

USC Rossier

MAGAZINE

USC ROSSIER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION : FALL / WINTER 2017



CENTERING EQUITY

Leading the Way in Higher Education

Dear Friends of Rossier,

The seven faculty members who grace our cover together direct five research centers that are pursuing more equitable outcomes for college students.

This common mission isn't lost on our own graduate students at USC Rossier. Of the nearly 700 students who have enrolled this year in one of our 11 graduate programs, nearly 50 percent are first-generation college goers.

And no one ethnicity or race accounts for more than 30 percent of our incoming student population. They are 29 percent white, 25 percent Hispanic/Latino, 25 percent Asian and 12 percent African-American.

While we are proud of the diversity of our incoming students, we know that diversity does not equal equity, as our center directors explain in this issue. From the Center of Urban Education's Equity Scorecard to the USC Race and Equity Center's National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC), our centers are taking distinct paths to achieve their goals.

As we help other institutions become more equity-minded, we also are looking within to ask ourselves how well we, as an institution, are living up to our own commitment to equity. We are aware, for example, that the diversity of our student body is not matched by the composition of our faculty: Nearly three out of five Rossier faculty members are white. That is something we are working to address.

In the past year, we also have conducted a rigorous review of our curricula, assessed our racial climate, created a Diversity Task Force, appointed a new Associate Dean for Equity and Inclusion and are nearing completion of a schoolwide revision of our mission statement, which will place equity front and center.

These processes are not easy, but they are necessary. The stakes seem higher than ever before for schools of education and for colleges and universities, where students are navigating the meaning and impact of DACA policy changes, travel bans and free speech battles from Berkeley to Charlottesville.

In the face of these challenges, we know that educational leaders can either impede or support student learning. The best of us should always be exploring our own values and biases in order to understand what we bring to the classroom, to student services, to faculty hiring.

Ensuring more equitable outcomes is not simply a goal for our 700 new students. It is a requirement for all of us at USC Rossier and within the field of education.

Fight On!

KAREN SYMMS GALLAGHER, PHD
Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean
USC Rossier School of Education



ON THE COVER: Standing, from lower left: Shafiqah Ahmadi, assistant professor of clinical education and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice; Shaun R. Harper, Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership and executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center; Estela Mara Bensimon, professor of higher education and director of the Center for Urban Education; Jerry Lucido, professor of practice, associate dean of strategic enrollment services, and executive director of the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice; and William G. Tierney, Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education and co-director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education. Sitting: Adrianna Kezar, professor of education and co-director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education; Darnell Cole, associate professor of education and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice.

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PHOTO BY ANDREW ZINN



Centering Equity

E

quity is not the same as equality, diversity or inclusiveness. It is not about espousing policies intended to benefit all students. Practices that work well for white students may be harmful to students of color and perpetuate inequality.

Rossier Professor Estela Mara Bensimon, director of the Center for Urban Education, coined the term “equity-minded” to describe what it is to be “critically race-conscious as opposed to colorblind.” Being equity-minded, she says, “means being cognizant of how racism is produced through everyday practices and having the courage to make racism visible and discussable.” —R

ENSURING
EQUITY

FRONT

AND

CENTER

“Through interdisciplinary partnerships and a commitment to equity, our research centers are improving access to education and creating new models for campus inclusivity.”

— USC Rossier Dean Karen Symms Gallagher



PULLIAS CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

pullias.usc.edu



FOUNDED: 1996
CO-DIRECTORS: Adrianna Kezar, Professor of Higher Education; and William G. Tierney, Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education

The only named, endowed center of higher education within a top U.S. school of education, the Pullias Center improves college outcomes for underserved students and enhances the performance of postsecondary institutions by assessing faculty roles and the educational trajectories of community college students. With four postdoctoral scholars and 17 doctoral research assistants, the Pullias Center is developing the next generation of higher education scholars.



CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION (CUE)

cue.usc.edu

FOUNDED: 1999
DIRECTOR: Estela Mara Bensimon, Professor of Higher Education

The center brings equity-mindedness to institutions of higher education through socially conscious research and tools. It engages practitioners as agents of change by empowering them to be critically race conscious and to respond to changing demographics in California and beyond. CUE's Equity Scorecard has been used by over 100 educational institutions to help them determine how well they are addressing equity concerns.



CENTER FOR ENROLLMENT RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE (CERPP)

cerpp.usc.edu

FOUNDED: 2007
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Jerry Lucido, Professor of Practice and Associate Dean of Strategic Enrollment Services

As the only independent research center in the United States serving admissions and enrollment specialists, CERPP is committed to fostering equity in college access, admission and outcomes. Throughout 2016-17, CERPP's USC College Advising Corps deployed 37 first-generation college graduates as near-peer advisers in 36 high-need Los Angeles schools, resulting in 14,269 college acceptances.



CENTER FOR EDUCATION, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE (CEISJ)

socialjustice.usc.edu

FOUNDED: February 1, 2017
CO-DIRECTORS: Shafiqah Ahmadi, Associate Professor of Clinical Education; and Darnell Cole, Associate Professor of Education

The center facilitates productive and meaningful interactions among students, educators and community members by examining how multiple identities such as religion, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation and disability intersect to foster shared values and democratic ideals. The center conducts rigorous research, provides trainings, develops curricula and engages the community in social justice activities and events.



USC RACE AND EQUITY CENTER

race.usc.edu

FOUNDED: July 1, 2017
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Shaun R. Harper, Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership

Through interdisciplinary scholarship, useful resources and an array of public engagement activities, the USC Race and Equity Center helps the nation correct its longstanding record of racial wrongs. Its National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) is a quantitative survey instrument that will be annually administered across the country to give institutions useful data on their own campus climates and students' feelings of belongingness.

The Obstacles to Equity

Faculty are a necessary component of creating equity on campus but are often hindered by structure and culture —

By Ross Brenneman

Standing in front of a room full of higher education professionals this September, Associate Professor of Education Darnell Cole told the audience that students should not bear the responsibility for creating equity on campus.

“This is what we get paid to do — faculty, staff alike,” Cole said. “We get paid to understand our student populations, and that requires something of us. ... This is an ongoing professional responsibility that sometimes we’re not held accountable to.”

