. How candidates present in interviews and at academic conferences, how those candidates are judged by other faculty and the number of publications the applicant has in peer-reviewed journals are just some of the many factors that influence who becomes a professor.

USC Rossier faculty are noted for taking an equity-minded approach to their research. The professors are also known for informing their graduate students about the processes and structures that their students will encounter as they embark on their academic careers.

“There are a few ways that I see USC Rossier faculty working to diversify the professoriate,” said Wilmon A. Christian III, director of workplace equity at the USC

Race and Equity Center. “On a smaller scale, our faculty participate in coaching, mentoring, and sponsoring and working with underrepresented students in hands-on ways to prepare them for the rigors of the professoriate. The other important thing that happens is how USC Rossier faculty demystify the professoriate and explain what they do and what it takes to get into these positions with their research and the projects that they are involved in.”

“Reflecting on my own experience,” Christian added, “coming from an HBCU and attending graduate school at a predominantly White institution, I'm grateful that I had mentors who broke things down for me and helped me with small things, like how I was crafting my personal statement, how I was refining my research interests and connecting with scholars who were doing the research and work that I was interested in pursuing.”

Taking a systems-and-structure approach to creating that ripple effect in attracting, recruiting and retaining emerging scholars of color is what USC Rossier faculty are pursuing to diversify the professoriate. This involves applying research findings and insights to understand why existing structures have produced a college professoriate that is not as diverse as the growing student population. A systems approach also involves examining the relationships among students, faculty and staff within and outside the college campus and the policies and practices that impact those students. In addition, this approach acknowledges that interactions with systems in a student's environment can

have a profound impact on their success and preparation for post-baccalaureate studies.

“When we think about improving access to graduate education and how we can diversify the faculty, we need to shift from individual responsibility and look more at institutional responsibility,” Posselt said.

The programs and research that USC Rossier faculty are involved in to promote diversity in graduate education and prepare underrepresented students to enter the academy as professors remind us that institutions and

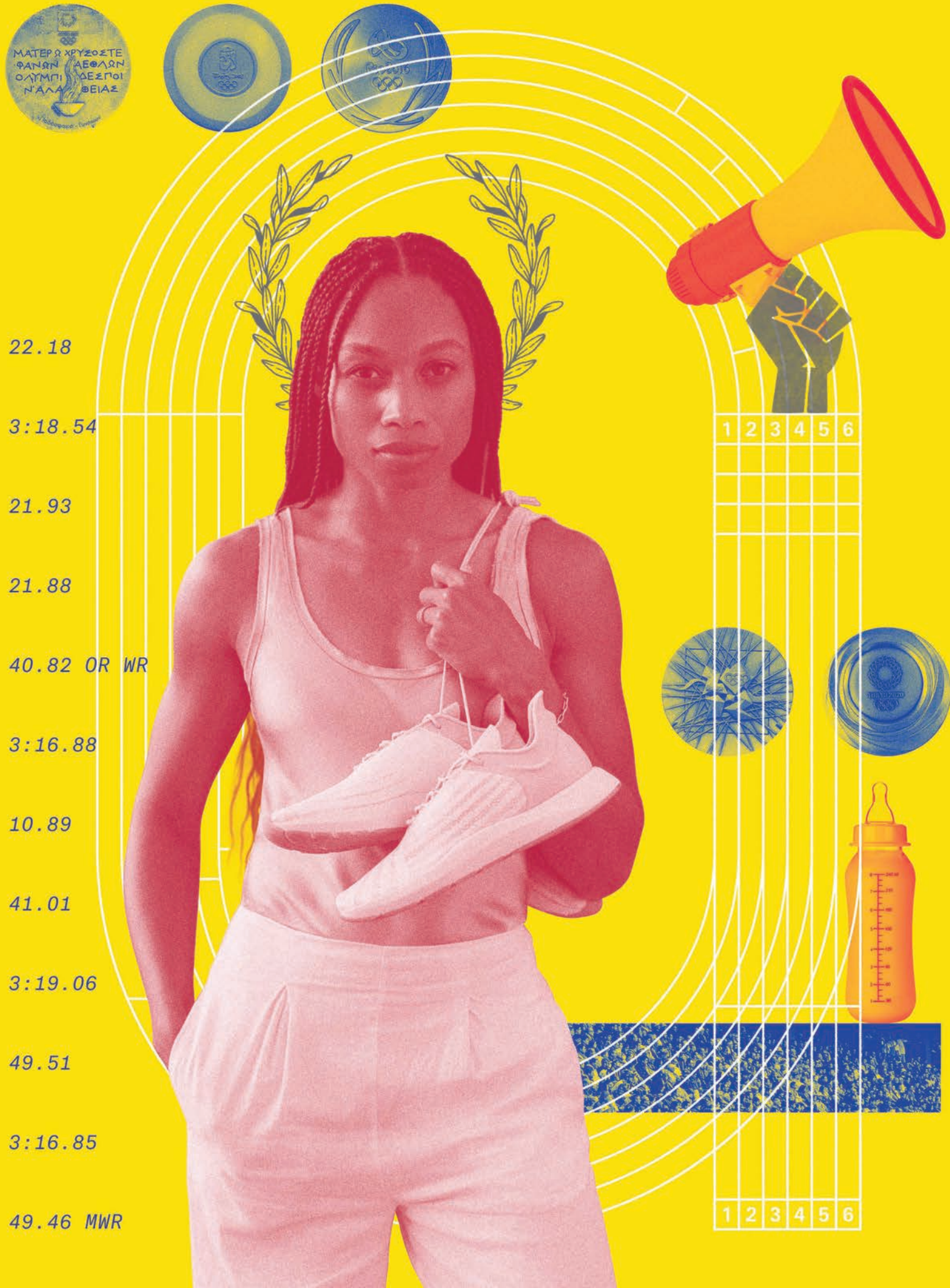
organizations can take more responsibility in their commitment to equity and diversity. USC Rossier's scholars are committed to applying their research in practical ways to address the institutionalized racism in higher education that has kept scholars of color and other marginalized people out of the professoriate. The school's commitment to diversifying the professoriate does not end with preparing graduates for the job market. Since 2020, more than 80% of the school's faculty hires—including the appointment of Royal Johnson—have been scholars of color. —R

“Equity is more than closing gaps. It's doing what it takes to keep gaps closed, keep diverse scholars engaged at all levels of education, and re-create the broken systems, structures and cultures that contribute to inequalities.”

—USC Rossier Associate Professor **Julie Posselt**

“Reflecting on my own experience, coming from an HBCU and attending graduate school at a predominantly White institution, I'm grateful that I had mentors who broke things down for me and helped me with small things.”

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FEATURE

ALLYSON FELIX IS NOT DONE

The Olympic great and USC Rossier grad is retired but staying busy with a new shoe company, elevating athletes' voices, and empowering women.

Interview: Kianoosh Hashemzadeh
Illustration: Edmon de Haro

LAST SUMMER, ALLYSON FELIX BS '08 officially retired from her prolific athletic career as the most decorated U.S. track and field athlete in Olympic history with a total of 11 medals: seven gold, three silver and one bronze. Her athletic achievements have been extraordinary, and so has her activism off the track. For the Los Angeles native and 2008 graduate of the USC Rossier School of Education (she also received an honorary degree from USC in 2022), giving back to her community and advocating for women and youth have always been a focus. After seeing her Nike sponsorship agreement gutted after she became pregnant with her daughter, Felix publicly called out the company, effectively paving the way for better contracts for women athletes. And now that she has put grueling workouts and race preparations behind her, she's able to fully focus on

other projects, like her woman-focused shoe and apparel brand, Saysh, and advocacy efforts, including working with Right to Play, the Power of She Fund, Voice in Sport and the International Olympic Committee's athletes' commission. In January, USC announced that the field at its track stadium would be named for her. In this interview, Felix discusses growing up in L.A. with two educator parents, how her time at USC Rossier shaped her, and the causes that are so important to her.

Kianoosh Hashemzadeh: You were born and raised in Los Angeles. What does the city mean to you?

Allyson Felix: I grew up in the heart of L.A., not too far from USC. My grandma would take us on walks through the Rose Garden and the 32nd Street Market. Growing up,

ILLUSTRATION BY EDMON DE HARO. PHOTO BY HARRISON BOYCE.

the city exposed me to a lot of greatness. I always saw people doing amazing things, and that made me feel like things weren't out of reach. It also allowed me to dream, because that's what I saw everywhere. I don't think I realized what that was until I started to travel and [saw that] everywhere is not like this, and that there is a special environment and diversity that I got to grow up with.

What neighborhood did you grow up in?

Lafayette Square. It's a historically Black neighborhood, right on Crenshaw and Washington.

Both of your parents are educators. How did being the daughter of two educators mold you into the person you are now?

My mom was a third-grade teacher. She taught for over 30 years in LAUSD. My dad taught Greek, doctrine and things like that [as] a seminary professor. Education was very important in our house. Even when I decided to go pro, my dad sat me down and said, "OK, so if you do this, you're still going to college, and you're still going to graduate." They instilled that in me, and that education is really a privilege. Not everyone has that access.

I also saw [my parents] serv[ing] their community. Education is not a career that is super rewarding in a monetary way, but I saw the rewards that they reaped. People would always come up [to them]—my mom's former students or people my dad had taught—and they would have all these incredible things to say like, "You changed my life." I saw they helped people, and that really shaped me.

You were offered a scholarship to run track at USC.

You chose to forgo your college eligibility, yet you still decided to get your college degree. Why was getting a degree so important to you?

Even [though it was a condition for] my parents, I always wanted a college experience. That was really appealing to me, and I didn't want to lose out on that. In sports, anything [can] happen, and there is life after sports. [College] was always a part of my plan.

With the way that name, image and likeness (NIL) has changed college sports (p. TK), do you think if NIL were in place when you were in college that it would have changed your decision in any way?

I love that [NIL] has happened, and I'm for the athletes. I don't think it would have necessarily changed my decision, because mine was more of a timing decision. I feel really blessed that our family wasn't in need, so it wasn't a decision based on that. My brother also went to USC years ahead of me, [and] I saw the demand on him from the NCAA system. For me, because the Olympics was the next year, it was a decision to focus on trying to make the team and not having a big workload. What it came down to [was], what's going to give me the best opportunity to make the Olympic team [and]



reach that goal? [In College, there are] different races that you [are] required to compete in [and] score as many points as you can. I felt like it would have been unfair for me to come and then not do all I could because I had this other goal.

When you arrived at USC, you decided to study education. Did your studies at USC Rossier change the way that you saw the world?

I always wanted to be a teacher. Being at Rossier showed me up close what it was like to be in the classroom, what it was like to have that impact, and be under a teacher and to work alongside [them] and see them in action.

Do any memories of USC Rossier stand out?

What I loved most was when we got [to go into] different schools. I was at 32nd Street School once a week. It was just the best time, to get in the classroom and see what [it] would be like to be a teacher [and] get to work with kids. I was in my mom's classroom growing up, but to have a task and be responsible for these kids, it gave me such a real-life experience that I enjoyed.

If you had continued with education, where do you think you'd be now?

I always saw myself as a fifth-grade teacher. Rossier showed me other aspects of education, the complexities of districts and the administrative side of things. I would have been interested, after a while, to explore some of the other oppor-

↑ Allyson Felix competes at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games wearing custom-made spikes by the shoe and lifestyle brand that she founded, Saysh.

“Growing up, the city exposed me to a lot of greatness. I always saw people doing amazing things, and that made me feel like things weren't out of reach.”

tunities as well, like administrative management or [being a] principal.

In 2018, you became pregnant with your daughter, Camryn. You competed early in your pregnancy and continued to train throughout. How did you manage that?

I had a great pregnancy all the way up until days before I delivered. I felt strong. I was running and in the pool. Towards the end, I might be active for three days a week, just listening [to my body] and trying to figure out what was best on that day.

Women come back regularly from pregnancy now, which is amazing and inspiring. Before, people made you feel like, OK, you're entering this other chapter of life. It goes beyond sports—for so many working women, they feel they can't let people know what's going on, [for fear] of getting taken off this or that, or [being] ask[ed] not to travel. It's not fair. It's not the way that it should be. [But] we have a lot of momentum now and a lot of great examples.

You've written beautifully and movingly about the birth of your daughter via emergency C-section. How did that experience change you?

It was a traumatic experience for me, and one that was unexpected. As an athlete, I've been healthy my whole life. I know how to take care of my body, and so when I was diagnosed with severe preeclampsia, it was this weird feeling of being really scared and not knowing what was going on, not being fully educated with [what preeclampsia is] and what it meant for me and my baby. The interesting thing about preeclampsia is that, oftentimes, there's nothing that you can see. I felt so grateful to come out [on] the other side. [It] was also an eye-opening experience of the state of maternal health in the United States. So, it changed me in that I [realized] I was much stronger than I thought.

You've spoken about how Jackie Joyner-Kersey has been an important mentor in your life. What role did she play as you were deciding to publish the op-ed in *The New York Times* about Nike and their lack of support for pregnant athletes?

She's been a constant in my life. She's my coach's wife, and I met her when I was a teenager. Jackie is amazing—not only is she the greatest female athlete that we've seen, but she cares about me as a person. When I was going through that hardship, I leaned on her for support. She always told me to go with what I felt. She was not trying to give me an answer but [encouraged me] to trust myself and to do what

I felt I needed to do. She was there for me throughout, and it gave me that encouragement to move forward.

After you left Nike, you created your own footwear and apparel company, Saysh, which has a mission to empower and serve women. On the first episode of your podcast, *Mountaintop Conversations*, you said that one of the things you wanted to do when you set up Saysh was to ensure that the inner workings of the company were reflective of its mission and public image. How are you doing that?

I feel grateful because there have been a lot of incredible people who have left amazing jobs because they want to come and build this type of company. I talk with everybody before they join, and I ask them, "Why do you want to be here?" And to me, that's the culture we're creating. You have to be able to align with that mission. We're going to be uncompromising with that. That is who we are, and we can't put that [out] into the world unless we are that every single day. As a company, we're able to be thoughtful [and give] incredible women a seat at the table. Our maternity returns policy [which provides expectant mothers with a free pair of sneakers in their new, postpartum size] was something that our first product engineer came up with. She said it was always something she wanted to do but was never able to at large companies. I love that we're mission-based and serve a bigger purpose than just making shoes. That's something I will never waver on.

Now that you have more time to focus on Saysh, what are your goals for the company?

I was traveling not too long ago, and I got on a plane and a woman was wearing a pair of our shoes. It was the first time I saw them in the wild. I probably scared her half to death, because I was so excited and wanted to chat with her. She started talking about this very impactful birth experience that she had. And what blew me away is that she loved the shoes, she loved that they were made for her foot as a woman—but she loved our mission. She wanted to stand with me, with other women. In five years or 10 years, I would love to see a sea of those shoes, and not just so our company will be successful, but because it will have that impact in the world.

Postretirement, you've been very busy. You were recently elected to the International Olympic Committee's athletes commission, which aims to incorporate the voices of athletes into their decision-making processes. What's your experience been like so far on the committee?

It's a big role, and I wanted to join because I want to be that voice of athletes. A lot of what we're dealing with right now are athletes' concerns about Russia and Ukraine, how [the war] affects them and what [supports] are in place. Of course, I have my own agenda. I would love to be supportive of women all over the world in what they're facing, [such

ILLUSTRATION BY EDMON DE HARO. PHOTO BY MUSTAFA YALCIN/ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY.

as] support[ing] or thinking about women [athletes] in the Middle East and how to support [them with] the issues that they're going through.

Drawing from your experience on being a mother at the Olympics, are there any ways that the Games could better serve women and create a better environment for mothers who are competing?

Absolutely. I have a long list of things. I have so much respect for women who [have] navigated that space and found a way to make it work, because what I found is that the systems are not in place to help mothers. Women probably didn't have a seat at the table when a lot of these things were thought of. I'm excited to bring my own experience—of traveling with an 8-month-old all around the world, going to an Olympics and not being able to bring my child—and the experience of mothers who are currently going through that.

You're a board member and an athlete ambassador for Right to Play. Why does their mission resonate with you?

I joined Right to Play over a decade ago. I wanted to do important work but be hands-on. [Right to Play] is [an] incredible organization. Their mission resonated with me after I saw their programs in action. They use play to help children in refugee camps and [other] stricken areas [to] help them through their circumstances—whether that is using games to teach [children] about malaria and how to protect themselves or programs that are helping girls stay in school and continue their education. I got in the field, and I started to understand how these programs worked. Play is [a] universal language. I was able to see that right away, and see these kids light up. Then I met with families and saw not only how these programs impact their children, but the impact [on] the family life. It was incredible, and I was really moved. I continued my work and joined the board. I always say when I go in the field, I think that I'm going to help, and I always feel like I come back as the one who's been changed by the experience.

You've also been working with your sponsor Athleta's Power of She Fund and the Women's Sports Foundation to provide child care grants to women athletes. How did you go about setting this program up, and why is this cause so important to you?

We started with the Power of She Fund to [support] women [with children] who are still pursuing sport and break down that barrier of child care for them, especially [when] traveling. When I went through it, it was expensive. I felt grateful that I had the resources to bring a partner [or] bring a parent to help me. I thought about women who don't have those resources, so [through these grants] are a way to [provide those resources].

This past year with the Women's Sports Foundation and &Mother, we were able to offer child care at the U.S. Track and Field championships for free, for everybody—all the athletes, but also for officials and agents; anyone associated

“I feel grateful because there have been a lot of incredible people who have left amazing jobs because they want to come and build this type of company. ... we're able to be thoughtful [and give] incredible women a seat at the table.”

—Allyson Felix on Saysh, Felix's footwear and apparel company

with the event. We want to keep doing more and find ways to support women so they don't have to choose between the sport they love [and motherhood]. It's such a practical thing, but so important.

You are also a board member and an owner of a mentorship program, Voice in Sport. How does the program work?

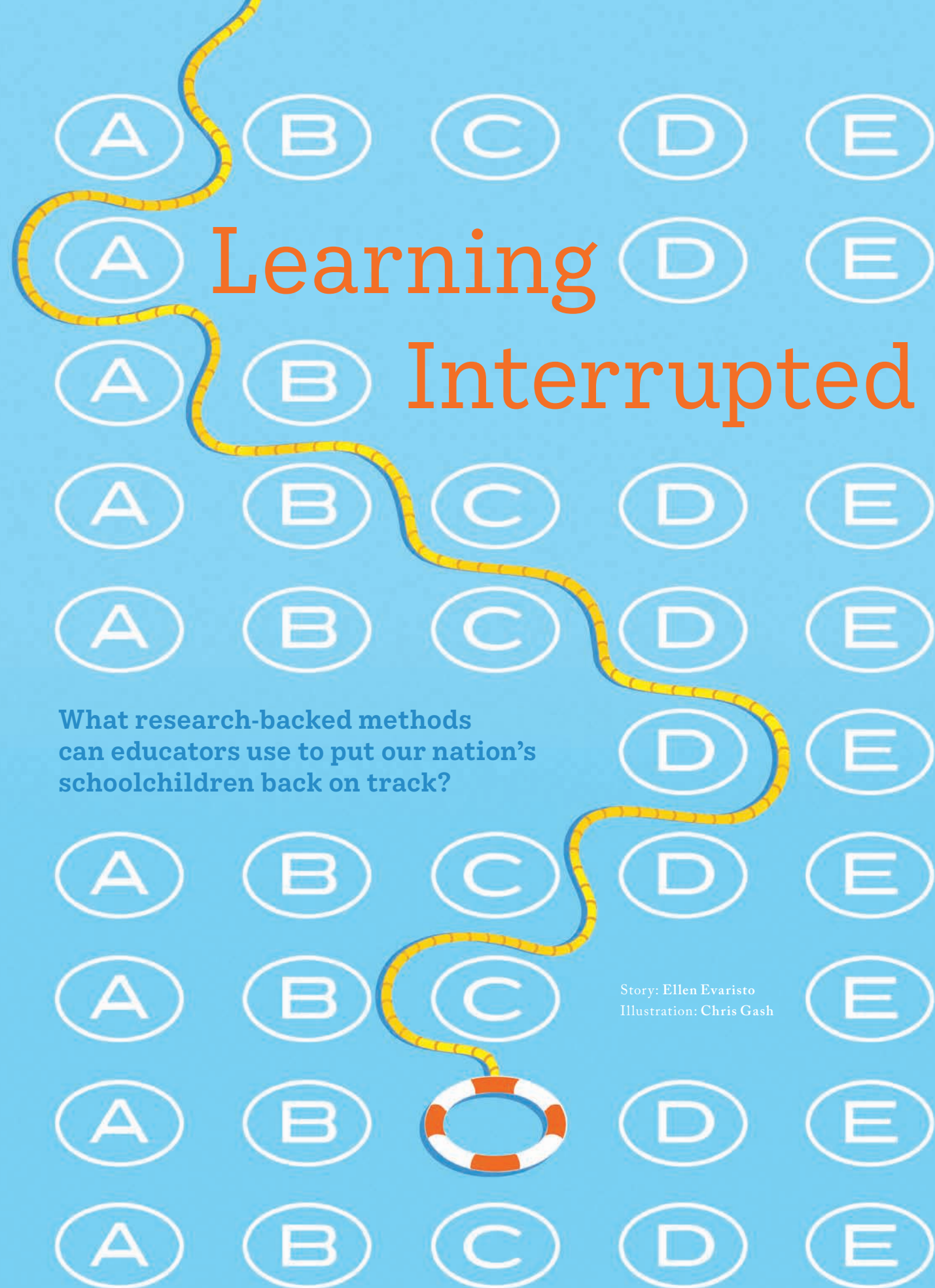
Mentorship is so important, especially for young women who are athletes. Voice in Sport is a platform for young girls focused on mentorship. Girls can sign up for a session with a professional athlete, a nutritionist [or] a college athlete and talk about different things. I did a session yesterday on self-belonging and self-worth. [The girls] have these real-life examples of people who have been there, and they can ask [us] anything. We also talk about our own journeys and experiences. I think it will help girls stay in sport [and] help [their] mental health, having these experts on hand at this very crucial age.

What are some of the pressing challenges that young female athletes today are facing?

It's a lot around mental health and nutrition. One of the girls yesterday asked me about [anxiety], which I felt was amazing at [her] age. She was probably [about] 13. She has horrible anxiety and fear of competing, and she doesn't know how to handle it. [With] my generation, that's not even something we would feel comfortable saying, and so she, at this age, is able to say that and talk to people who can help her through that.

After retirement, a lot of athletes, deservedly so, want to focus on enjoying life without the demands of training and competing. What has made you decide to chart a different path, one that is driven by advocating for causes that are so important to you?

I think it was going through the experiences the last two to three years that really changed my life. Whether it was leaving Nike, the fight for maternal protections, [my] birth experience—I feel like there's so much to do on those fronts. I want to be involved and try to make a difference. [Leaving] Nike showed me that it was possible. Before, sometimes change felt out of reach; seeing it happen made me feel, “No, we can do this.” It's a special time. There's a lot of momentum, and I don't want to lose that. —R



What research-backed methods can educators use to put our nation's schoolchildren back on track?

Story: Ellen Evaristo
Illustration: Chris Gash

REMEMBER WHEN THE SUMMER SETBACK or slide among kids was a major concern for educators? Teachers would see a decrease of at least one month's worth of school-year learning after a three-month summer break.

Now imagine that decline after a dramatic shift to online learning and over 14 months of quarantine. Resources are now available to safely bring students back to school, but how do you make up for this much of a disruption in education?

When the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) released test results in the summer of 2022, the data confirmed what many educators had feared: Math and reading scores of 9-year-olds had dropped to levels that hadn't been seen in two decades. While the decline in performance was noted across the board, the drop has been greater for Black and Brown students, especially those who lacked access to virtual learning or were enrolled in districts that delayed a return to in-person learning.

"This once-in-a-generation virus upended our country in so many ways—and our students cannot be the ones who sacrifice most now or in the long run," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona in comments about the NAEP results. "We must treat the task of catching our children up in reading and math with the urgency this moment demands."

As educators and district leaders wrestle with a host of other challenges, how can they create a plan to get students, especially the most vulnerable, back on track? What research-backed solutions might be most effective in addressing a problem that could have lasting consequences for the schoolchildren affected and our society at large?

MORE THAN MATH AND READING

In March 2020, nearly every school in the nation closed and attempted to transition from in-person to online learning. It was a herculean challenge, but surprisingly most schools managed to pull it off relatively well. That's the good news. However, many schools stayed closed for more than a year. The bad news that educators are contending with now is that the prolonged isolation has had devastating consequences, both on the mental health of many children and on their academic progress.

The length of time schools were closed was determined by various factors, among them geographic location (rural schools opened more quickly than urban schools); whether or not the school was public, private or a charter school (public schools generally stayed closed longer); the school board's political leanings; and student demographics. Parents and caregivers found themselves in the precarious situation of

responding to the challenges brought on by the pandemic in addition to simultaneously supporting their children academically. The interruption also saw a loss that extended past the academics.

"We learned pretty quickly that remote learning during the pandemic was not as effective as in-person learning," said Morgan Polikoff, a USC Rossier associate professor of education. "Student achievement fell off in that first year. Then a lot of schools were still intermittently open, open and closed, or some were really closed through the duration of the 2021 school year." Polikoff co-authored a report from the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) in August 2022 which found that learning delays correlated with the amount of time students were out of the classroom or were in a virtual learning environment.

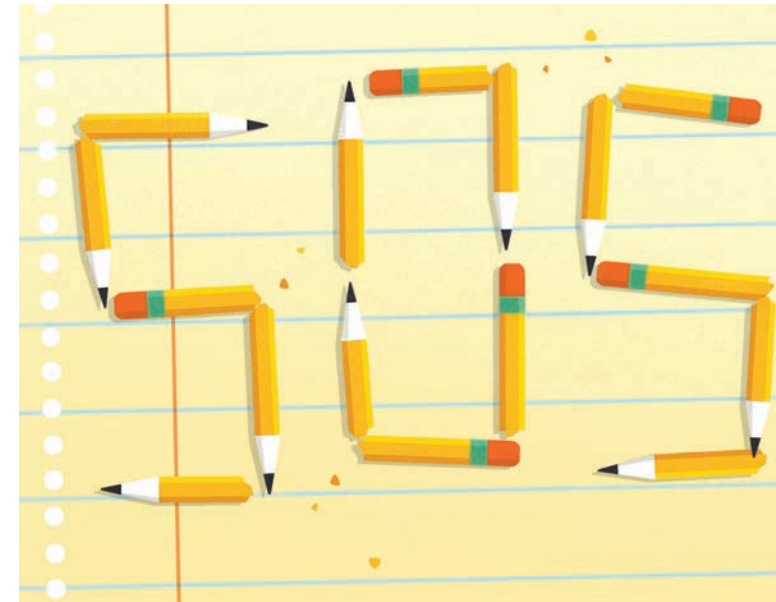
The recently released NAEP results from October 2022 showed that reading and math achievement declined significantly. Reading scores were steadier and only slipped roughly three points for both grade levels compared to 2019. However, reading scores have slowly been taking a downward dip. On average, math scores for 4th graders decreased five points to the lowest level since 2005, and the average math scores for 8th graders decreased by eight points to the lowest level since 2003. The drop in scores was found to be more significant for Black and Brown students: Math scores declined five points for White students, 13 points for Black students and eight points for Hispanic students.

Polikoff saw that low-income students, Black and Brown students, and White students who were out of school for more time seem to have borne the brunt of the learning loss. Polikoff pointed out Curriculum Associates' research from 2020. After over two years since those first school closures, the declines are still there. He added: "I think there's some evidence that we're starting to close some of those gaps, but we're certainly still pretty far away, especially in mathematics."

Patricia Brent-Sanco EdD '16 is director of equity, access and instructional services at Lynwood Unified School District, located south of Los Angeles. Her district and the community it serves were severely impacted by the pandemic. With 72,000 residents and a demographic of 94% Latino and 4.5% African American, one out of every 400 residents died of COVID-19.

"We are a four-mile city made up of essential workers. Our parents had to go to work," said Brent-Sanco. "Our students suffered not only grief and possible loss of parents and grandparents and family members, in addition there was a loss in learning."

The pandemic also exacerbated pre-existing inequalities. A 2021 report by the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights confirmed that the pandemic "deepened the impact of disparities to access and opportunity facing many students of color in public schools." A McKinsey analysis found that an alarming 40% of Black and 30% of Hispanic K-12 students received no online instruction when schools



were closed during the pandemic, compared with 10% of White students. Preliminary data indicated that the negative effects of the pandemic fell unevenly with regards to educational opportunities and achievements.

The sobering reports have become a call to action for educators, shedding light on how students of color have experienced a decline in academic achievement. The pandemic compounded and widened structural inequalities. "In other words, students who were struggling in school due to complications of poverty, structural racism, language difference and/or learning difference, among other factors, fell further behind during and after the pandemic," said Patricia Burch, a USC Rossier professor of education.

For many low-income families, surviving the pandemic with their health and financial well-being intact became more important than how well their children were per-

"We learned pretty quickly that remote learning during the pandemic was not as effective as in-person learning."

—USC Rossier Associate Professor Morgan Polikoff

forming academically. Considering the hardships endured by those who were required to report to work in person, it's hardly surprising that there is no sense of urgency among many families to address the backward slide in achievement. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, many employees—mainly Black and Brown—worked in person, citing that only 16.2% of Hispanic and 19.7% of Black workers could

work remotely. And that was before the pandemic. Polikoff says the burden for addressing the problem should not rest on parents or caregivers. "I would say that the system needs to identify students who need the support and provide the support," he added.

HELPFUL (OR HOPEFUL) SOLUTIONS: RESEARCH AND DATA OFFER LEARNING LOSS REMEDIES

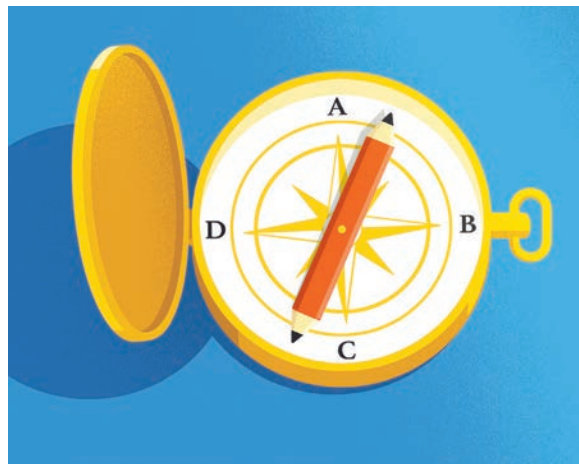
Brent-Sanco says that in the Lynwood Unified School District, "the pandemic illuminated what we already knew. We know that there has to be different levels of engagement strategies for those students who face struggles outside of school [and] have environmental factors that they have to deal with when they are outside of our walls." To address those concerns, Lynwood opened a food bank, distributed computers and wi-fi hotspots, and created a mental health collaborative with a hotline for parents. Other offerings include small-group instructions during the school day, direct instruction and guided and independent practice. In addition, a leadership academy at the elementary and middle schools instructs students on leadership lessons.

Several studies have offered evidence-based methods—many overlapping—to mitigate learning loss.

Curriculum Associates conducted a mixed-methods survey with more than 300 schools whose below-level students exceeded expectations. Researchers interviewed those school leaders to understand how they managed to do so during the 2020–2021 school year. Six key practices that were most effective in supporting students emerged from the study: Cultivate educator mindsets to support student success; create a culture of data; prioritize meeting the needs of the whole child (this includes addressing mental health as well as the need for social-emotional learning); create a school environment that engages and inspires students; enhance teacher practice with more resources and support; and strengthen connections with families. A California School Board Association report from the summer of 2020 offered useful guidelines to address learning interruption echoing similar remedies.

A Learning Policy Institute report, co-authored by USC Rossier Dean Pedro A. Noguera, from May 2021 integrated research on the science of learning and offered six guidelines for educators to address whole-child learning. The research addressed the need for "learning environments that center strong teacher–student relationships, address students' social and emotional learning, and provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge that builds upon their experiences and social contexts in ways that deepen their academic skills."

"The biggest mistake schools could make now is to focus narrowly and exclusively on academic achievement," Noguera said. "They must acknowledge the tremendous social, psychological and emotional challenges that many



students and staff experienced, and they must devise strategies to address all of these. This won't be easy, but it's the only sensible approach for moving forward."

WHAT'S WORKING?

The research and data reveal the needs that must be addressed. Federal funds have been earmarked to assist schools, and now the question is: How do educators and administrative leaders implement a strategy to address and respond to COVID-19 learning loss? Perhaps the pandemic created a unique opportunity to reimagine how students are taught. Some schools have explored possible options including extending the school day or academic year, summer school and grade retention. The latter, while well-intended, may carry negative consequences. Other options include tutoring, reevaluating curriculum, and teacher professional development.