Students had gathered alongside professionals for a summit on “(de)Institutionalizing Islamophobia” on campuses, led by the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice at USC Rossier. Cole co-directs the center with Associate Professor of Clinical Education Shafiqah Ahmadi, who told students at the summit that they have the ability to use their voices “to bring these issues to bear.”

Together, the co-directors emphasized a point backed by research: Faculty members are essential to promoting equity at institutions. But even when people recognize this, there are often many obstacles in the way of bringing equity work to fruition.

KNOW THE PROBLEM

Inequities on campuses show up in data and anecdotes alike. Even as students of color make up a greater percentage of enrollees, college faculties are still predominantly white (79 percent), according to the most recent estimates from the National Center for Education Statistics. Students of color make up 50 percent of students at two-year colleges, but only 39 percent of students at four-year institutions. Men still outnumber women in top administrative and faculty positions. Stories about explicit and implicit bias permeate the news on campuses large and small.

Identifying and calling out such inequities is a crucial step, experts say.

“I think we have to name race, I think we have to name our own culpability in systems that are bigger than ourselves,” says Julie Posselt, an assistant professor of higher education and a faculty member of the Pullias Center for Higher Education at USC Rossier. Posselt, who studies graduate school admissions, says that she’s seen such themes emerge time and again in her research.

“We have to be willing to reflect on the ways our everyday behavior helps reproduce bigger systems — habits, routines, seemingly small things can make a big difference,” she says.

Even when the problem is recognized, though, knowing how to address it can be problematic.

“I think people don’t have good role models and examples of how this kind of work can be done,” says Shaun R. Harper, director of the USC Race and Equity Center.

Born in rural Georgia, Harper was raised in a segregated town. He says his family made clear their expectations for him — that he wouldn’t waste his education by failing to support those facing discrimination.

Under Harper’s leadership, the USC Race and Equity Center visits colleges and universities struggling with racial issues.

“My great-grandmother would be turning over in her grave if I were sitting here as a tenured professor writing stupid papers about pointless questions that absolutely do nothing to liberate and improve conditions for black people and other people of color and gay and lesbian people,” Harper says of his role as a faculty member. “I feel an enormous amount of responsibility to my people.”

Other institutions have turned to the Center for Urban Education, run by Estela Mara Bensimon, a professor of higher education. More than 100 colleges and universities have used CUE’s Equity Scorecard to determine how well those institutions address equity concerns.

“I take the approach that people don’t know how to be equity-minded or critically race-conscious,” Bensimon says. CUE established the term “equity-mindedness” to describe actions that demonstrate individuals’ capacity to recognize and address the structures, policies and practices that create and sustain racial equities.

Often, Bensimon says, administrators and faculty mistake diversity for equity, which has been the case since she came to USC two decades ago.

“At that time the talk was always about diversity, and no one was worrying about the fact that community colleges here in California — and in the Cal State system — already had diversity, but it didn’t mean they were producing equitable outcomes for the students who created their diversity,” Bensimon says.

DIMINISHING SUPPORT

Another obstacle to improving equity on campus is that it often falls to tenure-track or clinical faculty, who are the most invested in campus culture, according to Professor of Education Adrianna Kezar, co-director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education.

But here’s the problem: Across the United States, 70 percent of faculty members are now adjuncts. Because those adjuncts often work for low pay and aren’t part of a university’s shared governance structure, Kezar says they often are excluded in the kind of crucial cultural work that could benefit from their involvement.

“Somebody like an adjunct probably doesn’t see much of a role in creating culture,” Kezar says. “Because if you want to have a role, you want to feel like part of campus culture — you need engagement. I think a lot of adjunct faculty don’t feel valued or part of culture.”

According to Kezar, adjunct faculty usually don’t have access to regular professional development, don’t get regular evaluations, don’t have job security and are unlikely to invest in a curriculum if they won’t be there the next semester. Even faculty unions have been historically reluctant to embrace adjuncts as members.

“How are we being effective as institutions when the very workforce that we’re hiring is counter to being effective?” Kezar says.

Kezar adds that tenure-track faculty members have a role in bringing adjuncts into the fold, whether through advocating for them in governance models or in simpler ways like mentorship. Advocacy groups representing non-tenure-track faculty, like New Faculty Majority, stress the lack of support for students of color and adjuncts, trying to illustrate the connections between different inequities and hierarchies that do not serve higher education.

ENTRY PROBLEMS

In addition to bringing in colleagues, faculty members may also have to prepare graduate students to be conscious of equity issues before they become professors — but that’s easier said than done.

“You’re socialized as a graduate student not to take risks,” says William G. Tierney, Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education and co-director of the Pullias Center. “You’re supposed to wait to take risks, and you always wait.”

Tierney says that moving up the academic ladder, from PhD student to assistant professor to tenured professor, means keeping the waters calm.

“By the time you’re an endowed chair you start worrying about the seating at the holiday party, if you’re going to end up sitting at the president’s table or out in Siberia, and that means you never take a risk,” he says.

Faculty members can be agents of change on their campuses and in the nation. They can mentor their own students, and work with students in other schools. But that’s not happening for the most part, Tierney says.

“If we thought everybody was unteachable, we would be very demoralized,” Bensimon adds. “We have a lot of privilege, we have a lot of power in the positions that we’re in, and it is important to think about how you use it — not only on behalf of yourself but on behalf of others.”

More than anything, perhaps, experts say that a faculty has to be united in doing the hard work of equity, even if it takes time.

“The power of a group of faculty deciding together that they want to make something happen is quite remarkable,” Posselt says. “Individual faculty working on their own can be really effective and are highly competent professionals, but faculty members working together have a much greater collective influence.” — R

Leading the Field

In November, Shaun R. Harper (below, right), the Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership at USC Rossier, will open the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). Harper began his term as president last November. He is the third faculty member from USC Rossier to serve in that position, along with Estela Mara Bensimon (2005–06) and William G. Tierney (2001–02), both professors of higher education. In a three-way discussion, Bensimon, Harper and Tierney discuss ASHE leadership, the obstacles they faced during their presidencies and the hopes they have for the organization.



To read the conversation, go to:
rossier.usc.edu/magazine/fall-2017/leading-the-field

G A T E W A Y

CERPP director's research bolsters U.S. Supreme
Court brief on affirmative action —

By Matthew Kredell

T O E Q U I T Y

For the most selective colleges and universities in the nation, the admissions process is conducted with all the transparency of a CIA mission. This can leave students and parents with a lot of questions.

How are admission policies set and carried out? What legal limitations do universities have in deciding who to admit and why? Is race a factor in student admissions?

USC Rossier Professor Jerry Lucido considers college admissions the gateway to equity, as admission decisions can affect the future of a family for generations to come.

Lucido, executive director of USC Rossier's Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice, attempted to bring clarity to a confusing subject with his chapter "How Admissions Decisions Get Made" in the *Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management* (Jossey-Bass, 2014).

"People are really interested in looking inside the black box of college admissions," Lucido says. "At the heart of what people wonder about is if it's fair."

Race-conscious admissions policies have come under attack from the Trump administration. In August, *The New York Times* reported that the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division is preparing to investigate and sue universities over the use of affirmative action in admissions decisions. This assault would go against the four U.S. Supreme Court cases that have defined how universities can use race.

As the first authoritative, comprehensive document outlining the admissions process, Lucido's chapter was cited extensively in an amicus brief filed by the College Board and other education organizations in the most recent such case, *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2015).

The principal author of the brief, Education Counsel attorney Art Coleman, contacted Lucido looking for a detailed explanation of the holistic review admissions process that is used by most selective universities in the country.

Holistic review is a flexible, individualized way of assessing an applicant's capabilities with consideration given to experiences, attributes, academic metrics, talents and background. Which factors weigh more heavily vary based on particular needs among the programs and schools of the university. Personal characteristics valued most in a candidate also differ with the mission of a particular institution.

"A major point of focus in our brief was the contours and elements of individualized holistic review in higher education admissions," Coleman says. "When we read the chapter, we discovered that it captured many important points that we wanted to emphasize. I think the lens on the process of admissions it provided may have been important in helping



Jerry Lucido, professor of practice and executive director of the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

educate the U.S. Supreme Court about the field in general, as a foundation for reaching the University of Texas-specific judgment that it did."

The ruling confirmed that universities can continue to use race-conscious practices in admissions.

"With the U.S. Department of Justice poised to investigate affirmative action in college admissions, it is critical that colleges and universities align their objectives and practices with their missions to educate broadly and, in particular, to achieve the educational benefits of diversity," Lucido says. "Doing so will provide a strong likelihood of withstanding legal challenges to their admissions policies and practices."

In a perfect world, all students would have an equal opportunity to compete for spaces on their merits, but Lucido points out that academic measures of test scores and grade point average aren't truly objective.

"The highest correlation with test scores is family income," Lucido says. "Are they really objective if so highly correlated with social class? An admissions counselor must understand the context in which a student's academic achievement has taken place. Has test prep been available to the student? Are Advanced Placement classes available at the school? That's where the notion of socioeconomic status, race and culture have to be considered when looking at a whole pool of applications."

Holistic review has been in place for four or five decades at some institutions, mostly the Ivy League universities. It evolved from an instrument of privilege to the key factor in

"People are really interested in looking inside the black box of college admissions."

— Jerry Lucido, professor of practice and executive director of the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

universities aligning their admission policies more closely with their missions, helping to reach the twin objectives of equity and merit.

"To use race under current law, it has to be as part of a university's mission for gaining the educational value of a diverse student body," Lucido says. "While some race-neutral strategies may help, the most proven way to diversify a class is to be race-conscious." — R

“WHO WE SAY WE ARE”

By Matthew C. Stevens

A new research center emerges at the intersection of identity and social justice —

The opening panel of a recent summit titled “(de)Institutionalizing Islamophobia on College Campuses” confronted the facts head on: Anti-Muslim incidents were on the rise in the United States throughout the 2016 presidential campaign.

Summit organizers were hoping they could help reverse the trend by giving tools to the 90 students, faculty and higher education professionals in attendance, representing 20 institutions from across the country.

Through the summit and other events, the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice has made Muslim students a focus of campus climate efforts, given the new urgency in the months following the issuance of Executive Orders 13769 and 13780 — also known as the Muslim travel bans.

“We see the aftermath of the travel bans as an opportunity for confronting institutional discrimination with a call for transformation of academic institutions,” says Darnell Cole, associate professor of education at USC Rossier and co-director with Shafiqah Ahmadi, associate professor of clinical education, of the center. “We want to lean in to better support those students most harmed by these policies.”

The center formally launched on Feb. 1, five days after the announcement of the first iteration of the Muslim travel ban.

A RISE IN TARGETING

In 2015, the FBI reported a six-percent increase in hate crimes over the previous year; attacks against Muslims represented the biggest jump, with an alarming rise of 67 percent from 2014. The Southern Poverty Law Center documented

nearly 900 hate incidents in the 10 days following the 2016 presidential election.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported similar trends among students, from bullying in middle schools to intimidation and assaults on college campuses.

“According to recent climate reports, most Muslim college students feel uncomfortable on campus, feel that they don’t belong and feel that they are treated differently than other students,” said Marwa Rifahie, a 2011 graduate of USC Gould Law School and a civil rights attorney for CAIR-LA.

Rifahie was one of five panelists — all of them Muslim women — to offer their expertise at the summit, which was the center’s inaugural event.

Rifahie added that data also show that when individuals have no knowledge, background or interpersonal experience with Muslims, they are more likely to view Islam negatively. She and her fellow panelists also noted other inequitable treatment documented on campuses today, including blacklisting of Muslim student organizations and the criminalization of students who attempt to assert their rights.

EMBRACING INTERSECTIONALITY

Ahmadi and Cole seek to examine how multiple identities such as religion, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation and disability intersect to foster shared values and democratic ideals.

“Intersectionality allows us to connect and understand each other in a more nuanced way, taking into consideration the complexities of our identities,” says Ahmadi.

To Ahmadi and Cole, intersectionality is more than a focus of research and action — it is part of their own experience.

“I was a refugee kid who immigrated to this country, learned English, got my education, went to law school and became a faculty member at one of the best universities in the country,” says Ahmadi. “Darnell is an African-American man who grew up in the South and was raised in a Christian family.”