"High-impact tutoring has emerged as a promising strategy for addressing learning loss," Burch added. "From years of research, we know that high-quality tutoring can significantly change outcomes for students struggling academically. Tutoring is something that middle- and higher-income families purchase for their children. It needs to be available to all students in public schools. One-on-one or small-group tutoring with highly qualified trained staff, integrated within the school day where possible and focused on literacy and numeracy, is necessary to a functioning public education system. Districts around the country already are spending Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) dollars on this. The challenge is how to sustain and, where appropriate, scale efforts once funds dry up."

A meta-analysis by the National Bureau of Economic Research reviewed studies of tutoring with control groups and showed that it widely increased student achievement and engagement, was shown to be cost-effective and was responsible for significant gains across the board.

Studies have proved that the combination of "high-dosage tutoring," culturally and linguistically relevant instruc-

tions, and the building of relationships with students and parents, delivers significant gains for students. High-dose tutoring is defined as intensive learning in small groups. Consistent, carefully thought-out, in-school tutoring has drastically improved learning, according to a February 2021 EdResearch for Recovery report. Brent-Sanco's Lynwood district offers an additional layer of support to students through mentoring programs, a social emotional curriculum, homework tutoring and support to prepare students for college and a career. "It fills in the gap for anything that students might be missing," she said.

Secretary Cardona agrees with this approach. "The evidence is clear. High-impact tutoring works, and I've urged our nation's schools to provide every student who is struggling with extended access to an effective tutor," he said in a *U.S. News & World Report* story from April 2022.

In addition to tutoring, improving curriculum should be a focus. "Now is the moment to double down on what we know seems to work," Polikoff said. Through the Understanding America Study (UAS) Education Project—part of the USC Center for Economic and Social Research—he and his team are working with a nationally representative panel of American families regarding the impact of COVID on their educational experiences. The project focuses on collecting data from the subset of UAS households with at least one pre-K-12 child and/or at least one postsecondary student. "I think high-quality curriculum materials will play a very central role in addressing learning loss," he said. In a March 2022 paper, Polikoff examined how the pandemic affected

"The biggest mistake schools could make now is to focus narrowly and exclusively on academic achievement. They must acknowledge the tremendous social, psychological and emotional challenges that many students and staff experienced, and they must devise strategies to address all of these."

—USC Rossier Dean Pedro A. Noguera

how curriculum materials were used. Whether in school, online or in a homeschool setting, his recommendations included providing access for all children to quality core curriculum materials, offering personalized curriculum tailored to student abilities and interests, and supporting teachers' supplemental core curriculum efforts.

Throughout the pandemic, teachers have been asked to juggle multiple roles, often balancing educator, mental health provider and technology support. Providing them with quality professional development and support is another

option to mitigate student learning loss. Polikoff stresses the importance of equipping teachers with the right tools and providing thoughtful solutions, so they can challenge structural barriers.

Before the pandemic, there was a growing concern for student mental and emotional health and the correlation with learning. In April 2022, The New York Times surveyed school counselors on the effect the pandemic had on student

"Tutoring is something that middle- and higher-income families purchase for their children. It needs to be available to all students in public schools."

—USC Rossier Professor Patricia Burch

mental health. The participants noted that students were not motivated in the classroom and that "emotional health is necessary for learning to happen." As the value of the whole student increases, so has the role of student counselors. Schools are spending a portion of their COVID relief funds to address student mental support and hiring counselors.

Carol Kemler Buddin BS '79 is a fourth-grade teacher in the Poway Unified School District in San Diego County. With 41 schools in the district, 60% of the population are students of color and 10% of students are economically disadvantaged.

When everyone returned to the classroom the previous academic year, her district recognized that students were not at the level they should be. "We saw it across the board with all of our students," she said. For example, in her school's beginning weeks of kindergarten, when students gain readiness routines, some were not able to write their name, hold a pencil or sit in a group. In the upper grades, some students were not able to regulate their outdoor and indoor volume or were not able to perceive personal space.

"We looked at all the data, and with that data we were able to decide how to best help our students," Buddin added. The district used COVID funds to focus on student social and emotional health. To address food insecurity, the district provided free meals to students, and additional counselors were hired for small groups, social emotional lessons and individual student support. Technical and summer training was also provided to educators in the district. Summer school was provided in 2021 and 2022 for students who needed an extended school year for academic instruction.

In addition, they were able to identify students who needed additional assistance and made recommendations for tutoring. Peer-to-peer tutoring is available three days a week after school, and additional reading teachers were hired for students who needed support. "At the end of the year we

Learning Loss Remedies

Students across the country have been affected by COVID-19-related learning loss. Here are steps teachers, schools and school systems can take to address the disruption:

- Offer high-dosage tutoring, or intensive learning in small groups, to supplement student learning experiences. According to the National Student Support Accelerator, this method "leads to substantial learning gains for students."
- Foster engagement not only with the students but with their families and guardians as well. Monitor student progress and provide feedback to keep all informed and involved in the learning process.
- Design high-quality curriculum materials to meet a student's unique abilities and interests to reinforce teaching efforts in the classroom. Suggestions from CRPE include offering all children access to quality core curriculum materials, personalizing the curriculum, and supporting teacher supplemental content.
- Provide and encourage professional development for educators, who often managed multiple roles during the pandemic. Helpful recommendations from the National Math and Science Initiative includes digital training as well as training for educators to care for their social and emotional needs.
- Make mental health a priority. Implementing strategies for social-emotional learning will help students build the skills they need to regulate their emotions and behavior.

just kept saying, We can't believe what we've accomplished," Buddin said. "At the beginning of the school year, some of our upper-grade students were reading at the second-grade reading level, and we were able to catch them up to their grade level by the end of the school year. We just couldn't believe it, yet we were joyful about their successes."

The learning challenges created by the pandemic have provided the opportunity for educators and administrators to reimagine the classroom and reevaluate current educational structures. Buddin said: "We're all working a lot of hours, and we're doing a lot of individual instruction right now, because we need to give the kids what they need, and that is what teachers do!" —R



Interview: Ellen Evaristo

Illustration: Heather Monahan

How do you combine hip-hop music and science teaching?

Professor Chris Emdin on working in service to youth, teaching as performance art and hip-hop's transferable skills.

Chris Emdin joined USC Rossier in January 2022 as the Robert A. Naslund Endowed Chair in Curriculum Theory and a professor of education. His research focuses on democratizing science and transforming urban education. A scholar, best-selling author and impassioned advocate of educational equity, Emdin brings a unique approach to schooling, incorporating hip-hop music and culture to transform science teaching. He discusses the importance of student engagement, STEAM, and the art and legacy of teaching.

You're a science educator first. You earned your PhD in urban education, your MS in natural sciences and your BS in physical anthropology, biology and chemistry. How do your studies shape your approach to education?

As a person who has expertise in the sciences, I learned to think in a very particular way. I initially approached science education as a scientist. Everything was about the data, the numbers, and the inputs and outputs. It was about getting young people to memorize content. I wanted to be a good teacher, but I was trained to look at the world in a particular way. I have since discovered how incomplete that approach is. The desire to be effective was not enough if I relied solely on delivering my content without understanding context. It required a radical departure from my training to delve deeply into understanding human beings.

Today, I would call myself equal parts scientist and sociologist. Equal parts interested in the cognitive dimensions of teaching and learning, as well as the effective and emotional dimensions. I found myself as a scholar when I learned to resolve the tensions that always existed between my scientific training and my more humanistic experiences as a teacher.

How do you use hip-hop music and culture to transform science teaching, and why is this important?

Hip-hop is not just a musical artform. It's a culture, a way of knowing and being, and a tool for transformation. Folks use it as a way to orchestrate their existence. Once you recognize that it's not just some random artifact but a culture, then you have to engage with it as such. Once I recognized the power that hip-hop has on the lives of young people, I had no choice but to utilize it in teaching and learning.

Science has always been perceived as being out of reach of most young people. These are young folks who society says are not the best. They are not smart or valued. I see them engaging in hip-hop and expressing the same skills, traits and dispositions that I see in the most brilliant scientists. They're curious and make keen observations. They're thinking and speaking through metaphor and analogy and deconstructing complex ideas. I'm like, "Whoa! You're a scientist." But they believe that they're not. My work is to remind or inform them of who they are, and show them and their teachers how the skills they

have, just by virtue of their engagement in hip-hop, can be applicable in spaces like science.

Then there's also the cool level, right? You could write a rap about anything in the world. You can certainly write one about science.

"I see students engaging in hip-hop and expressing the same skills, traits and dispositions that I see in the most brilliant scientists."

We'll try it. Let's hold high academic and cultural expectations and remove the perceptions of what smartness is or should look like. Let's experiment with cool ways to help youth latch on to content. Then you watch magic happen.

You are director of youth engagement and community partnerships at the USC Race and Equity Center. Tell me more about your role.

Connecting with young people, valuing them and making them feel as though there's a pathway for them to higher education must be the central focus in all our endeavors. Working in service of young people and their futures requires direct engagement with them about what they need to be their best selves. This requires all the adults who are connected to young people to understand that they are in service to them.

Youth engagement is practical. It begins with conversations and co-creation while maintaining high expectations. It's about creating opportunities for youth voices to be heard. This requires teachers and other education stakeholders to meet youth where they are. My role is to help those who work in schools to develop the strategies needed to do the same. The goal is to develop a youth engagement ecosystem where access to excellence is maximized because all youth-facing adults are equipped with the tools and trained with the strategies to help youth to be fully actualized.

Young people can only reach their full potential when the entire community supports their intellectual, psychological and emotional

growth. One of the essential pieces of our work at USC Rossier is to support the community in fulfilling its potential to support young people. My work is to let the community know that we are accessible and willing to be in direct relationship with them. That's what community partnership looks like.

USC Rossier is not just a school of education. We are a place where innovation, creativity and imagination abound. We're interested in engaging with the community off campus and exploring ideas that are not traditionally perceived as having anything to do with education and seeing how they can impact change. Learning can happen in a coffee shop or barbershop as well as in a classroom. I'm the person who helps to envision what that may look like.

What are some of your current research projects?

I'm continuing Science Genius BATTLES, which is a science rap competition. It's science education meets American Idol and rap battles, where we challenge young folks to write raps about science, compete in their classrooms and battle to see a winner. The winner from each school then battles winners from other schools, and those winners go on to a citywide competition. It's all over the place now. My favorite version of it is in Kingston, Jamaica, where they have reggae and dancehall science battles, which is just amazing to witness. That project is expanding, and it has immense potential for teaching, teacher training and even the creation of musical products.

I'm also designing a certificate program for teachers. It draws from my TED Talk: "Teach teachers how to create magic." The goal of the certificate is to teach teachers the performance art of teaching. That includes watching videos of the best performers, like Misty Copeland, and watching how she enters the stage and then asking, "How can a teacher enter the classroom the same way?" I'm excited to expand that work at USC because we're in the middle of an institution and city that centers on creative arts. My doctoral students and I are developing a set of courses for teachers, and they will graduate with a certificate in teaching as a performance art.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. For the extended interview, please visit rossier.usc.edu.



Social-Emotional Learning Is All Learning

The work of Mary Helen Immordino-Yang shows how schools can embrace a new interdisciplinary science of development, culture and neuroscience.

Story: Katharine Gammon
Illustration: Sonia Pulido

THE FIELD OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) is at a moment where it is both lauded and scrutinized in schools. SEL, simply put, involves developing self-awareness, self-control and interpersonal skills within school curricula. The benefits of SEL include an increase in student emotional regulation and empathy, and the ability to make better decisions, which, in turn, can lead to improved test scores, grades and school attendance; increased postsecondary education readiness; and better mental health. With schools grappling with learning loss (p. 27) and an increase in student mental health issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, spending on SEL grew roughly 45% between November 2019 and April 2021, according to a report by Tyton Partners, an education consulting and investment firm.

There has, however, been a backlash against teaching these skills. Some critics say social-emotional learning is not meant to be taught by teachers but is better left to parents. Others have gone further, decrying SEL as a covert means to teach public schoolchildren progressive perspectives on race, gender and sexuality, leading some districts to eliminate SEL from their curriculum entirely.

In all of it, the science of social-emotional learning is still emerging, and that's one of the goals of the USC Center for Affective Neuroscience, Development, Learning and Education (CANDLE), a USC Rossier research center founded and directed by Professor of Education, Psychology & Neuroscience Mary Helen Immordino-Yang.

Immordino-Yang didn't like school as a kid. She was always interested in the natural world—trying to understand nature and humans' role in it—but never felt as if she fit in at school. Immordino-Yang studied developmental psychology, lived in various countries after her undergraduate studies, and worked with her hands building boats. Then she injured her hand and found work as a science teacher in a struggling district south of Boston.

It was there, in a classroom of refugee students from all over the world, that she realized how fascinating the problem of education is. "It was the area that I really had always been looking for," Immordino-Yang says. "It was a problem that was about developmental psychology and the development of mind, but it was also deeply cultural and social, with real-world complexities and implications, unlike what I was seeing in the developmental psychology lab."

Immordino-Yang, the Fahmy and Donna Attallah Chair in Humanistic Psychology at USC Rossier, has found a way to funnel her varied background into a unique and emerging field. CANDLE, founded in 2020, integrates research on neuroscience, education and psychology to create a new understanding of development and teaching.

WHAT SCHOOLS GET WRONG ABOUT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

CANDLE's work often focuses on social-emotional learning, which can be a problematic concept, Immordino-Yang

says. It suggests that some kinds of learning are social-emotional, and then the rest of learning is just regular cognitive stuff—which isn't the case. Succeeding in a math class, for example, takes perseverance, risk-taking, relationship-building and attitude. "We are always deeply social and emotional in everything we think about. We think because we want to; we think because it matters," she says. "Those are emotional drives."

Immordino-Yang also says there is a lot of thought about developmental appropriateness in preschools and elementary schools, but little thought about it in middle and high schools. Schools "are deeply inappropriate in the way [they]

design around kids' biological and psychosocial needs for growth," she says. That's the other reason she studies adolescents: "because I really want to understand how we [can] meaningfully innovate in the secondary education space."

The center works to connect brain science to classroom science, by using developmental affective neuroscience to guide the transformation of schools, policy, and the student and teacher experience, with a focus on middle and high school students. Around 10 researchers at CANDLE conduct transdisciplinary studies on teachers and students—for example, scanning teachers' brains as they graded student work in an MRI machine to show that teachers who think about their role more complexly may have a more consistent pattern of engaging with their students' work.

They are also working on longitudinal studies of brain development on inner-city, low-socio-economic-status youth from immigrant families throughout Los Angeles County, Immordino-Yang says. The team has conducted extensive qualitative interviews with the kids over several years, and, via the MRI scanner, they have looked at their brain development and functioning as the youth are making sense of complex social stories in real time. The results show that beyond IQ, socioeconomic status or their parents' education level, brain development can be predicted by the way kids engage with narratives about who they are, Immordino-Yang says. "It's a really powerful statement about the power young people hold through their own thoughts and feelings to grow themselves over time."

Another project, being worked on with University of Michigan Professor Jamaal Matthews, is trying to understand how a young person's processes of creating meaning become the substrate for their biological growth. Matthews received a three-year NSF midcareer faculty fellowship with Immordino-Yang to study social affective neuroscience and collaborate with CANDLE researchers to forge a new conversation and research approach that brings together racial equity studies with developmental brain studies in adolescents.

"We're trying to understand the sort of psycho-biological, psycho-social, cultural, biological nature of adolescence," Immordino-Yang says. "It's really about changing the way we think of teaching as a profession in secondary school: What is the role of the teacher in kids' lives? What do teachers need to know how to do, [and] what capacities do they need to have to be effective in these spaces?"

The work is part of a scholarly body that could upend traditional ideas about teaching and learning. One of CANDLE's current challenges is that society has deeply held assumptions about what learning is about, what school is for and what it means to think, Immordino-Yang says. And those assumptions are problematic in many ways. "The thinking and focused attention and quote-unquote *academic* learning is directly tied to the way that students are feeling, and that's directly tied to the ways that their social world is structured," she says.

Skateboarding Tricks and Social Skills

Zoë Corwin has been diving into the world of skateboarding for the past several years. Corwin, a research professor at USC Rossier who is the principal investigator for the Promoting At-Promise Student Success project for the USC Pullias Center for Higher Education, believes we can learn a lot from studying the intersection of skateboarding, mental wellness and community. She started USC Skate Studies, along with an interdisciplinary group of colleagues, to highlight the experiences of youth who are passionate about skateboarding—both those who are in communities of skaters and those who feel disenfranchised from groups.