Together, they take their own lived experiences, along with their professional and academic expertise, and apply them to the rigorous research they conduct.

One of their inaugural projects is a survey of more than 100 Muslim college students from across California. They are documenting and analyzing the students’ experiences during and after the 2016 election. The study includes those at community colleges, liberal arts institutions and major research universities — both private and public — in major urban centers as well as smaller communities. The center plans to expand this study to ultimately encompass all 50 states.

OVERCOMING STIGMAS

Ahmadi sees the study of Muslim college students as a way to let students tell their own stories as Muslims, many of them immigrants like her who are in college despite the challenges they faced inside and outside the classroom. Ahmadi is also a model of intersectionality in her embrace of multiple identities — immigrant, refugee, Muslim, woman, mother, attorney, professor.

Such mastery does not come easy to young college students, who often choose or are forced to concede some part of their identities in order to create a safe environment for themselves.



Associate Professor of Education Darnell Cole and Associate Professor of Clinical Education Shafiqah Ahmadi, co-directors of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice

“When an African-American woman dons the hijab, many see her only as a Muslim, the ‘other.’ She ceases to be African-American,” says Ahmadi. “She loses her own agency to create and control her own identity. Unfortunately, this change in

“Muslim students who are visibly religious tend to face more negative encounters and attacks,” she said in a panel on intersectionality and diversity. “These students are expected to cover their difference, downplay their difference.”

A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

During the summit’s workshop, the 90 attendees, including Tina Aoun, the director of the Middle Eastern Student Center at UC Riverside, drafted their commitment to deinstitutionalize Islamophobia on their own campuses. They were asked, “What aspect of Islamophobia were they going to interrupt? What resources did they need? What were the action steps needed? What is the realistic timeline?”

Aoun saw faculty training as a priority.

“You need to have staff and faculty who are not just ‘tolerant’ or ‘accepting’ of Muslim students,” she qualified, “but who are advocates for them; and we want to make that happen at UC Riverside. I’m one person, but I’m sure with the students we can make that happen.”

Aoun echoed other comments from throughout the day about how all students, no matter their identities, seek camaraderie and connection.

“A lot of our Muslim students are looking for ways to be advocates and to connect with staff, faculty and their peers who are not Muslim to find support. And beyond support, beyond friendship, beyond allyship, they’ve been looking for services,” said Aoun.

Comprehensive services, summarized Cole, must include staff and faculty training, policy changes around religious holidays, dedicated spaces and resources and interventions against Islamophobia.

“And talk to your students,” he concluded. “Not just inside the classroom, but also outside.” —R

“Intersectionality allows us to connect and understand each other in a more nuanced way, taking into consideration the complexities of our identities.”

— Shafiqah Ahmadi, associate professor of clinical education at USC Rossier and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice

identity happens not because of who we say we are as Muslims, but because stereotypes are imposed upon us.”

Shabana Mir, author of the book *Muslim American Women on Campus: Underground Social Life and Identity* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014), acknowledged the stigma associated with being visibly Muslim.



DOING RACIAL EQUITY

USC Race and Equity Center seeks to prevent racial crises on college campuses —

By Matthew C. Stevens

Shaun R. Harper, executive director of the new USC Race and Equity Center, longs for the day when the growing recitation of hashtags like #Charleston or #Charlottesville will give way to an ever-trending #DoingRacialEquity.

“Our center is the place that educational institutions call when they need guidance and evidence-based advice in moments of racial crisis,” he said in August after returning from the University of Virginia. He had spoken to the entire faculty and staff one week after a march by white supremacists left one counter-protester dead and 19 injured.

“But I would rather institutions call us preemptively in order to take more preventive measures as opposed to restorative or corrective actions,” he said.

Harper was the founding executive director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, which he ran from 2011 through the spring of 2017. He moved to USC in July 2017 to establish and direct the USC Race and Equity Center and to become the Clifford and Betty Allen Professor in Urban Leadership. The move is a homecoming for Harper, who was executive director of the USC Rossier EdD program from 2003 to 2005.

When he asked the Virginia audience if they were appalled by white supremacy on campus, Harper wasn’t referring to the marchers carrying tiki torches. He was talking about the far more common and overlooked forms of racism that go unchallenged every day on predominantly white college campuses all over the nation.

“Campus chief executives, including those who are people of color, join white nationalists in preserving and exacerbating white supremacy when they neglect to name and boldly counter racism,” wrote Harper and the center’s chief strategy officer, Charles Davis III PhD, in a joint op-ed that ran in the *Los Angeles Times* the morning after the UVA march.

Harper and his colleagues are frequently invited to visit college campuses throughout the year to conduct climate assessments and leadership training. Two weeks before fall classes started, Harper drove 50 miles north of USC’s University Park Campus to deliver a presentation to the entire faculty and staff at Moorpark College, a community college nestled in the hills of Ventura County. While 50 percent of its 14,000 students are white, its Latino enrollment is

a solid 33 percent; but black students make up less than 2 percent of the student body.

He told his audience that to practice racial equity, they needed to be reflective and honest.

“You have to be reflective about your own role not only in giving voice to the importance of equity and diversity and inclusion,” he said, “but also to be honest with yourself about the role you might play as educational leaders either in making equity possible or in stifling it.”

Collaborate. Be opportunistic, not problematic. Confront prior socialization and implicit biases. That’s Harper’s message.

BEING HONEST WITH DATA

One of the center’s first studies will take a close look at suspension and expulsion rates of black and Latino students at all California public high schools. It builds on his work from 2015, when he was co-author of a study of the suspension and expulsion rates of black students at more than 3,000 high schools in 13 southern U.S. states.

While blacks were only 24 percent of students enrolled in public schools in those states, they were 48 percent of the students suspended and 49 percent of the students expelled.

“The goal of our California suspension report is to make inequities transparent and to learn from high schools where black and Latino students are *not* disproportionately overrepresented in school discipline cases,” he notes.

Data also sets up another fundamental truth: Doing racial equity is about collaboration and collective ownership. Seventy-nine percent of full-time faculty members at colleges and universities across the country are white; and 87 percent of college and university presidents are white.

“For far too long, when we talk about race and equity, somehow we default to putting the burden on people of color,” he says. “White people absolutely have to be involved meaningfully in major leadership capacities in achieving racial equity.”

Visits to campuses like Moorpark sometimes end with discussions of high-accountability plans for racializing the college’s curriculum or devising campus-wide conversations on race.

The hope is to act now rather than to wait for a crisis. Ironically, the visit to Moorpark took place on the same day as the white supremacist march in Charlottesville. Harper didn’t know it yet, but by the following Friday he would be making a presentation at the University of Virginia. He accepts that, for the foreseeable future, his center’s work will be in high demand. —R

Beyond the Test

Assistant Professor Julie Posselt researches equity and well-being in graduate school programs —



USC Rossier Assistant Professor Julie Posselt

USC Rossier Assistant Professor Julie Posselt has had a nearly lifelong fascination with educational equity. She grew up in a small town in Wisconsin, where her parents instilled in her an awareness of the challenges facing educators working with low-income students.

Since joining the USC Rossier faculty last year, she has been advancing her research into the graduate admissions process and how universities and disciplinary societies can increase the diversity of graduate students, particularly in the sciences.

The timing is right because many universities are realizing that heavy reliance on test scores limits both the applicant pools and who is ultimately admitted. Female students and students of color might not typically perform quite as well as white males on standardized tests such as the GRE, Posselt says, but many of them display the necessary ambition and determination to succeed in graduate study.

“There are more and more schools and graduate programs that recognize we need to think more expansively about who has potential, and they’re

reevaluating admissions practices,” she says. “By thinking beyond test scores when making the first cut of applicants, you’re less likely to lose students from underrepresented backgrounds.”

WHITE MALES HAVE THE EDGE

As an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, Posselt majored in education and history, with a minor in political science. After receiving her master’s in educational policy studies at Wisconsin, she became the assistant director of the McNair Scholars Program at the University of Northern Colorado. McNair is a federally funded program that helps facilitate the transition to graduate school for students from typically underrepresented groups. During this time, she started researching access to graduate education.

By Martha Groves

She moved on to the University of Michigan, where she focused on higher education as a doctoral candidate. She started her faculty career in 2013 at Michigan, where she wrote *Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping* (Harvard University Press, 2016).

The book received high marks from reviewers, with one calling it “a deep and compelling take on graduate admissions.” It presents graduate admissions from the point of view of professors and others who decide which students are admitted. Typically, Posselt found, the professors genuinely thought that they were selecting graduate students based on merit, and they seldom talked openly about race. Yet, especially when filtering the initial pool of applications, they relied on criteria that tipped the scales in favor of the usual suspects — white, well-educated males.

COACHING FACULTY TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE

Posselt is now conducting research in two areas — one student-based and one program- and faculty-based. Through a National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation postdoctoral fellowship, she is preparing the first national analysis of equity and student well-being in graduate education.

She also is a co-principal investigator on three different grants from the National Science Foundation. One is aimed at increasing the numbers of women and members of ethnic and racial minorities in graduate physics programs. The two-year study — known as IGEN, or Inclusive Graduate Education Network — is funded by a \$300,000 grant from National Science Foundation INCLUDES (or Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science). IGEN was one of 37 pilot grants funded in the first round of the NSF INCLUDES program.

Posselt coordinates and leads the project’s research agenda. She also has helped to develop and facilitate workshops to coach faculty members of graduate physics programs on ways to make their recruitment and admissions practices more inclusive. In some cases, that might require them to reach beyond the small networks

“By thinking beyond test scores... you’re less likely to lose students from under-represented backgrounds.”

— Julie Posselt, assistant professor at USC Rossier

of colleges and universities that have impressed them in years past. In other situations, professors are learning how to take a more systematic, holistic approach to reviewing applications.

“Working at the level of the discipline is a unique opportunity,” Posselt says. “By creating a network of physics PhD programs that are all dedicated to more inclusive practices, IGEN wants to change what professors in the field think of as normal ways to recruit, admit and mentor students.”

Among all PhD fields in the United States, physics programs award the smallest percentages of slots to women (19 percent on average) and members of underrepresented ethnic and racial minorities (7 percent), according to the American Physical Society. Those proportions are well below the groups’ much larger representations in the general population.

At the end of the pilot period, Posselt and members of the IGEN team will have the opportunity to apply for an alliance-level grant. That could involve partnering with other NSF INCLUDES grant recipients on a much larger, longer-term project.

Posselt said she enjoys working with physicists as a community of scholars. “Physicists care about precision in ways that social scientists do not always,” she says. “There’s elegance in the way they communicate their ideas. They care very much about fundamentals. I appreciate that.” —R

Improving Math Placement in Community Colleges



USC Rossier Professor Tatiana Melguizo (above) is helping community colleges overcome a major roadblock to the equitable assessment and placement of its math students.

“Students have often been placed in courses that were two or three levels below the ones they mastered in tests during high school,” she says.

Despite the existence of increasingly rich and detailed high school transcript data, community colleges have not been using it, relying mostly on commercially developed tests and students’ self-reported data. Over the past five years, Melguizo and Frederick Ngo PhD ’17 have helped foster a partnership between the Los Angeles Community College District and the Los Angeles Unified School District that is uniting data from diagnostic tests with information from high school transcripts.

They are also studying how faculty are using the information to deliver targeted math instruction, and how useful such information is.

“You can’t change assessment and placement policies without also changing what is happening pedagogically in the classroom,” she adds.

Melguizo says they’re helping faculty create profiles of students in order to recognize areas where students struggle, and to assist in a potential curricular redesign that would better serve students.

— Matthew C. Stevens

Hire Education

Center for Urban Education helps California Lutheran University overcome barriers to racial equity in its faculty hiring practices —

By Dan Gordon



Paloma Vargas (above left) is an assistant professor of biology and the Hispanic Serving Institute coordinator at California Lutheran University, working with a student on her summer research project.

On the surface, the polite, collegial atmosphere that prevails at the typical university campus seems laudable. But faculty members from racially minoritized groups regularly experience discrimination, much of it subtle. Colleagues might notice such micro-aggressions but hesitate to act, since no one wants to confront the offender for fear of making waves. That silence too often extends to victims of discrimination, who prefer to dismiss the offense out of fear of repercussions should they upend the “culture of niceness” in the workplace. The outcome? The politeness of well-intentioned faculty and administrators becomes toxic, preventing the type of open dialogue that is vital to ensuring equity.