Their research includes a national survey, case studies conducted in seven diverse regions of the United States, and an L.A.-based participatory action research study involving documentary filmmaking. The study's focus on skaters from low-income and/or minoritized backgrounds ensured that the findings reflect diverse perspectives. By gaining a deeper understanding of the complexity of skateboard ecosystems, the researchers say they hope to inform the way that society views and interacts with skateboarders. The researchers have created a podcast, zine and series of videos—in the hopes of making their findings accessible. Corwin is grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from skateboarders, who tend to be critical thinkers, problem solvers who address issues from a communal level, and who are adept at communicating across diverse groups, Corwin says. "Educators can learn a lot from the innovative and genuine ways that skaters build and maintain community," she says, "and, relatedly, how they practice mental wellness."



"We are always deeply social and emotional in everything we think about. We think because we want to; we think because it matters. Those are emotional drives."

—Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, Fahmy and Donna Attallah Chair in Humanistic Psychology at USC Rossier

RESEARCH IN ACTION

Immordino-Yang's research can be seen in action at local schools she has partnered with. Da Vinci RISE High in South L.A. is an independent studies high school that serves predominantly foster and housing-unstable youth, says Erin

Whalen, the school's executive director. "We were built and designed for the youth in those populations: If we create a school model with the most at-risk students in mind, that will serve all students really well," he says.

Whalen says Immordino-Yang's work has been incredible because as a school serving at-risk students, many metrics and measures are rooted in the manifestations of trauma, but at RISE, they start at the most basic of a person's needs: They have mental health services, family counseling and behavior interventionists all in-house at the school. The school doesn't suspend or expel students. Whalen says the school uses Immordino-Yang's work as a basis to place social-emotional learning at the core of the school experience. "Mary Helen has been an incredible thought partner," Whalen says. "She's one of our first folks in the mental health-psychology realm to validate the work we're doing."

He points out that skills like self-regulation and agency aren't separate from academic skills: "Social agency and self-management exist in the history classroom, on the playground and in math class." Those skills are also

what employers are looking for—while rote facts can be Googled, social-emotional skills require students to know themselves in a deeper way.

At New Village Girls Academy in Los Angeles, principal Jennifer Quinones started working with Immordino-Yang two years ago, to see how to best support teachers. The school focuses on students who are not successful in traditional settings. They might be young mothers, students who have been bullied or those with other high needs. "You can imagine the amount of social-emotional learning trauma they bring to school with them," says Quinones. "One thing that has been ignored is that the trauma is also carried by the adults working with them."

Immordino-Yang is leading a team of researchers to figure out how to help teachers manage their stress—to "put on their own oxygen masks first," Quinones says. She worked at another school where she noticed a correlation between teachers who were angry and frustrated and the likelihood that their students would violate probation terms and end

Critical Race Digital Literacy Skills

The internet is a place where misinformation and racial discrimination can grow, but it's also a place where communities can spring up. That motivates Brendesha Tynes, Dean's Professor of Educational Equity and professor of education and psychology at USC Rossier. Via the Center for Empowered Learning and Development with Technology, which Tynes founded and directs, she studies youth experiences with digital media and how these experiences are associated with mental health and socio-emotional outcomes. One of her projects is a national survey of critical race digital literacy skills, a longitudinal study of 1,138 kids ages 11–19. She hopes to find out whether critical race digital literacy is a buffer in negative race experiences online, and if those skills help mental health outcomes like depressive symptoms, PTSD and anxiety.

Tynes will use that data to help create a platform called CRITmetric, which will teach young people in grades 8–10 to critique and cope with the racism they experience online—including algorithmic bias. Ideally, she says, the work will help young people to better navigate a post-2020 digital landscape, using a historical and critical lens. “I hope it makes them better able to manage their own experiences online and to create spaces for themselves in digital spaces where they can thrive,” she says.

Another one of the center's studies looks at the way social-emotional learning topics are presented in teacher preparation programs, both in person and online. The researchers will interview program leaders, teachers and administrators to see how SEL fits into teacher preparation. “Through documenting what is already established, we will better understand which aspects of SEL remain missing in programmatic efforts, and how we can build on existing initiatives to promote a better continuum of learning for teacher candidates,” the researchers say.

the practice of wellness, we also needed to be the example for our girls.”

The study has concluded, and researchers from CANDLE are putting together the data with the hope of doing a follow-up in the future. “Mary Helen is very special in what she can do,” Quinones says. “She brought edu-babble to a level that everyone can understand. She talks about how the brain functions, what stress causes, and the damaging effects it can have on the development of a child.”

“She brought a real wealth of knowledge of the actual scientific evidence, thinking about how to incorporate wellness into math, science and history,” Quinones adds. Immordino-Yang is also helping the school think about how to teach courses that are culturally responsive and how to help teachers have mechanisms to help students develop self-awareness to be able to better communicate.

“Mary Helen Immordino-Yang brought edu-babble to a level that everyone can understand. She talks about how the brain functions, what stress causes and the damaging effects it can have on the development of a child.”

—Jennifer Quinones, principal at New Village Girls Academy

It's not always easy work. Immordino-Yang says developing a new knowledge of education and neurodevelopment is messy, generative and not always efficient. She is publishing papers in neuroscience journals, but also journals of education, philosophy and political science.

Still, she hopes CANDLE's work will contribute to a more inclusive educational world, one that focuses on process instead of outcome in development and learning. The rise of social-emotional learning curricula around the country has been heralded as a tool to promote equity in learning. She thinks that in the future, teachers and students will start to appreciate the deeply cultural nature of human biology and understand more diverse perspectives around science learning and teaching—based on development. “We're really inventing a new transdisciplinary approach to developmental science,” she says, “with the goal of creating a richer, more modernized understanding of human development.” —R

up back in juvenile hall. By being proactive about wellness and stress reduction, she says, her school has retained more teachers, and they are doing better than before. “If we're not making sure the adults molding them are OK, then we are failing completely,” she says. “If we wanted to promote



Planting SEEDS

A new research project led by Darnell Cole explores the impact of multigenerational STEM mentoring on L.A. middle schoolers.

Story: Nadra Kareem Nittle
Photos: Rebecca Aranda

↑ College student Ceisly Andino (center) helps middle school students with SEEDS, a game-based program designed to foster the learning of STEM content.

HOW DO YOU BOOST THE NUMBERS OF MARGINALIZED students in the sciences?

That's a question Darnell Cole, a USC Rossier professor of education and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice, has wrestled with throughout his career. His new research project, known as SEEDS (Student Engagement, Exploration and Development in STEM), sets out to answer it by exploring the impact of multigenerational mentoring on the math and science engagement of middle school students from economically disadvantaged Los Angeles neighborhoods.

“Our focus is connecting the middle school students with college students who live in these communities as mentees and mentors together around the construct of STEM engagement through online gaming,” Cole said. “The middle school students get to see people who look like them, who might have experienced things that they've experienced, engage in science concepts.”

The mentors, several of whom are USC students, are all majoring in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects at two- and four-year colleges, and they benefit

from their relationship with the middle school students as well. For one, they are viewed by the middle schoolers as scientists rather than as college students at risk of not graduating, as those from low-income backgrounds and communities of color are often framed, Cole said. “It helps solidify their identity beyond these kinds of characteristics that are often deficit-oriented and changes into an asset-oriented view,” he said.

As the middle schoolers receive guidance from college students, the college students are mentored by professionals—educators, working scientists and others in the STEM field—who coach them through the undergraduate experience. They can help them transition to graduate school or to a STEM career. “Our professional mentors are able to engage our college students in meaningful, thoughtful ways with their career pathway information as well as their own kind of navigational and aspirational capital,” Cole said.

In addition to Cole, SEEDS includes co-principal investigators Christopher Newman, an associate professor in the Department of Higher Education at Azusa Pacific University; Shafiqah Ahmadi, a USC Rossier professor of clinical education and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice; and Ting-Han Chang, a postdoctoral researcher at the center. Graduate and undergraduate students also have leadership roles in the project, which kicked off in 2021 with a pilot phase.

The first year of the program at full scope is now underway, a development Cole attributes to the partnerships and grant funding that have made SEEDS possible. That includes a close connection with the USC McMorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI), a seven-year enrichment program to help students from South and East Los Angeles earn college admission. NAI hosts a Saturday Academy at two USC sites with four schools: El Sereno Middle School, Florence Nightingale Middle School, James A. Foshay Learning Center and Murchison Street Elementary. About 450 students from those schools take part in the SEEDS program.

NAI has “allowed for us to come in and provide the SEEDS program using online games to promote STEM content learning as well as mentorship around STEM concepts and ideas,” Cole said. “The online games are part of the award-winning *Legends of Learning* curriculum specializing in math and science and designed for distance, hybrid and blended learning.”

Lizette Zarate, NAI program director, said she appreciates *Legends of Learning* because students can use the curriculum with no prior knowledge of the lessons included.

“We had a science component as part of our program pre-SEEDS, and it’s all hands-on, inquiry-based science that we do,” she added. “What SEEDS brings—it’s a game-based program [in which] kids bring their laptops, and then they get to play video games that are science-focused.”

The city of Los Angeles is another important SEEDS partner. The college students now participating in the project



Over the course of the program, SEEDS participants develop a stronger sense of their identity as potential scientists.

applied through L.A.’s Youth Development Department, which pays a collective sum of \$180,000 to cover 60 SEEDS internship roles. Through its relationships with organizations such as Para Los Niños, Brotherhood Crusade and Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services—Los Angeles, the USC McMorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative has helped recruit college students to serve as SEEDS mentors.

Having granted SEEDS \$228,373 in September 2021, the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation makes the project possible, Cole said. That grant covers two years, while the city of Los Angeles plans to make an annual financial commitment to SEEDS, Cole said. He hopes to develop a variety of partnerships that can provide corporate or individual funding for the SEEDS project. Cole would also like to replicate the project in cities across the country to evolve the outreach it is doing.

“The wonderful thing about SEEDS is that it creates these significant partnerships between foundations, the city of Los Angeles and postsecondary institutions as well as LAUSD and other schools that are participating in this work,” Cole said. “It creates this opportunity to have these partners who occupy different places in the city come together around one critical goal: developing opportunities and access for low-income and minoritized students to engage in STEM work.”

The genesis of SEEDS dates back to about seven years ago, when Cole and Newman earned a National Science

↑ Educators, scientists and mentors with the SEEDS program pose at Doheny Memorial Library. The mentors, several of whom are USC students, are majoring in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects at two- and four-year colleges. “The middle school students get to see people who look like them, who might have experienced things that they’ve experienced, engage in science concepts,” says Darnell Cole (second row, far left), the USC Rossier professor responsible for the SEEDS project.

Foundation grant that aimed to bring physicists, scientists, social scientists and educators together so they could brainstorm about ways to increase the participation of racialized minorities in the sciences, particularly in physics and astronomy, Cole said.

“We were able to create a preconference experience [for] the National Society of Black Physicists,” Cole said. “We pull[ed] together all of these scientists who were physicists, astronomers, worked in national laboratories, and put them in the same room with social scientists and educators and began to ask and workshop these questions. We were able to generate a few significant ideas, and [SEEDS] is one of those ideas.”

Although SEEDS is new, the project has already yielded some preliminary results. Students who participate in SEEDS, so far, have performed similarly academically to their peers from the same schools who don’t. This may be, in part, because students are still rebounding from being out of class for a year after schools shut down amid the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020. While the Los Angeles Unified School District held classes online during this period, research has found that students in communities of color and low-income communities had low participation rates in remote instruction and that their test scores in a variety of subjects continue to suffer.

“One of the things that this program does—not only the SEEDS program, but also NAI—is that it creates an opportunity to bring these students back face-to-face and engage them in some hands-on work around science,” Cole said.

“If students see themselves as scientists, they’re more likely to engage in science-related work and more likely to persist through the challenges that they experience in science-related work.”

— Darnell Cole, USC Rossier professor of education and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice

“The SEEDS project really allowed [the students] to engage their technology in ways that were designed to promote STEM content acquisition and curiosity and engagement in the same space as their mentors and peers. So, I think we were thinking about it, not in terms of learning loss, but how do we create and recreate a meaningful STEM-focused engagement and mentors who are thoughtfully engaged in working with them.”

Where SEEDS participants differ from their peers who aren’t involved in the program is in science identity, baseline mean scores have found. Over the course of the program, SEEDS participants develop a stronger sense of their identity as potential scientists.

Cole said the research indicates that SEEDS participants grow in their ability to identify adults or mentors available to offer them guidance in pursuing scientific interests. He emphasized, however, that these are preliminary findings, and he doesn’t want to overstate their significance. More research needs to be done, but the SEEDS pilot points to the start of a meaningful trend with regard to science identity.

“The science identity has been cited in the literature as being these fundamental, core concepts, that if students and individuals, as they’re developing, see themselves as scientists, they’re more likely to engage in science-related work and more likely to persist through the challenges that they experience in science-related work,” Cole said.

Equally important, Cole added, is that the college students serve as role models to their middle school mentees, instilling in them the belief that they, too, can go to college and become STEM majors. Zarate said the college students contribute to making science fun for their young mentees. That some of the college students took part in NAI themselves just deepens the connection between them and the middle schoolers.

“In their science class, the [kids] are with their science teacher cutting up cows’ eyeballs, which is actually a lesson that we did a few weeks back,” Zarate said. “They’re focused on that. In the SEEDS period, it gets to be more informal, more personal, kind of like, ‘My mentor’s here. I’m playing this cool video game’—that’s really science. It’s disguised learning, but they get to connect and ask questions that they probably wouldn’t get to ask their teacher, probably wouldn’t feel comfortable asking their teacher.”

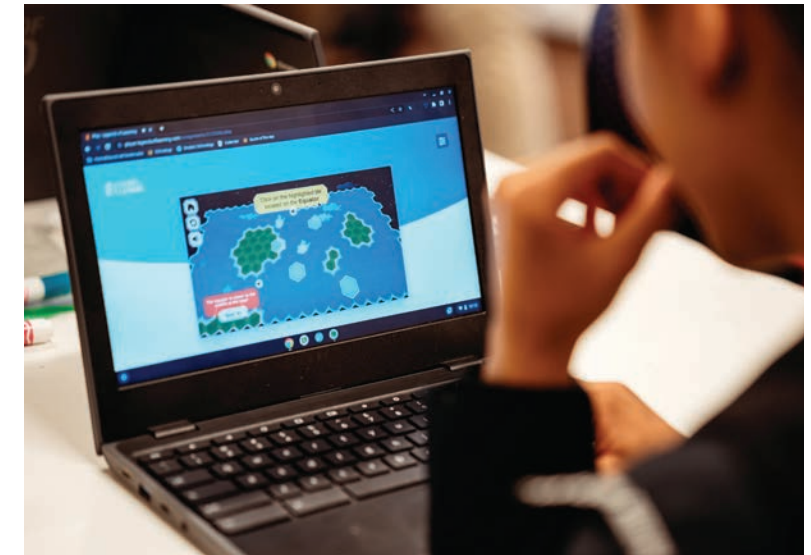
With the mentorship of these college students, the SEEDS middle schoolers can explore STEM free of harmful stereotypes about their academic abilities, Cole said. Stereotypes may lead to a phenomenon known as “stereotype threat,” in which marginalized people hear negative stereotypes about their group, such as “Black and Brown students aren’t good in STEM,” and proceed to struggle in that subject.

“Often, minoritized students or low-income students walk into [STEM] environments, and they’re stereotyped about why they have access to these environments, their inability to be successful academically, the fact that they don’t look like a scientist,” Cole said. “All of those things are washed away in many ways because we’ve redefined, for the middle school students, who they see as scientists, and we’ve also helped reshape and cultivate how college students now are being seen as scientists by these middle school students. So, it’s a wonderful kind of thing that stereotype threat doesn’t revolve around the center of the experience.” —R

↓ For Wendy Rodriguez, serving as a SEEDS mentor is a homecoming of sorts. A senior biology major at Claremont McKenna College, Rodriguez participated in the USC McMorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI) when she was in middle and high school at Foshay Learning Center. “So it’s pretty nice to know that I get to work with students that are going through the same program. I see myself reflected in them.” She’s happy to see NAI expand its reach to the variety of schools participating in the SEEDS project. Trying to get students from economically disadvantaged communities more interested in the sciences may have a particular impact on girls, who are underrepresented in STEM fields. In high school, Rodriguez remembers being the rare girl on the robotics team. “It was a big thing for us to have girls on the team,” she says. “I do think that representation [in the sciences] can get better for women and girls, and I definitely see that this program can help support that.” The students she has interacted with as a SEEDS mentor seem interested and engaged in their science curriculum, Rodriguez says. Her goal is simply to support them any way she can.



→ Students in the SEEDS project play the award-winning online video game *Legends of Learning*, which has a STEM focus and does not require students to have prior knowledge of the lessons featured. “It’s a great idea, and most of them find it enjoyable,” college mentor Ka’eo Wongbusarakum says of the game. “Just having the science in the background is enough to get kids thinking about STEM, or to just help them learn things, even if it’s subconsciously, even if they’re not memorizing things and being tested on it. Just having it in the game helps them to think about it in a new way or to actually integrate it into their knowledge.”



← After a semester mentoring middle school students as part of the SEEDS project, USC neuroscience major Ka’eo Wongbusarakum better understands the challenges and work ethic involved in being a teacher. “I think that it’s given me a lot more appreciation of teaching as a career and the work and effort that goes into not only controlling the class but engaging the class and having them have a worthwhile time and get something out of this period,” he says.

He applied to become a mentor for the program because he was intrigued by its focus on multigenerational mentorship. As he mentors middle school students with the hope of piquing their interest in the sciences, he, in turn, has the opportunity to be mentored by doctoral students and STEM professionals. These relationships, he says, have the potential to influence his future.

↑ The SEEDS project is made possible thanks in large part to its partnership with the USC McMorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI), which aims to boost the college attendance rates of students from South and East L.A. by prepping them when they’re in middle and high school. Those pictured are NAI students participating in the Saturday Academy that NAI hosts with El Sereno Middle School, Florence Nightingale Middle School, James Foshay Learning Center and Murchison Street Elementary.

↑ College mentor Omar Ryan helps student participants in the SEEDS project. College students say they’re drawn to SEEDS to have the opportunity to give back to students from communities similar to the ones in which they grew up. Being mentored by college students, particularly those from communities of color and disadvantaged neighborhoods, allows the younger students to see that it’s possible for them to study and pursue a career in the sciences, says Darnell Cole, the USC Rossier professor of education responsible for the SEEDS project. Despite the challenges youth might face, a STEM career is not out of their reach.

Alberto Carvalho Has Arrived in L.A. With Plans to Make LAUSD the Premier District in the U.S.



Superintendent Carvalho and Dean Noguera discuss what's different about LAUSD, the district's new approach to centralization, and the importance of enrolling L.A.'s youngest students.

Interview: Pedro Noguera, Emery Stoops and Joyce King
Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education

Illustrations: Heather Monahan

IN FEBRUARY 2022, Los Angeles Unified School District welcomed a new superintendent, Alberto Carvalho. Carvalho, an immigrant from Portugal, began his career in education at Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida, where he was a science teacher. After serving as an assistant principal, Carvalho moved to Miami-Dade's central office, where he served in various roles including chief communications officer and assistant superintendent. In 2008, Carvalho was tapped for the role of superintendent. His 14 years at the helm of one of the largest urban districts in the nation would see it rise to one of the highest performing. A self-described "eternal optimist," Carvalho intends to lead LAUSD toward sustained improvement. In late October, Carvalho discussed his plans for the district with Dean Pedro Noguera.

Pedro Noguera (PN): I was very enthusiastic about you coming to L.A. because of your work in Miami. There are very few superintendents around the country who have the kind of longevity you had and almost none who've done it in an urban district. Under your leadership, Miami schools experienced significant improvements. Now you're in L.A., a district that has proved challenging for many superintendents. So far, what have you found to be most surprising, most different, from your experience in Miami?

Alberto Carvalho (AC): Well, number one, the political structure is different. The governance style is different. The level of activism in this community, from a very positive perspective, really lifts all voices. [There are]

differences also in terms of the administrative element within LAUSD compared to Miami. LAUSD has a very stratified system of management. Anything that's discussed, said, contemplated or approved at a central level is distanced from what happens in a classroom. That's significantly different from Miami. The level of coherence, level of autonomy and the decision-making processes in Los Angeles Unified are very diversified and local, as opposed to Miami, where the adoption of curriculum decisions regarding textbooks, basal series, technology [and] progress-monitoring tools were pretty coherent and universal.

PN: Do you feel like you're going to try to make LAUSD more like Miami, to make it more centralized? Or are you going to keep it the way it is?

AC: We're going to find a new balance. I believe that the decentralization and autonomy movement that took place over the past few years may have gone too far. The reason why I say that is there are a number of practices—whether we're talking about the curriculum that's being followed, support systems or progress-monitoring tools—that may vary within a single school. They may vary wildly across two or three schools within the same ZIP code. Considering the level of mobility experienced by students and their families, students should not be seeing something so different and disconnected by moving from one school [to another] less than a mile away.

We are going [to go] from six local district regions to four regions. We are providing a greater level of coherence, and we are embarking on decisions via RFP (request for

“We're knocking on doors, we're making calls. We are re-engaging communities that disengaged from our school system. Based on the data for this year, we may be in a position of beginning to curb that declining enrollment trend, which has been so pervasive in Los Angeles.”

– Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District

proposals) processes to arrive at best-in-class standards-aligned curriculum [and] progress-monitoring tools that are more universal, but with input from folks from the field. It's a balance between central decisions but also local implementation. We're not going to re-centralize every single function, but we are re-centralizing some functions while beefing up local control in other areas. And we're going to move in the direction of earned autonomy, meaning there's a large percentage of our schools [that] are doing fairly well to very well [and that] ought to be left alone. But for schools that are hugging the bottom, we're going to provide disproportionate support [and] funding, but also significantly augmented accountability by the central office.

PN: One of the issues that comes up often in L.A. is whether the district is too large. Do you think the district should be broken up and split into smaller districts?

AC: I actually don't. I've studied this. I've looked at the performance of larger districts [and] midsize districts. Miami is not only one of the largest districts in the country—it's now the third largest in terms of enrollment. And its performance, according to two administrations of NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) is number one in the country out of the 27 TUDA (Trial Urban District Assessment) districts. So, is being that large detrimental to educational attainment? I don't think so.

What I do believe, however, is that there ought to be a degree of coherent theory of action that is seen in districts regardless of size. I do believe that under my realignment plan that takes the district from six local districts into four regions, with greater agreement regarding curriculum, materials support, coherent funding that's differentiated on the basis of need and progress-monitoring tools, [that] the size of the district [will be] inconsequential.

PN: Could you explain for our readers why declining enrollment is a threat to the district, and what you're approaching to respond to this challenge?

AC: In California, education is funded on the basis of two critical elements: enrollment, and I don't agree with this second element, average daily attendance. Those are two issues that are significantly impacting the financial viability of our school system.

With that said, let's be real. There are a number of factors that continue to influence enrollment rates in Southern California [including] declining birth rates in Los Angeles [and the] high cost of housing, which drives families to move to more affordable areas, whether it is within the state or outside California. While it's true that the bulk of our funding is tied to the average daily attendance rates, we are far more concerned about the number of students we estimate are out there but not in school.

I just painted a bleak perspective as to what are the contributing factors to declining enrollment in Los Angeles and, quite frankly, across America in most large urban districts. There is a bit of a silver lining, however. This year we

were bracing ourselves for a 4.1% decline in enrollment. We were pleasantly surprised because, rather than decreasing by 4.1%, enrollment [dropped] by 1.9%—you'd have to go back a full decade to [see] that low [of a] decrease. That's a good early indicator. We're seeing significant improvement in terms of TK (transitional kindergarten) and kindergarten enrollment, which is great news. You and I have taken the positions on that matter.

We're also seeing significant improvements across the board in specific grades, in terms of kids not only coming back from other forms of publicly funded education, but kids who were never enrolled in the school system, and have been in this community for [years], becoming members of our family. So, something is happening. We're knocking on doors, we're making calls. We are re-engaging communities that disengaged from our school system. Based on the data for this year, we may be in a position of beginning to curb that declining enrollment trend, which has been so pervasive in Los Angeles.

PN: That's very impressive. I've told you several times since you arrived in L.A. that USC wants to be a partner with you in this work. In the coming months, we're working with President Folt to convene all 22 schools at USC, to consider how we can build upon existing partnerships with local schools to increase our impact on student outcomes. For example, we're thinking about getting the medical school, social work and others, working with USC Rossier to support children, families and educators. We'll be in touch about what comes out of this important gathering.

Let's close with this, Alberto. When you came to L.A., I used the analogy that bringing you to L.A was like the Lakers acquiring LeBron James. So, if I stick with that analogy, despite his great track record, LeBron is having some trouble with the Lakers right now. The team as a whole is not looking so good, and part of the problem appears to be that he doesn't have the team he needs to win consistently. What about you? Do you feel like you have the team

in place to get the work that needs to be done accomplished?

AC: I do. With that said, we have released to the board the realignment and reorganization plan that has created a number of new positions, and I'll give you a couple of examples. I'm creating an educational transformation position that's going to concentrate all efforts on the most fragile schools in the district [and] incorporating our work regarding BSAP (the Black Student Achievement Plan) and HEET (Humanizing Education for Equitable Transformation). This is a critically important position [that will] advocate and lift the needs of these schools at all levels of the central office.

Secondly, we created an eco-sustainability officer who will make decisions that will impact how we procure, who we contract with, the whole issue of shading in schools [and] greening of schools [as well as] maintenance efforts to improve outdoor learning spaces.

But, by and large, I have gotten to meet, know [and] understand the team that was here prior to my arrival. There is immense talent at the central level, the local district level and the schools. What has lacked is not raw talent, expertise [or] skill. What I found was lacking was the interconnectedness between different divisions, breaking down silos and creating systems of support that, at the end of the day, elevate the potential in schools.

I have the team members I need, and I have the team members that go beyond Beaudry (LAUSD headquarters) and the over 1,000 schools at LAUSD, which are institutions like USC, private sector support, other forms of government support [and] community-based organizations.

Look, I'm the eternal optimist. I'm in Los Angeles because I think the potential for Los Angeles to actually become the premier district in America is rather strong, and I will not tire until we surpass where I left Miami. That's the goal. —R

☎ This interview has been edited for length and clarity. For the extended interview, please visit rossier.usc.edu.

Shaun Harper, founder and executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center, speaks at the kickoff for the LAUSD Racial Equity Leadership Academy on March 5, 2020.

Led by Shaun Harper, the USC Race and Equity Center is teaching business leaders, educators and administrators how to better serve their communities with evidence-based strategies to advance equity.

Interview: Margaret Crane

Illuminate, Dismantle and Disrupt

PHOTO BY STEVE COHN.

“RACISM IS AMERICA’S LONGEST-STANDING social problem. Racial inequities remain pervasive in workplace settings and the larger society,” says Shaun Harper, executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center. “At the same time, our educational institutions teach students far too little, sometimes nothing at all, about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).”

Students in many fields are graduating without the skills needed to effectively address issues of race and implicit bias in their workplaces. “A lot of the work that we do at the Center is remediation,” says Harper. “We work with professionals to teach them the things they never learned in their educational training.”

The Center’s mission is to illuminate, dismantle and disrupt racism in all its forms and is “unapologetically race-forward,” according to Harper. It provides dynamic research, professional learning and organizational improvement for educational institutions, government agencies, nonprofit organizations and a multitude of industries in the U.S. and abroad. Participants in its evidence-based educational programs become leaders in the quest for racial equity and informed advocates for all those experiencing marginalization.

One of the nation’s foremost DEI experts, Harper is University Professor and Provost Professor of Education and Business at the USC Rossier School of Education and



“Diverse companies are more productive. When you don’t treat your employees fairly, you have high turnover. It becomes difficult to recruit, hire and train talented people. But when organizations like Nike lead the way, it’s saying this is not theoretical. This is attainable.”

—Brandi Junious, Director of Corporate Partnerships, USC Race and Equity Center

the USC Marshall School of Business. He founded the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania in 2011. When he joined USC in 2017, the Center relocated to become the USC Race and Equity Center.

“We come to the table, not simply to highlight the pervasiveness of injustice and inequity,” Harper says of the Center’s goals, “but to share tools, solutions and learning opportunities—to teach leaders, workers and everyday Americans how to effectively combat inequities and injustices.”

Rigorous interdisciplinary research is key to the Center’s evidence-based methods. At USC, more than 100 faculty members collaborate on research with Center experts and contribute to the development of useful tools such as the annual National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates. The Black Students 50-State Report Card grades public colleges and universities on racial equity indicators, and a recent report offers professional sports teams and leagues resources for advancing racial justice.

↖ Brandi P. Jones, chief operating officer and chief of staff.

↖ Brandi Junious, director of corporate partnerships.

↗ Shaun Harper, founder and executive director.

↗ Erica Silva, associate director of K-12 professional learning programs.

Since its inception, the Center has worked with more than 700 partners and clients, with projects ranging from strategic advice for academic and business leaders to multi-session corporate and campuswide training series. Courses are led by an interdisciplinary cadre of more than 60 distinguished scholars and DEI experts.

At USC, the Center provides no-cost, multiyear professional DEI learning experiences to administration, staff and faculty. These live virtual sessions can accommodate up to 10,000 employees.

“Most of our work at the Center is focused on educators, administrators and leaders, and equipping them with the skills that are needed to better teach and lead,” says Harper, who also holds the Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership at USC Rossier. “We educate them about isms and phobias: sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism and more. But more importantly, we’re teaching them how to disrupt and dismantle those isms and phobias in the workplace.”

DEI training programs like the Center’s Racial Equity Leadership Academies educate professionals to develop cultures of inclusion within their own organizations. Equity-focused curricula help them learn to talk about race and racism, increase their understanding of DEI practices and develop strategies to implement positive change in their organizations.

Learning opportunities are customized to fit the specific needs of businesses and institutions. “We can be working with a company as big as Nike on a Monday,” says Harper, “then addressing two dozen teachers in an individual middle school on Tuesday, and working with a group of STEM department chairs on Wednesday.”

K-12 RACIAL EQUITY ACADEMIES

“We’re responsible for educating all of our students, especially students of color who experience dire racial inequities



“A lot of the work that we do with leaders is remediation. We are teaching leaders and faculty things that they never learned in their educational or professional trainings.”

—Shaun Harper, Founder and Executive Director, USC Race and Equity Center

and who have been historically marginalized in schools,” says Erica Silva EdD ’19, associate director for the Center’s K-12 Professional Learning Programs. “At this time, when the national conversation around equity is so polarized, the Center plays a role in dismantling racism in schools.”

In 2021, 15% of students in America’s public schools identified as Black and 27.5% as Latino/Hispanic. Partnering with schools throughout California and across the country, the Center’s K-12 Racial Equity Academies offer principals, counselors, superintendents, faculty and staff the tools they need to serve their diverse student bodies.

Latino and African American students comprise 82% of the Los Angeles Unified School District’s population. In 2020, Harper partnered with LAUSD to create a Racial Equity Leadership Academy for principals and administrators in the nation’s second-largest school district. The Center’s chief academic officer, USC Rossier Professor of Clinical Education John Pascarella, designed and facilitated the ongoing project in coordination with the district’s Darnise Williams EdD ’09. Participants completing the program received an executive leadership certificate from USC Rossier.

In 2021, Pascarella hired Silva to co-design and co-lead workshops for Year 2 of the LAUSD academy. “We ask leaders, ‘What does it mean to be equity-minded when you’re

seeking to retain teachers of color, when you're analyzing and assessing your curriculum or evaluating your school library? We work to build racial literacy within schools and districts and provide actionable tools and strategies for our participants to advance racial equity within their organizations," Silva says.

President Biden Appoints Shaun Harper to National Board for Education Sciences

In the fall, the White House announced that President Joe Biden named Shaun Harper, executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center, to the National Board for Education Sciences.

The 15-member board approves research priorities for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), an independent, nonpartisan branch of the U.S. Department of Education that is charged with supporting research for education practice and policy. Board members advise the IES director on policies and activities, including the general areas of research to be carried out by the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Center for Education Evaluation, the National Center for Education Research and the National Center for Special Education Research. The board also evaluates the work of IES and solicits input from the field on research priorities that will significantly improve schools and post-secondary institutions across the country.

"I accepted this important assignment because it is a consequential opportunity to help inform federal investments into high-impact, responsive and rigorous research that actually does something to fix longstanding inequities that chronically disadvantage particular schools and long-underserved student populations," says Harper.

This isn't Harper's first engagement with the White House. In 2014, the University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education (now the USC Race and Equity Center) hosted the White House Summit on Educational Excellence for African Americans. A year later, he was appointed to President Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper Alliance national advisory council. Harper also served on the education policy committee for the Biden-Harris campaign in 2020 and has spoken at several White House and U.S. Department of Education convenings.