As members of California Lutheran University’s faculty and leadership began to look inward in an effort to determine why they were having trouble recruiting, hiring and retaining black, Latina/o and Native American faculty, they came to view their own culture of niceness as part of the problem. “I’m not sure if it is risky” to speak up, one longtime faculty member reported, “but people feel like it is.” A more recent faculty hire determined that it was risky to be outspoken prior to receiving tenure, so she would “smile and nod” rather than risk confrontation.

Cal Lutheran is a private liberal arts institution affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Located in Thousand Oaks, Calif., approximately 50 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, it boasts an increasingly diverse student population. More than half of the incoming freshmen in 2016–17 were from racially minoritized groups. Cal Lutheran recently became a Hispanic Serving Institution, a federal designation for accredited universities with an

undergraduate population that is at least 25 percent Latino, a significant proportion of them low-income and first-generation college students. But efforts to recruit a faculty reflective of that diversity were falling short. And now, through a process of self-examination facilitated by USC's Center for Urban Education (CUE), it was becoming clear that the polite atmosphere was inhibiting honest conversations.

CHANGE FROM WITHIN

"This great culture in which everyone is nice to everyone else can also make it hard to speak up when things need to be pointed out," says Leanne Neilson, Cal Lutheran's provost and vice president for academic affairs. "Certainly we want to maintain respect for each other, but we also want to be able to have those difficult dialogues."

Many institutions of higher learning struggle to recruit a racially diverse faculty. But Cal Lutheran has distinguished itself by aggressively setting out to identify problems with its processes and take proactive steps to change, with guidance from the USC Rossier-based center. The efforts have already begun to pay off: During the 2016-17 academic year, Cal Lutheran filled 11 faculty and one dean position; two-thirds of the hires were people of color, including two Latino/as, two blacks and three Asians in addition to a Latina hired as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

CUE has become a national leader in helping two- and four-year colleges and universities close the gaps that adversely affect historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Its Equity Scorecard has been adopted by more than 100 educational institutions, including the University of Wisconsin System, Pennsylvania State Higher Education System, the Nevada System of Higher Education and the Colorado Community College System.

CUE puts the onus on institutions, rather than on students. Rather than seeking a one-time workshop, Cal Lutheran welcomed the process of learning and change by becoming "researchers" of their own practices and discovering, with CUE's guidance, the myriad ways in which their practices were more likely to result in white hires.

"Our method works because the faculty change themselves," says Estela Mara Bensimon, professor of higher education and the founder and director of CUE. "By changing their conceptual frameworks, faculty and administrators are actively disrupting familiar hiring routines and uncovering the harmful effects of invisible forms of racism."

Neilson embraced the model. "Instead of just interviewing us, giving a report on what we needed to change and then walking away, CUE worked with us for a full year to help us reach our own conclusions," she says.

The process began in January 2016 with the formation of an "evidence team"



that included 18 faculty members from across the Cal Lutheran campus, as well as the provost and a dean. In a series of meetings, the team systematically reviewed each step in the recruiting and hiring process through a lens of how it could be more welcoming to faculty of color.

In one exercise, the team created a chart that included one quadrant for listing all of the ways Cal Lutheran is attempting to retain black, Latina/o and Native American faculty. By the end of the session, the quadrant remained blank, exposing an unspoken truth. The stark awareness turned into a catalyst that motivated the group to own the problem and begin discussing ways to address it.

Edlyn Peña MEd '04, PhD '07 calls this a "moment of cognitive dissonance," when faculty are confronted with a truth that they didn't even know existed. Peña is an associate professor of higher education leadership at Cal Lutheran and the co-director of the Autism and Communication Center. She earned her doctorate from USC Rossier under the guidance of Bensimon and has been

a faculty member at Cal Lutheran for nine years.

Despite her longtime awareness of equity-minded practices, she has felt the false sense of safety of Cal Lutheran's "culture of niceness."

"While I had been examining issues around race and equity since I studied at Rossier and worked at CUE," says Peña, "these conversations were just now emerging at Cal Lutheran and they wouldn't be easy."

EQUITY ADVOCATES

"The lack of faculty diversity is a challenge across the nation," says Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux PhD '08, associate director for research and policy at CUE. "When you bring it up with institutions you will often hear, 'We try, but the candidates aren't there.' But if you look at the data, that's not the case." While blacks, Latinos and Native Americans continue to be underrepresented among doctorate earners in some disciplines, such as physics or computer science, their representation in the fields of education, social science and the humanities is strong. Nonetheless, their percentages among faculty fall far below their representation among doctoral degree holders.

"We see being more equity-minded in hiring practices as an issue of learning," says Malcom-Piqueux, "so we engaged the Cal Lutheran evidence team members in a process to study their own practices in a way that would help them gain insights that would lead to better results."

By "equity-minded," Malcom-Piqueux is referring to the awareness of how race circulates through routine practices such as hiring. Leaders might espouse diversity as a desirable outcome in the abstract but their actions and procedures will remain unchanged unless they adopt an equity-minded practice.

As part of that learning process, CUE experts discussed how implicit bias often hinders the efforts of an otherwise well-intentioned institution to promote equity by reinforcing the status quo. For example, if a largely white faculty is recruiting in part by word of mouth, their networks might not be diverse. If members of the search committee evaluate candidates based on traditional criteria, they might

undervalue a scholar of color who uses a critical race theory framework or other alternative methodology. And if the institution isn't stressing its commitment to embracing diversity in its job announcements and through its interviews, it might send the wrong signal to candidates from minoritized groups.

To counteract these tendencies, each faculty member on the evidence team was trained by CUE to be an equity advocate, and now each faculty search committee must include at least one equity advocate with full voting power to make sure the process is aligned with Cal Lutheran's new standards. Search committee members are trained in implicit bias before proceeding with their recruitment and must document each step of the process to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to identify a diverse pool of candidates.