The academy offered a DEI learning series to 124 principals and administrators in LAUSD. "By approaching their work with a race-conscious lens, leaders were able to go back to their school communities and have productive discussions about race and racism with school staff," notes Silva, who joined USC Rossier as the associate director for K-12 professional programs in 2021 and, later, as an adjunct professor in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program.

Adalberto Vega, principal of John Liechty Middle School in the Pico-Union neighborhood of Los Angeles, says, "The academy allowed me to understand my own biases and gave me the confidence to lead Liechty stakeholders in brave conversations about race."

As part of a schoolwide focus on racial equity, Vega addressed inequities faced by Black/African American students. He worked with school leaders to create the Black Students Matter Committee. To include it in schoolwide objectives, the principal embedded his racial equity project in Liechty's annual School Plan for Student Achievement. As the initiative progressed, he collaborated with the Los Angeles Center for Love and Justice and LAUSD's Local District Central to inaugurate anti-racist educational projects for students and parents.

In 2021, the Center launched a Racial Equity Academy for Inglewood Unified School District, to provide DEI training for 800 teachers, counselors and administrators in the Los Angeles County-based district.

The Center has worked with public and independent schools and districts across California and the nation and plans to expand its program to include more opportunities for teachers and school leaders to learn how to advance racial equity in their organizations.

STEM RACIAL EQUITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Center's Racial Equity Leadership Academies have helped administrators and faculty in a range of academic disciplines acquire much-needed skills in the practice of racial equity. The Racial Equity Leadership Academy for STEM Leaders is targeted to rectify inequities in college-level science, technology, engineering and math departments.

"Discussions that involve race are often treated as off-limits in engineering and computer science classrooms and departments," says USC Rossier Research Professor Brandi P. Jones, a national thought leader in DEI for STEM disciplines. "No clear or uniform structure exists to prepare faculty for discussions on race and racism, particularly in highly technical disciplines."

The lack of recognition for racial inequities in STEM departments has serious consequences for higher education, the workforce and the national economy. Offering context to one of his presentations to the academy, Harper cited the notable graduation gap between Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Pacific Islander and multiracial students who choose

STEM majors and those who ultimately attain degrees in their chosen fields.

Offering a solution, the Center launched its first Racial Equity Leadership Academy for STEM Leaders in 2021. The nine-month program for 250 STEM department chairs from across the nation was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Once a month, these academic leaders met for live virtual learning sessions. For many, this was the first time they had seriously addressed issues of race and racism within their disciplines.

Harper, Jones and Kendrick Davis comprise the creative team for the STEM academy. As project leader, Davis, who is an associate professor at USC Rossier and the Center's chief research officer, facilitated the STEM academy's monthly sessions. Presentations addressed contemporary DEI dilemmas and racial problems in classrooms and labs. Participants learned to identify systemic inequities embedded in curricula and to address discriminatory policies and practices. They collaborated on discipline-specific equity action plans with colleagues in their respective fields.

Another important topic was how to engage in sensitive discussions. Jones, the Center's chief operating officer and chief of staff, recently led a STEM academy session on productive departmental conversations about race and racism. She modeled exercises on a series of questions: "How do you talk about race in fields where we don't generally talk about race? Who has the power and privilege to speak in a classroom? What are the questions that students of historically underrepresented backgrounds may have?" Jones' questions lead participants to "discover ways to create practices, systems and structures in which everyone can thrive."

NIKE MULTIYEAR DEI LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

"We're talking about the biggest brand on the planet," Harper says, discussing the Center's dynamic multidimensional partnership with Nike. Launched in 2020, the partnership focuses on advancing DEI in every continent where the Nike, Converse and Jordan brands operate.

From the C-suite to the warehouse, the two-year program provides meaningful equity training to employees at all levels of the company. Learning experiences are tailored to the specific needs of senior executives, headquarters staff, and manufacturing, retail and distribution workers. "As we engage the corporation's 75,000 employees, we're developing a scalable, replicable approach to partnering with businesses of comparable magnitude," notes Harper.

Since its inception, the Center has acquired vast experience helping corporations achieve their equity goals. In 2019, it partnered with USC Marshall to launch a professional DEI learning portfolio for businesses, firms, government agencies, cities and other organizations—providing its live virtual learning experiences to companies ranging from Citibank and T-Mobile to Wonderly, PayScale and more.

The massive companywide endeavor with Nike began in 2019 with a DEI Leadership Acceleration Academy for nearly 400 Nike leaders from around the globe. Framed within the context of the Nike workplace, sessions addressed such issues as how to recognize and reduce implicit bias, best practices for partnering with employee networks, and strategies for disrupting homophobia and heterosexism. In 2022, the Center launched the Professional Learning Series, a course of live, online DEI learning sessions for thousands of Nike managers worldwide. Additionally, 60 digital shorts were produced on a range of DEI topics for all Nike employees worldwide.

Brandi Junious, the Center's director of corporate partnerships, points to an important area of the corporation—the Nike United Networks. "At Nike, affinity groups represent Black and LGBTQIA+ employees, women and others," she says. "We're working with network leaders to help them with language, tools and activities they need to move the DEI project forward."

The Center's work with Nike and other businesses is grounded in their research on organizations of all sizes and contexts. "Data shows that diverse companies are more productive," Junious says. "When you don't treat your employees fairly, you have high turnover. It becomes difficult to recruit, hire and train talented people. But when organizations like Nike lead the way, it's saying this is not theoretical. This is attainable."

THE FUTURE

Looking back over the Center's achievements, there's something Harper would like to change. "I'd like to get ahead of the process before people enter leadership positions," he says. "That's an important role for higher education. We ought to better prepare students for citizenship work and for eventual leadership on DEI issues."

In January 2022, Harper brought Christopher Emdin to the Center. Emdin is the Center's inaugural director of youth engagement and community partnerships and a USC Rossier professor of education (p. TK). "Chris will create new programs designed specifically for young people," says Harper.

Among the Center's ongoing projects, a national commission on historically Black colleges and universities and racial equity launched in January. Also, a two-year initiative that began in November focuses on improving academic success among male students of color in community colleges across the country.

"We don't have a 'just add water' approach at the Center," Harper notes. "Because, honestly, that's not what equity is. Equality is giving everybody the exact same thing in equal shares, in equal amounts. Equity is giving people what they need and customizing it to meet their needs. It's understanding the unique context of everyone we work with." —R

What's in a Name (Image and Likeness)?

Changes to rules governing intercollegiate athletics bring challenges and promise for student athletes.

By Alan Green, Professor of Clinical Education and USC Faculty Athletics Representative

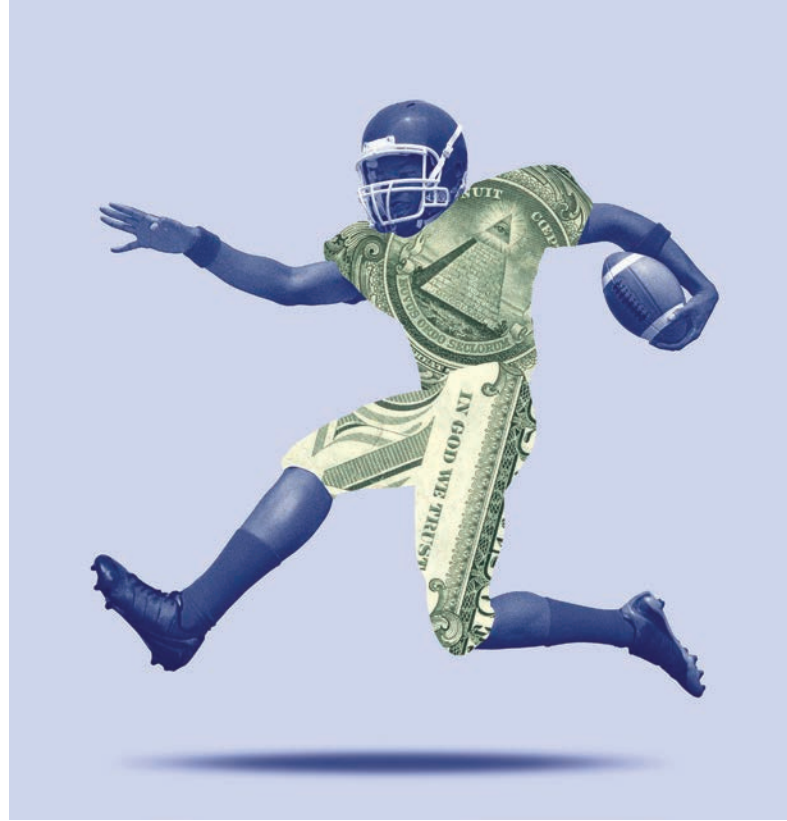


PRIOR TO JULY 1, 2021, student athletes were prohibited from receiving compensation for the use of their name, image and likeness (NIL). This rule, publicly regarded as unfair, was put in place to protect the amateur status of those competing in college sports, while others, including coaches and schools, profited from athletes' NIL.

After years of resisting changes to this rule, the NCAA finally capitulated as several states were poised to implement laws that would allow student athletes to receive NIL benefits. These new laws came about thanks in part to a lawsuit filed by former UCLA basketball player Ed O'Bannon claiming damages from a video game producer who profited from his NIL. With this new era comes tremendous opportunities, challenges and responsibility for student athletes and the schools they play for.

Access to NIL opportunities is the first step in a long-awaited process to pay college athletes a share of the revenue generated by mega media deals derived from some, but not all, college sports. Of the more than 30 sports sponsored by the NCAA (USC has 21), only men's basketball and football turn a profit. These two sports, which typically underwrite athletic department budgets including Olympic sports, are made up of more than 80% young Black men, often from low-income backgrounds. Now that NIL is allowed, several student athletes have landed five- and six-figure endorsement deals, and some choose to use their NIL platforms to leverage community service and social justice initiatives.

The challenges associated with NIL include avoiding illegal inducement of potential student athletes and navigating the mental health concerns stemming from managing yet another demand on student athletes' time and self-image. As expected, NIL has quickly become a means to attract recruits to attend a particular college, even though the new rules expressly prohibit pay for play. With some colleges providing athletes with NIL deals just for being on a team, it is not far-fetched to see how these deals can be used to entice potential student athletes. It is the responsibility of schools to avoid illegal recruiting, yet they stand to benefit from the presence of a strong NIL reputation. As such, every institution must walk a fine line between controlling



boosters who want to invest money toward that reputation and allowing legitimate opportunities to attract and retain athletes. Student athletes themselves risk losing their eligibility if found to have received money for choosing a particular school.

Before NIL, student athletes were already inundated with demanding schedules from academics, training, rehabilitation and travel for competitions. They now must manage a new category of stressors, including autograph sessions, photo shoots and other NIL events. Expectations to land endorsement deals also put pressure on student athletes to maintain a strong social media presence. These new demands impact mental well-being and require athletic departments to provide robust psychological services.

Although these changes present concerns, there is plenty of opportunity for student athlete empowerment through exposure to brand management and financial literacy. NIL is also a platform for social justice initiatives and access to entrepreneurial, career and professional development opportunities. Additionally, there is a potential for deep academic engagement in subject areas such as writing, business management and communications.

The NIL era is fraught with challenges for colleges and universities who have long benefited from the hard work and performance of student athletes, particularly those who are Black and low-income. There are new and increased pressures to be addressed. These challenges are bemoaned by purists who decry the spiritual decay of collegiate amateurism while ignoring the erosion that came over the past several decades with mega media contracts that only benefited coaches and schools. As institutions learn to grapple with this new reality, they may find solace by embracing NIL as an opportunity to enhance the current and future lives of student athletes. —R

ILLUSTRATION BY EDMON DE HARO

STEAM books for children reflect a diverse community

Three USC Rossier alums collaborated with USC Scientists and a nonprofit publisher Room to Read to author book series, STEAM-Powered Careers.

By Ellen Evaristo



"WE WERE HAVING A HARD TIME TRYING to pair science kids' books—featuring characters that actually look like our kids—with our curriculum," said USC Rossier alum Dieuwertje "DJ" Kast EdD '20, Director of the STEM Education Programs at the USC Joint Educational Project (JEP), a division of USC Dornsife.

STEM identity and representation falls short in children's literature. A study published in 2018 stated that half of all children's books reviewed featured White main characters, and that there were more non-human characters (27%) than there were for all minorities combined (23%). In the study, 10% of the children's books featured an African American/Black main character and 5% featured a Latinx one.

To address this issue, Kast and her colleagues around USC—two of whom include USC Rossier alumni Brittany Acevedo MAT '19 and Brooke McMahon MAT '20—developed *STEAM-Powered Careers* (Room to Read, 2022), a 10-book series created to reflect the community they teach, and to educate elementary school students on the variety of groundbreaking and diverse careers in STEAM. Targeting elementary school-aged children, each book features a trio of characters and their animal friends paired with a working USC scientist, many of whom come from underrepresented communities. Offered in English and Spanish, the topics range from engineering to gastroenterology and marine biology to virtual reality.

"We tried to underlie some themes to break different stereotypes," Kast said. For example, featured scientist Alina Garcia Taormina,



← Student Alexia Mckenzie holding a copy of *STEAM-Powered Careers: Engineering*.

a USC Viterbi alum with a PhD in material science, worked with Acevedo to author the book on nanotechnology. Each book also offers a lesson plan for educators.

Room to Read provided 9,000 sets of the 10 titles (90,000 books total) to various STEM education programs in the Los Angeles area. In addition to Acevedo, McMahon wrote the gastroenterology book and Kast wrote the oncology book with her father, Dr. W. Martin Kast; she is also the featured scientist in the polar science book.

USC JEP develops service-learning activities for USC students to address community-defined needs. JEP's STEM education programs include the Young Scientists Program, WonderKids and the Medical STEM program. It was through WonderKids, where Kast and her team discovered the need to create the book series.

"Representation matters," Kast said in a USC JEP blog. "The data has shown that representation of yourself in the scientists you see in front of you influences your own science identity and how much you persist in STEM fields."

Free digital copies of the books, in addition to NGSS-aligned lesson plans and videos of scientist interviews, are available in English and Spanish at RoomToRead.org/Steam. —R

Other alumni publications



Embracing Workplace Religious Diversity and Inclusion: Key Challenges and Solutions
Ed Hasan EdD '18, founder and CEO, Kaizen Human Capital (Palgrave Macmillan/August 2022)
Challenging organizations to take religion and religious inclusion in the workplace seriously, this book explores multiple perspectives and themes, from workplace stigma and employment discrimination to strategic diversity and inclusion management. Expanding on his USC Rossier doctoral dissertation, the author focuses on integrating theory and practice in examining emerging religious inclusion issues in the workplace, providing insights based on real-world case studies.

Faculty publications



Teaching and Supporting English Learners: A Guide to Welcoming and Engaging Newcomers
Eugenia Mora-Flores, professor of clinical education and assistant dean of teacher education at USC Rossier; and Stephanie Dewing, assistant professor of clinical education at USC Rossier (Shell Educational Publishing/December 2022)
This professional book provides step-by-step strategies and practical tips to help teachers bring English language instruction into any classroom. With this meaningful resource, teachers will meet English learners' diverse needs and make newcomers feel safe and welcome.

PHOTO: D. KAST

Highlights From Class Notes

Class Notes are compiled and written by Tom Arteaga, 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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1990s

PAUL MCGARRY MS '94 earned an MS in education at USC and an MA in TESOL at California State University, Los Angeles. Paul recently completed their eighth year as a lecturer at the USC International Academy and continues to work for the Los Angeles Unified School District's Division of Adult and Career Education.

JENNIFER PRINGLE-STARR MS '99 is the principal at Saints Felicitas and Perpetua School in San Marino, Calif.

2000s

BRENNA ALBERT BS '01 joined Medline Industries as vice president, global controller. In this role, Brenna will oversee all accounting and controllership functions globally. Medline does business in more than 90 countries with revenues of approximately \$20 billion in fiscal year 2021. Her training in education and leadership at USC Rossier is critical for her in this prominent leadership position.

JENNIFER VEGA LA SERNA PhD '02 was awarded the Carter Doran Leadership Award from the California Community Colleges Chief Instructional Officers at the Spring Conference in San Francisco in April for her statewide work on diversity, equity and inclusion.

JEANETTE CHIEN EdD '04 was awarded the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators 2022 Central Office Administrator of the Year award in July in Santa Clara at the annual conference.