CUE's analysis of Cal Lutheran's search guidelines revealed several opportunities for improvement. Evidence team members reflected on where job openings were posted and how they could branch out beyond existing networks. They also revisited job announcements. "They were written in a very conventional style," Malcom-Piqueux says. "There was nothing about Cal Lutheran being a Hispanic Serving Institution and that it valued faculty who engaged in culturally relevant approaches, or who could teach and mentor first-generation college students and students of color."

To demonstrate how the job announcements could be different, CUE staff wrote a sample for the evidence team to use as models — part of a toolkit that also included sample interview questions and evaluation rubrics. "The faculty liked that, because it was a practical approach," says Román Liera, a Rossier PhD candidate and CUE research assistant who took the lead in creating these tools. Whereas job announcements were once left largely to the individual departments, the revamped wording is now part of a template incorporated into every listing.

While the "culture of niceness" initially inhibited some faculty, the commitment of Cal Lutheran's leadership to confronting difficult issues and making sure all faculty felt comfortable voicing their concerns

led to more frank discussions. "Once a level of trust was established, the faculty of color began to share their experiences and it was educational for their colleagues, not only for recruitment but for improving the transition to faculty life at Cal Lutheran," Liera says.

Evidence team members were also given strategies for engaging their colleagues in the issues being discussed, and for counteracting any instances of implicit bias they saw, a practice Peña embraced.

"I always had the commitment to equity," Peña says, "but I didn't always know how to enact it because there wasn't a policy or structure in place to back me up."

The administration sent strong signals across the campus that the institution was prioritizing diversity and equity, including the provost's willingness to restart faculty searches that weren't yielding a diverse short list.

"I felt empowered to speak up and be an institutional agent of change rather than a lone voice on a committee," Peña says.

"Consistent with CUE's theory of change," Bensimon says, "we created inquiry tools to enable the provost and the 18 faculty members on the evidence team to see for themselves that their practices, as well as their ways of thinking about the problem, were flawed."

"Cal Lutheran deserves a great deal of credit," Malcom-Piqueux adds. "They came to the experience ready to do the hard work in figuring out what they needed to do differently. It was clear from the outset that they were willing to put resources, time and energy behind making real changes."

FACULTY-DRIVEN

Neilson believes a key to the initiative's success is that it was driven not just by the administration's goals, but also by the faculty's desires. "If you want to get buy-in for developing a campus culture that's more equitable, it has to come from both administration and faculty," she says.

The transformation from a culture of niceness to one in which issues of equity and inclusion are discussed openly and honestly began early at the evidence team meetings. "We would be called out by the CUE group when someone would

"We see being more equity-minded in hiring practices as an issue of learning."

— Lindsey Malcolm-Piqueux, associate director of CUE

say something that was clearly tip-toeing around an issue, and they helped us reframe the way we spoke to each other so that we weren't shoving things under the carpet," Neilson says. "In our society, a lot of us were taught from a young age that we need to be colorblind, but that colorblindness often got translated to color-muteness, where you don't want to talk about it at all."

Now that Cal Lutheran's leadership has consciously challenged that culture, she has seen a change. "Faculty are much more comfortable making waves, because they realize that it is necessary to ensure that we have a climate that all faculty members and all students can feel comfortable in."

In its mission statement, Cal Lutheran describes its aim "to educate leaders for a global society." Neilson sees the university's work with CUE as an essential step in fulfilling that goal. "To educate leaders for a global society we need to be able to present varying viewpoints," she says. "We need black, Latino and Native American faculty who can mentor our underrepresented students, and we also need white students to see faculty from underrepresented groups leading the classes. We're making these changes because this is what is best for our institution."

Meanwhile, Peña is now a chair of a faculty search committee for the first time since undergoing this one-year training.

"If I hadn't gone through this process, I don't think I would have felt as empowered as I do now," she says. "Now I can bring that lens and perspective with me as chair of the search committee. Not only that, I have a procedure and document endorsed by the provost and the president as I start to bring candidates onto campus." —R

EXPANDING THE EQUITY UNIVERSE

CUE Associate Director Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux
is changing the world she left behind —



Approximately 15 years have passed since Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux PhD '08 posed for a picture with all of the graduate students in the Caltech Department of Planetary Sciences. But her memory of that seemingly innocuous event remains vivid and is part of what drives her current work as associate director for research and policy in the USC Rossier-based Center for Urban Education (CUE).

"I was the only minority from a historically underrepresented group in that photo," recalls Malcom-Piqueux. "I didn't have anyone I could relate to, and I felt like a token."

Malcom-Piqueux certainly deserved her spot in the prestigious program. The daughter of scientists, she had earned a bachelor's degree in geological and planetary sciences at MIT before beginning the doctoral program at Caltech with the intention of getting her PhD and then pursuing a career in research and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education.

But she never felt like she belonged. "It was an isolating experience," she says. "There were very few faculty of color across the institution, and none in my department, and it's hard not to have role models from a similar background who have succeeded. It was also difficult to connect with my peers. There were challenges I faced and experiences I had as a black woman that they couldn't relate to." It didn't help that Malcom-Piqueux was asked by campus police to show her ID when other students weren't, or that she alone was questioned about what she was doing in the lab on a weekend.

A desire to better understand and address the experiences of other students of color in STEM fields led to Malcom-Piqueux's

decision to leave Caltech with her master's degree and get her PhD in education. After reading about CUE, she knew USC Rossier was the ideal program for her. Malcom-Piqueux worked as a CUE research assistant from 2004 to 2008, the year she completed her doctorate. She remained involved with the center even after leaving USC for faculty positions at UC Riverside and George Washington University before returning to USC Rossier in 2015 as a research associate professor and CUE associate director.

While still at Caltech, Malcom-Piqueux had approached a faculty adviser about her feelings of isolation. "He told me science is science, that race didn't have anything to do with it," she says. "At the time I knew that was wrong but didn't know how to explain why it did matter." After more than a decade of scholarship and practice on issues related to diversity and equity in STEM education, Malcom-Piqueux can articulate the challenges, and tackling them in her position at CUE is right where she wants to be. — *Dan Gordon*

To watch a video about Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux, go to rossier.usc.edu/magazine/LindseyMalcomPiqueux

Equity Runs Through It

By Matthew Kredell

A new report from the Pullias Center
explores the keys to success for retaining STEM
majors at Cal State campuses —



Maribel Perez-Espinal, a biology major at Humboldt State University, deepened her passion for science through a summer program at the Klamath River.