WILLIAM MCINTYRE EdD '06 was honored with two third-place awards in the Royal National MÀ'd in Scotland in October 2021. The MÀ'd is a celebration of Scottish Gaelic culture, language and arts, and includes exhibitions and competitions in such things as Gaelic singing, poetry, storytelling, drama and Gaelic-culture music. The awards were for written poetry and recited poetry. The written poetry was selected from a sequence of poems in Gaelic—Litrichean na Bana-Bheachlannair, The Letters of a Beekeeper—about a woman who reflects on a past love relationship (a mixing of the tragic medieval romance of Abelard and Heloise and the contemporary #MeToo movement).

ROGER RICE EdD '07 retired as the superintendent of Ventura Unified School District and is now working as a consultant for the Education

Support Services Group, a division of Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud and Romo, supporting education leaders in all areas of practice but especially in human resources, continuing education and alternative education.

MARIE DACUMOS EdD '08 is in a new role at the USC Rossier Office for Professional Development Programs overseeing the School Leadership Academy and Urban Superintendents Academy.

THOMAS TAN EdD '08 is the executive director of technology services at Huntington Beach City School District, where he leads instructional, academic and administrative technology services.

MIRIAM EZZANI EdD '09 is an associate professor of educational leadership in the Texas Christian University College of Education. She received a promotion and tenure in spring 2022.

DIANE SHAMMAS PhD '09 was awarded the Alex Odeh Memorial Award for her scholarship, leadership, activism and philanthropy by the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Diane was also recognized with a Humanitarian Award by the South West Asian North African (SWANA) students association of California State University for her support to push forward the vote of CSUs to approve the inclusion of a SWANA classification for applicants. She also set up an annual fund for California State University, Fullerton to support SWANA student activities, a SWANA center within CSUF's Diversity Center and faculty to teach Middle East and diaspora studies.

2010s

ROSE HAJIAN MAT '10 is the third-grade elementary teacher at Pilgrim School in Los Angeles.

CRAIG BARTHOLIO EdD '10 is the coordinator for special education at Chino Valley Unified School District in Chino, Calif.

FAL ASRANI EdD '10 is the superintendent of the Marysville Joint Unified School District in Marysville, Calif.

GUS FRIAS EdD '10 was appointed to serve a four-year term as a member of the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Alumni Council.

BONNIE ALGER MAT '11 conducted the 1st Cavalry Division Band (U.S. Army) in the world premiere of David Froom MA '78's 'Manna' Variations for Wind Ensemble at a concert in honor of Armed Forces Day in Salado, Texas.

USC Rossier Alumnus and Keck Medicine Medical Director Launches Leadership Training Program for Physicians

James Hu MD EdD '21 turned to USC Rossier's OCL program to help facilitate systemic change at Keck Medicine.

Story:
Hope
Hamashige

TOP-SHELF CLINICAL CARE AND CUTTING-EDGE medical research are, for obvious reasons, at the core of Keck Medicine of USC's mission. But there have been times, according to James Hu MD EdD '21, when this laser focus on medical excellence has left its leaders unable to solve problems like physician burnout, lack of engagement and faculty retention. "Leaders at many academic institutions are chosen because they are experts in their specific fields, not their leadership qualities," said Hu, a physician and medical director of the Sarcoma Program of USC. "I felt that leaders were coming up with linear solutions to complex problems focused on the individuals and not the work environment."

Though Hu wanted to help facilitate systemic change within Keck Medicine, he also believed he needed to learn some new, nonmedical skills. In 2018, he decided to pursue a doctorate in organizational change and leadership (OCL) at the USC Rossier School of Education.

Hu says his time at USC Rossier gave him new insights into the skills that leaders need to employ to lead successful organizations. To put his new knowledge to the test, he is now teaching a leadership training course for program directors and division chiefs at Keck Medicine that is based on research he conducted as an EdD student.

For his dissertation, Hu created a survey that he sent to 1,145 colleagues about physician burnout and leadership behaviors. It helped him understand which leadership behaviors boosted morale and engagement among his colleagues and which fell flat.

Though there are many leadership training courses already available through books, online and in person, the course Hu created, the Keck School of Medicine Leadership Program, is unique because it is homegrown. "This one is grounded in data about our unique opportunities and barriers and being taught by instructors from USC," said Hu.

In the 11-month program, which launched in the fall, participants attend lectures on subjects including theories of leadership and systems thinking. They do homework and attend in-person sessions to discuss the material as it relates to challenges they are facing. Each student will

create an implementation plan to overcome a problem they identify that is unique to their department.

"They will come to learn how to address complex problems and learn when they need to implement new processes because the existing framework is failing," said Hu.

The course is something of a departure, in that teaching colleagues from other USC schools is not the norm, said Maria Ott, the Irving R. and Virginia A. Melbo Chair in Education Administration and a professor of clinical education at USC Rossier. Nevertheless, Ott—one of the instructors in Hu's course—said the leaders at USC Rossier believe that cross-discipline sharing can be enormously beneficial.

"Leadership development is core to what we do at USC Rossier," said Ott. "And while people may not think that doctors need leadership training, we believe that every field needs it and can be improved by developing the leadership potential of their team."

Ott also noted that 27 (more than one-third) of the directors and division chiefs at Keck Medicine signed up for the course, an indication that there is demand for this kind of training and a broad commitment among the leaders at Keck Medicine to improving the organization.

"If we were offering something they didn't need or didn't want, they wouldn't have signed up for it," said Ott. "It's a compliment to Dr. Hu because he has a vision about taking a great organization and making it better. I think he has inspired them with his vision of where this organization can go in the future."

For his part, Hu said he is impressed with the leaders who are taking his course because it is a commitment of time and effort to improve themselves and the organization. "Leadership is incredibly hard," noted Hu, "but it can be taught, and my hope is that we can grow a cadre of informed and motivated leaders that will affect positive change in the culture of our organization." —R



PHOTO COURTESY OF KECK MEDICINE / RICARDO CARRASCO III/USC.

→ James Hu EdD '21, a physician and medical director at Keck Medicine, created and launched a leadership training course for Keck Medicine program directors and division chiefs in the fall of 2022.



BUU VAN NYGREN EDD '21 ELECTED NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT

At 35, Buu Van Nygren EDD '21 became the youngest person elected president of the Navajo Nation on Nov. 8. A 2021 graduate of USC Rossier's Organizational Change and Leadership Program, Nygren upset popular incumbent Jonathan Nez.

Nygren and his running mate, Richelle Montoya, defeated Nez and running mate Chad Abeyta 52.7% to 47.3%. Montoya is the first woman to hold the position of vice president.

The offices carry national influence because the tribe's reservation is by far the largest in the U.S. at 27,000 square miles, covering parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. Its population of about 400,000 is second only to the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (about 430,000).

Nygren, who is half-Navajo and Vietnamese, is from Red Mesa, Arizona, and works as chief commercial officer for the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority. He received bachelor's and master's degrees from Arizona State University before going to USC Rossier. He campaigned on delivering basic needs to Navajos and moving more quickly on infrastructure projects.

"I've said it time and time again, that we want to do the things that are tough," Nygren told a crowd in the tribal capital of Window Rock on election night, according to The Associated Press. —R

REGINA ZURBANO EDD '11 is the new director of curriculum and instruction—secondary for the Palmdale School District in Palmdale, Calif. She is excited to join this dynamic organization that serves almost 18,000 students in Grades K–10 living in the greater Palmdale area in the Antelope Valley. Regina oversees the MSAP Grant, which supports the five Nationally Certified Magnet Academies (6–8), the upper grades of three K–8 schools and one charter high school. She provides leadership in the ongoing development and improvement of curriculum and instruction in PSD for the middle school and high school levels; assists in the planning, organization, support and evaluation of the curricular and assessment programs of PSD; and works collaboratively with all district personnel to develop advocacy of a high-quality educational program for all students, processes and products. This is a homecoming for Regina as she grew up in the Antelope Valley.

LAURA REARDON MAT '12 completed an EdM in independent school leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University, in February 2023. She pursued this course of study while also working full time as an English language arts coordinator and English teacher at Sierra Canyon School in Los Angeles. In addition, since graduating from USC in 2012, she and her husband have welcomed two daughters, Vivian (2018) and Eleanor (2020). She is in her 11th year of teaching with a demonstrated commitment to being an agent of positive change in educational settings.

MATTHEW JELICK MAT-TE SOL '12 returned home to California after six years of living and teaching in China. During his time in Shenzhen, he became the assistant director of the language department at his university, worked in partnership with the U.S. Embassy on teacher development programming across the country and was invited to join the Executive Committee of the USC Alumni Association of South China.

WENLI JEN EDD '12 was named associate editor of *CSU Global* journal in the area of Scientific Essentials and Sustainable Environments. *CSU Global* is an online publication on global learning, competencies and globalization. California State University has more than 55,000 faculty and staff and 485,000 students spread across 23 campuses and representing nearly all geographic areas of the state. It is the largest university system in the country driving the sixth largest economy in the world. *CSU Global* will harness this wealth of knowledge to the benefit

of Global California while showcasing one of the university's great strengths. The aim is to analyze and promote debate, and foster debate, on all aspects of global learning, global competencies development and globalization through publishing original articles and multimedia presentations authored by CSU faculty, students and staff.

PATRICIA BECKMANN WELLS EDD '13 is consulting on the Unreal 5.0 Engine Metahuman project and was invited to lead discussions with the character team on using biometrics to accurately portray ethnic diversity in creating 3D humans.

RYAN EISENBERG EDD '14 is the CEO of the Children's Health Council (CHC) in Palo Alto, Calif. CHC is a leader in services for learning differences and mental health for children, teens and young adults in our communities. For 70 years, CHC has developed innovative and expert programming for the children and families it serves. Offering comprehensive specialized schools, clinical mental health and innovative community organizing programs, CHC is focused on serving the needs of the Bay Area.

GREG FRANCOIS EDD '14 is the deputy superintendent of Monrovia Unified School District.

ERICA MONSEGUE ME '14 is the director of athletic compliance at USC. She supports a portfolio of USC athletic teams to make sure the university is working within the framework of the NCAA rules and regulations. Ultimately, her goal is to protect the university and make sure our student-athletes, coaches and athletic department staff are successful by interpreting the bylaws the NCAA has outlined for Division I universities.

THOMAS CROWTHER EDD '14 is the new director of curriculum, instruction and assessment K–12 for one of Los Angeles' earliest charter organizations, The Accelerated Schools (TAS), which is composed of 1,800 students at Wallis Annenberg High School, TAS Middle School, TAS Elementary School and Accelerated Charter Elementary School (ACES). Campuses are located less than a mile from USC's campus and serve students of the South Los Angeles community. Among his first-year focus areas are elementary-middle-high school articulation, college/career readiness for the high school and working with the site leaders on continuing to support students returning to school after more than a year at home due to COVID-19 during a mentoring block most afternoons.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NAVAJO TIMES

Bringing a Reformer's Zeal to Government Service

As director of the Dream Keeper Initiative, Saidah Leatutufu-Burch EDD '21 is leading efforts to promote prosperity in San Francisco's Black communities.

Story:
Diane Krieger

SAIDAH LEATUTUFU-BURCH EDD '21, inaugural director of San Francisco's Dream Keeper Initiative (DKI), is well on her way to "changing the way the world works."

Part of Mayor London Breed's response to the killing of George Floyd, the initiative is a citywide effort launched in 2021 to advance prosperity in San Francisco's diverse Black communities. It began as a one-time reallocation of \$120 million in law enforcement funding to reimagine public safety and address structural inequities, but has grown into an annual fund earmarked for Black-centered cultural spaces and programming. Last year, DKI awarded 141 grants worth \$60 million.

"This is the first time that San Francisco has intentionally geared resources toward these communities," explains Leatutufu-Burch. "It's an acknowledgement of the historical harm that we experienced during redevelopment—the massive displacement of Black folks, the number of educational and economic disparities, as well as over-policing in the Black community."

San Francisco was once a hub of Black prosperity. In its heyday, the Fillmore District was known as the "Harlem of the West." Recent decades, however, have seen the city's Black population collapse—from 14% in the 1970s to under 6% today.

DKI's mission is to promote prosperity in San Francisco's diverse Black communities, and that's an important adjective for Leatutufu-Burch, who "unapologetically" identifies as both Black and Samoan. "The Black community is not a monolith—we're a megalith," she says.

A self-described "organizer, activist and disrupter of anti-Black racism and systems rooted in White supremacist ideology," she brings a reformer's zeal to government service. "I enter my work every day with that mindset," she says. "What I'm most passionate about and hopeful for is attaining Black liberation and Indigenous sovereignty in my lifetime."

Leatutufu-Burch chose the Organizational Change and Leadership program because she sees herself as a reformer. She describes the online program as "very practical" and ideal for "folks who don't just want to think about the way the world works, but actually want to change the way the world works."

The 33-year-old San Francisco native is the youngest child of a Hawaii-born Samoan father, a city field engineer, and an African American mother, a retired deputy sheriff. Leatutufu-Burch and her siblings grew up economically poor, living in North Beach public housing. A first-generation student, she earned her bachelor's in political science at the University of San Francisco in 2011, and her master of public administration at San Francisco State in 2015.

Recent graduate, Saidah Leatutufu-Burch EDD '21, was named inaugural director of the Dream Keeper Initiative in the fall of 2021. The new effort aims to advance prosperity in San Francisco's diverse Black communities.

PHOTO BY LYDIA DANILLER



Her new role spearheading DKI grew from a USC Rossier connection. Leatutufu-Burch was recruited by Sheryl Evans Davis EDD '21, executive director of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, the city department that houses DKI.

The two women bonded as classmates, and Davis joined a network of mentors who were templates for Leatutufu-Burch's dissertation, "The Rich Auntie Effect." Written under the advisement of USC Rossier professors Helena Seli and Monique Datta as well as Joshua Berger, former director of the Belldegrin Center for Innovative Leadership at Brentwood School, Leatutufu-Burch focused on mentorships that spur socioeconomic advancement in young people of color and the idea "that wealth is not solely associated with economics, but should be viewed holistically." Social networks, educational capital, familial capital, cultural capital, actual income, political capital and access to mentorships can all produce wealth, she argues.

Her work with DKI embodies that philosophy, though it hasn't been smooth sailing. The program is staffed by 28 city employees across nine departments, only eight of whom directly report to Leatutufu-Burch. Leatutufu-Burch describes the atmosphere as "tropical, and by that I mean there's no shortage of storms. But when it works, it is beautiful."

Among the beautiful outcomes, she points to a 360% uptick in Black homeownership through city-funded programs and dozens of new Black-owned businesses. "There's still much further to go, and we continue to experience the storms," she says. "But there are moments when the storm subsides, and we bask in that beauty." —R



VIVIAN EKCHIAN EdD '19 NAMED 2022 LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

Vivian Ekchian EdD '19 has been named the 2022 Los Angeles County Superintendent of the Year for her work leading the Glendale Unified School District.

Ekchian, a longtime educator and administrator at the Los Angeles Unified School District, said the honor “is part of a larger team that works so very hard to serve our youth. I happen to be holding the recognition, but it’s really on behalf of everyone that works in my school district and the community members who support education in Glendale.”

The award was given by the L.A. County Office of Education, which said Ekchian “has endeavored to ensure students are at the center of every decision and strives to create coherence, inspire innovation and accelerate academic success.” When Ekchian became superintendent in Glendale in 2019, “not only did she set in motion an effective plan to refocus the district’s strategy for student achievement, she did so while implementing a robust COVID-19 mitigation plan for students and staff,” said Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo MSW, EdD. —R

KELSEY IINO EdD '14 was appointed to the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) Board of Trustees. LACCD is the largest community college system in the country.

ARNOLD LAANUI EdD '14 was appointed president of Damien Memorial School in Honolulu. He is an alumnus of Damien and will be the school’s fourth president. Before his return to Damien, he had a distinguished career with the FBI and the Hawaii Department of Education.

BEN DIMAPINDAN EdD '15 was appointed associate dean of communications strategy and digital media at the USC Gould School of Law.

KATHERINE STOPP EdD '15 was named superintendent of the Fountain Valley School District. She is the first woman in the district’s nearly 250-year history to serve in this role. Fountain Valley School District is composed of 10 schools serving more than 6,000 K–8 students from Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach, Calif. Katherine is the perfect candidate to continue the spirit of excellence of FVSD for many years to come, and the FVSD community is excited for her appointment.

JOSHELYN MARTIN ME '16 is the assistant director of residential life for care and support at California State University, Monterey Bay. This role entails serving on the departmental leadership to make critical decisions around support processes for our residential student population. The position also handles high-level crisis management and collaborates with various campus partners for appropriate referral.

CLARA A. FINNERAN EdD '16 is the new superintendent of Lompoc Unified School District in Santa Barbara County. Between 2016 and her new position, she has served as assistant superintendent of education at Las Virgenes Unified School District in Calabasas. She is fluent in Spanish and American Sign Language. Clara received a bachelor’s in psychology, Spanish and theology from Notre Dame, a Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Portland, and an MA in Educational Leadership from the University of San Francisco. She earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership from USC Rossier.

OSCAR LUGO MAT '16 was serving as assistant director at Fusion Academy Los Angeles and has decided to pilot the role of humanities and world languages department head at the recently opened and growing Seattle campus. Oscar enjoys the beautiful scenery while continuing to

support students with varying needs in a 1-to-1 environment committed to differentiation and individualized education.

ED HASAN EdD '18's dissertation at USC Rossier evaluated “Workplace Religious Discrimination Toward Muslim Women Who Wear the Hijab.” Over the past few years, he expanded his dissertation into a book that analyzes and celebrates religious diversity in the workplace in various countries, including the U.S. The book is titled *Embracing Workplace Religious Diversity and Inclusion: Key Challenges and Solutions*. Palgrave Macmillan published it as part of its Studies in Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization in Business. This milestone would not have been possible if it were not for Ed’s USC Rossier professors and classmates.

NICOLE WHITNER EdD '18 is assistant vice president and dean of students (AVP/DOS) at the University of San Diego. Nicole serves as a member of the Student Affairs Leadership Team and as a principal adviser to the VP of Student Affairs regarding practice and policy development. Central to the work of the entire Student Affairs Division is a focus on the quality of the student learning experience as embodied in the Thriving Student Model, which seeks to facilitate a leading-edge cocurricular experience grounded in inclusion, diversity and equity. The AVP/DOS oversees areas such as residential life, student conduct and the Center for Student Success.

JAYNEMARIE ANGBAH EdD '18 is director, Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) Change Learning Journey, at the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies. In this role, she champions, promotes and helps shape and implement equity-based initiatives across the organization’s operations, talent and HR, and communications teams, as well as serves as a resource for grantmaking portfolios and programs. She also supports the building and strengthening of an equitable and inclusive culture and a sense of belonging across all teams at Schusterman.

FANISHA MUEPO EdD '18 is the new G.A.T.E. (gifted and talented education) coordinator at Harte Prep Middle School in Los Angeles. Her company, Think Big Educational Services, has a podcast on Apple, Spotify, Amazon and Bullet In Flight Radio featuring topics on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, college access, scholarship resources, relationships and more.



Two USC Rossier Grads Partner to Reimagine Military Training

Victor Castro MEd '19 and Richard DiNinni EdD '22 are creating new educational programs at West Point that blend virtual reality and game-based training technologies with research-based pedagogy.

Story:
Dan Gordon

THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP DATING BACK NEARLY a decade, two USC Rossier School of Education graduates have contributed to a transformation in how U.S. Military Academy (USMA) cadets are taught, introducing guided experiential learning initiatives into the high-stakes training environment.

Victor Castro MEd '19 and Richard DiNinni EdD '22 have spearheaded programs that blend virtual reality and game-based training technologies with research-based pedagogy, bringing classroom lessons to life as cadets apply newly acquired concepts and skills in leadership, marksmanship and navigation to real-world challenges in simulated settings.

“Whether it’s game-based on a laptop or handheld, or using virtual or augmented reality, we’re taking the real-world space and overlaying information that will support the cadets’ learning during the training event,” DiNinni explains.

DiNinni, an East Coast-based project director with the USC Institute for Creative Technologies, has for the past eight years been a visiting scientist at West Point. In that role, he spends much of his time collaborating with Castro, a two-time combat veteran now in a civilian position as deputy director and training instructor at the West Point Simulation Center, which uses modeling and simulations technology to create authentic learning environments. Drawing on their USC Rossier experience—DiNinni as a graduate of the Doctor of Education in Organizational Change and Leadership program and Castro of the Master of Education in Learning Design and Technology program—they explore how new educational technologies, combined with evidence-based practice, can support cadet training.

“It’s been a great partnership, in that we bring different strengths and experiences to the table but are both passionate about the same thing—developing new ideas and technologies to improve the learning outcomes for these cadets,” DiNinni says.

Among the first major systems DiNinni and Castro leveraged as part of their strategy to refine Simulation Center

programs was a training tool used to enhance classroom instruction in military leadership. “When you have a young officer taking command of their first unit, they’re around 22, overseeing soldiers in their 30s with much more life experience, and suddenly they have to help these older soldiers through personal issues they haven’t experienced themselves,” DiNinni says. “This game-based simulation environment enables these cadets to interact with a virtual human playing the role of one of those older unit members and shows them the outcomes of their decisions.”

While lectures play an important role in establishing a knowledge base, simulated learning environments offer opportunities to heighten the engagement of a trainee, immersing them in challenging scenarios that enhance their preparation for the interpersonal encounters they will ultimately face, DiNinni and Castro explain. The use of technology-based training tools in the Simulation Center can also help the USC Rossier graduates hone their approach based on cadet performance and feedback. For example, each third-year cadet who went through the program was tested both before and after to evaluate the program’s impact on learning outcomes and identify gaps to be addressed.

Castro contrasts his own military training with the work he helps oversee at USMA. “When I was learning the M60 machine gun, I had to do everything in front of a drill sergeant who would yell at me if I failed once,” he says. “It was more negative learning. At the Academy, we have the cadets not only experience the learning, but understand why it’s important and then reinforce that by teaching someone else.”

Castro hopes he and DiNinni can play a role in increasing synergies between their alma mater and Castro’s employer—potentially including a partnership in which USC Rossier students and faculty work with USMA to help validate the learning applications.

“All aspects of what we learned at Rossier have easily transferred to what we do at the Academy,” Castro says. “Every time I start working on something with Rich, I tell him, ‘We’re doing exactly what we did in our programs.’ This is everything that the evidence-based education that came out of Rossier was telling us to do.” —R

PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD DININNI AND VICTOR CASTRO

Richard DiNinni EdD '22 (left) and Victor Castro MEd '19 (right), have spearheaded programs that blend virtual reality and game-based training technologies with research-based pedagogy to transform how U.S. Military Academy cadets are taught.



DOMENIKA LYNCH BS '98, MFT '15 APPOINTED TO THE COMMISSION ON PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

Domenika Lynch BS '98, MFT '15, executive director of the Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program, has been appointed by President Joe Biden to the Commission on Presidential Scholars.

The commissioners, eminent private citizens selected from across the country in the fields of education, medicine, law, social services and business, among others, make the final selection of the 161 Presidential Scholars. The scholars demonstrate exceptional accomplishments in academics, the arts, career and technical education, and an outstanding commitment to public service.

Lynch also was appointed to serve on the U.S. Small Business Administration Council for Underserved Communities. She has led the Aspen Institute program since the summer of 2020. Before that she served as president and CEO of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, an organization founded by Hispanic members of Congress. —R

MICHELLE MATTER EdD '18 joined The SCAN Foundation as senior policy analyst. Michelle serves as the principal analyst supporting the foundation's vision, mission and strategic priorities by evaluating, reporting on and engaging with communications, policy and programmatic issues related to aging, health, family caregiving and long-term care efforts.

TERRI HORTON EdD '18 was included in Onalytica's 2022 Who's Who in Future of Work Global Report, listed as a key opinion leader and expert with high authority and credibility.

STEPHANIE BURROUGHS EdD '19 is the assistant superintendent at Foxborough Public Schools in Foxborough, Mass., and oversees all K-12 curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development.

CONSUELO HERNANDEZ WILLIAMS EdD '19 is the associate superintendent—student services at the Ventura County Office of Education.

BEATRICE BENAVIDES MAT '19 is the director of career services at Bank Street College of Education in New York City.

JULIE AGUIRRE-JACINTO EdD '19 is the director of elementary education at Morgan Hill Unified School District in Morgan Hill, Calif.

MARTHA MONAHAN EdD '19 is the director of human resources at Palisades Charter High School in Pacific Palisades, Calif.

KRISTINA WRIGHT EdD '19 is the director of learning and design at the Making Waves Foundation in Richmond, Calif., and is responsible for the design and implementation of responsive and innovative college access and success models, and program strategies grounded in data, student and community voice, and best practices to ensure all students thrive on their college journey, by design.

SONIA MAXSON GCRT '19 is the resource specialist at Chámmakilawish Pechanga School, working with special education Indigenous students on a small Indian reservation in Southern California.

2020s

KATHLEEN CIFFONE GCRT '20 is a mild/moderate special education teacher at Los Gatos Union School District in Los Gatos, Calif., and

was named the 2021–2022 LGUSD Special Education Teacher of the Year.

ERIK HOLLANDER EdD '20 is an associate professor of business at Concordia University Wisconsin and was awarded the 2022 Batterman School of Business Undergraduate Business Faculty of the Year.

ENRIQUE RUACHO EdD '20 is chief of staff for Superintendent Lamont Jackson at San Diego Unified School District.

CLAUDIA MONTOYA-ANDREWS ME '20 is director of career education at Coastline College in the Coast Community College District in Orange County, Calif.

BRANDON ELLIOTT EdD '21 is the recipient of the Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal from Chorus America.

MARIANNA CID MAT '22 is a third-grade Spanish dual language teacher for Los Angeles Unified School District.

HOWARD CROOM EdD '22 is the associate athletic director, chief diversity officer and director of student services and affiliated faculty in the School of Language, Culture and Society at Oregon State University.

GARY SAUNDERS EdD '22 is the interim executive director for Gorman Learning Charter Network in Redlands, Calif.

IN MEMORIAM

Susan Jane Rainey EdD '83, who served as superintendent of the Riverside Unified School District from 1998 to 2008, passed away Sept. 25, 2022. She was 75. Rainey started teaching in the late 1960s, and at age 33 she was appointed principal at Brea Olinda High School, one of only six women to be a high school principal in California at the time. After her tenure leading Riverside Unified, Rainey served two terms in the Riverside County Office of Education. She also volunteered for, and often led, numerous charitable organizations in the city.



Leading With Love and Care

San Diego County Superintendent Paul Gothold EdD '17 aims to improve conditions for all students, including migrant and transborder students.

Story:
Adriana Maestas

SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT PAUL GOTHOLD EdD '17 has been an educator for 30 years, but he didn't intend to be. A business major, he ended up in the classroom in 1992 and fell in love with teaching. In Gothold's fourth year of teaching, a principal pulled him aside and asked him to help mentor other teachers. Once Gothold saw the impact he could have in scaling his knowledge and techniques for working with students, he was hooked, and he moved into a leadership role as an assistant principal.

"I was fortunate that people saw skills in me at that time that I didn't necessarily see in myself," he said.

Seeing the potential in students that others might not see is something that drives Gothold today as he leads the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) in improving

learning conditions so all students can be college-ready. SDCOE serves the region's most vulnerable students, supporting nearly 500,000 students and 42 school districts. With the county touching the U.S.-Mexico border, SDCOE has served unaccompanied minors and transborder students, or those who cross the U.S.-Mexico border to attend school. While the exact number of transborder students is unknown, it's estimated that the Tijuana-San Diego region has thousands.

One program that Gothold led to support unaccompanied minors was Futuro Brillante at the San Diego Convention Center, which served as a temporary shelter for them in 2021. The ad hoc school ran classes twice a week for two hours a day, serving over 3,500 students for four months. The effort drew employees from across SDCOE departments to create a curriculum, teach, and provide materials, technical needs and translation support for unaccompanied migrant students.

Despite threats made to his family as a result of the program, Gothold persevered. "Those threats were addressed, but they are indicative of what we can come up against when we try to educate young people who are in extremely difficult circumstances," Gothold said.

In accommodating the transborder students, Gothold spoke proudly of the Global Academy of California, a National City-based college-preparatory independent study program for ninth- through 12th-graders designed to foster students' global competency. The Global Academy affords both local and transnational students the flexibility to earn a high school diploma based on articulated criteria recognized by SDCOE.

"The success of the Global Academy led to more conversations with Mexico," Gothold said, including the development of a binational diploma that would be good on both sides of the border. "The goal is to make sure that the kids have access to skills and learning opportunities regardless of which side they live on. There are benefits to the whole region by ensuring that young people are prepared academically to contribute to society."

Professor of Clinical Education Darline Robles, a former superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, has served as a role model and mentor during Gothold's career. "It has been a privilege to have worked with Paul and witness his career trajectory, from teacher, principal and superintendent," she said. "His genuine love for students, staff and the community he serves is what drives him to be a servant leader."

Gothold credits USC Rossier for providing him with theories and research-based evidence to validate the work that he has done on behalf of marginalized students. "I taught probation-expelled kids in L.A. County. I saw how students were excluded from the education system. We had to rebuild these students and restore their hope. I loved watching kids turn their lives around," said Gothold. "USC gave me a framework and access to research that I could hang onto and explain the 'why' to people about how to better serve historically marginalized communities." —R



Transforming Educational Opportunities

The USC Rossier Educational Equity Initiative is reinventing education to be responsive to the needs of every learner.

By Katrina Nash

SURROUNDED BY EDUCATION advocates and USC Rossier supporters, Dean Pedro A. Noguera launched the USC Rossier Educational Equity Initiative in the fall at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. The ambitious initiative consists of five priority projects designed to create transformative educational opportunities for children in Los Angeles and across the country.

In his opening remarks, Dean Noguera reflected on the goals he set for USC Rossier when he joined the school in 2020, asking, “How do we create the change our system so desperately needs? What can we at USC Rossier do that no one else can?” Launching the Educational Equity Initiative was the answer.

But what does it mean to advance educational equity? USC Rossier’s vision is to create a world in which schools are responsive to the unique needs of every child and learning leads to an expansion of the opportunities

available to them throughout their lives.

The projects of the new initiative include partnering with four existing Los Angeles Unified School District schools to train and support teachers; an expansion of USC Rossier’s Teacher Residency Program; a new USC Rossier STEAM Teaching and Research Center; the Los Angeles Education Policy Solutions Hub, which will conduct research and analyze data that will be used to diagnose educational conditions and inform decision-making at L.A. schools and colleges; and the USC Democracy Project, which aims to prepare students to engage in civil discourse and participate in democracy at all levels. All five projects are designed to “give kids an education so they can accomplish anything they aspire to,” said Noguera. (See p. 1 for more on each of these projects.)

As part of the Educational Equity Initiative, USC Rossier will work directly with LAUSD to train new teachers, support existing teachers

with professional development in instructional best practices and provide critical social services to children and families. “The future of teaching is more threatened than it has ever been in our society,” said USC Rossier Board of Councilors Chair Reveta Franklin Bowers BA ’70, who spoke at the launch. “Rossier is place-based, located in the middle of a community that needs quality teaching as much as any place in our country.”

At a time when a deepening partisan divide is threatening the foundations of our democracy, the Democracy Project is rethinking how civic education can meet this challenging moment. “In some ways, I believe the education system has lost its center,” said USC Rossier Board of Councilors member Gary Crisp, who was also in attendance. “I want to support the next generation of children to be the best they can be, live their dreams and have the right tools to succeed in life.” The Democracy Project will provide teachers with a curriculum to help students learn about complex issues while simultaneously teaching them how to conduct independent research and engage in civil discourse.

Expanding the Teacher Residency Program will provide more than 30 talented, bright students with a fully funded Master of Arts in Teaching degree, a living stipend and a two-term teacher residency where they work intensively, side by side with a mentor teacher, adequately preparing them for the challenges ahead. “Our institution is committed to ensuring that school leaders are prepared to face the challenges of today as well as create equitable learning environments through the establishment of practices and systems that ensure positive learning outcomes for all students,” said USC Board of Councilors member Patricia Brent-Sanco EdD ’16. —R

📶 To learn more about the USC Rossier Educational Equity Initiative, please visit rossier.usc.edu/equity or contact Alex Pampalone, associate dean for advancement, at pampalon@rossier.usc.edu.

PHOTO BY BRIAN MORRI/211 PHOTOGRAPHY

USC Rossier Educational Equity Initiative



LAUNCH OF A PARTNERSHIP WITH FOUR SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AND EAST LOS ANGELES



EXPAND THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAM



DEVELOP THE USC ROSSIER STEAM TEACHING AND RESEARCH CENTER



CREATE THE LOS ANGELES EDUCATION POLICY SOLUTIONS HUB



ESTABLISH THE USC DEMOCRACY PROJECT



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To learn more about the USC Rossier Educational Equity Initiative, please visit rossier.usc.edu/equity or contact Alex Pampalone, associate dean for advancement, at pampalon@rossier.usc.edu.

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A perfect day for football,
and for meeting up with
classmates and friends!
USC Rossier students pose
at the school's annual
Homecoming Picnic
on Nov. 5, 2022.



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