PHOTO BY KELLIE JO BROWN, HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

Maribel Perez-Espinal felt out of place when she arrived at Humboldt State University, the most remote college in the Cal State system. Everyone she met in her first weeks on campus was nice and inviting, but they didn't look like her.

Many first-generation college students struggle to find a sense of belonging at their universities, and administrators at Humboldt understood this issue was intensified by the culture shock students from urban areas have in coming to the northernmost part of the state, among the redwood forests.

Latino enrollment at the university has doubled over the past 20 years, but the surrounding county is still 80 percent white. Perez-Espinal came from Stockton, Calif., where 40 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino.

As part of the CSU STEM Collaboratives project, Humboldt sought to help students such as Perez-Espinal feel a connection to the region through a place-based theme designed around the Klamath River, the state's second-longest river, which runs through Humboldt County on its way from Oregon to the Pacific Ocean.

"The Klamath Connection program connected us to the land, the people and the surroundings here at Humboldt," says Perez-Espinal, who is entering her junior year majoring in biology with the ultimate goal of becoming a neurosurgeon. "It's a connection so deep that I would say it will be hard to leave once my time is up here as a student."

The STEM Collaboratives is the first CSU program to connect existing interventions into an integrated approach, incorporating both curricular innovation and out-of-class support for first-year STEM students on a large scale.

The Pullias Center for Higher Education at USC Rossier ran a three-year evaluation of the project, completing a final report in August.

"At the Pullias Center, we're always looking for systemic, scalable solutions," says Professor Adrianna Kezar, co-director of the center and principal investigator of the project. "CSU is the nation's largest four-year public university system. For the Pullias Center's commitment to study innovative and scalable approaches to supporting first-generation, low-income, student access, transition and success, CSU is where programs can have the greatest impact."

WHAT IS THE CSU STEM COLLABORATIVES?

Funded by a \$4.6 million grant from the Helmsley Charitable Trust and coordinated through the CSU Chancellor's office, CSU STEM Collaboratives tasked eight universities to link at least three high-impact practices and create an integrated environment of support for STEM students in their first year.

Transition from high school to college can be extremely challenging, especially for students of color, first-generation college students or any students who did not receive adequate academic preparation in high school. Introductory courses in STEM fields tend to be structured to weed out students rather

than compensate for this lack of preparation.

Nationally, 46 percent of white and Asian students majoring in STEM complete a degree in six years, compared to less than one-third of Latino students and about 20 percent of African-American students. Despite decades of focus and effort invested into fixing this problem, attrition from STEM majors remains high, especially during and after the first year.

Each participating campus implemented a summer bridge experience for incoming freshmen, a first-year experience or seminar and redesigned introductory STEM courses.

Another key part of the effort was bridging the traditional divides between student affairs staff and faculty members to have everyone working toward rethinking the ways in which they support first-generation students as they transition to college.

At Humboldt, faculty got excited about interdisciplinary and field-based research that incorporated real-world problems,

"At the Pullias Center, we're always looking for systemic, scalable solutions."

—Adrianna Kezar, professor and co-director of the Pullias Center

staff resonated with the idea of working with the community and parents liked the idea of classes guaranteed to count for students' majors.

"The intention was that if we want students to succeed, we need to start looking at underlying structures and having faculty and staff collaborate can make a much bigger impact than having several isolated programs," Kezar says.

USC'S ROLE

The CSU administrators secured the services of Kezar and the Pullias Center to conduct a study to help them understand whether the program worked and how it was supporting student success.

Kezar and research assistant Elizabeth Holcombe, who is pursuing her PhD in urban education policy with a focus in higher education at USC Rossier, conducted the analysis with a multi-method case study approach.

They collected data through surveys and document analysis, observed project meetings, and visited each campus to hold interviews and focus groups with students, faculty, staff and administrators.

"Adrianna and Elizabeth were really supportive and seemed to be excited about our particular model," says Professor Matthew Johnson, co-director of Klamath Connection at Humboldt. "Adrianna has so much experience with institutional change, she is able to offer advice on

strategies for engaging students and marshaling support from faculty and staff.”

TWO VERY DIFFERENT MODELS OF SUCCESS

The 68-page final report produced by the Pullias Center reviews all eight campuses but highlights the varied paths to success taken by two campuses: Humboldt and Cal State University, Dominguez Hills.

Humboldt began with a summer excursion to the Klamath River Basin to show students some of the social, cultural and economic challenges of the region — as well as its beauty — providing an early geographic and cultural connection to their new home. Courses were modified to include components related to the Klamath Connection theme, as was a one-credit first-year seminar, making the first-year curriculum more engaging to students.

“We wanted students to see how what they’re learning relates to a place, and hopefully draw some parallels for them



Students at Cal State Dominguez Hills take part in FUSE, the First-Year Undergraduate STEM Experience.

to compare to their communities back home,” Johnson says.

The overall retention rate for Klamath Connection students at Humboldt increased by 12 percent, the highest improvement among the participating campuses.

While Humboldt has a community of students living on campus, most Dominguez Hills students do not live on or near campus. It’s an urban, commuter school with many students living complicated lives, including students in their 30s who are often juggling school with a job and family.

The study lauds Dominguez Hills for the adjustments made to overcome implementation barriers in the initial year of its First-Year Undergraduate STEM Experience (FUSE) program, recognizing that working students may benefit from a shorter summer program and more interventions in their classes.

One such intervention was the addition of supplemental instructors. “Having a supplemental instructor helped a lot in class,” says Martin Vera, a sophomore computer science major at Dominguez Hills. “The FUSE events also helped with

transitioning to college. I wasn’t the most talkative student, so having the events helped me make some friends.”

It took collaboration in the second year to overhaul the program with better integrated processes to account for the varying levels of academic preparation and the commuting nature of their students.

“Students have a lot of busy days,” says Professor Matthew Jones, associate director of the Center for Innovation in STEM Education at Dominguez Hills. “To plan something outside classroom hours, it was hard to get students to come to that initially. We redesigned the program to integrate it into their math class.”

The success is apparent in the data: Students in the redesigned precalculus course are passing at nearly double the rate of students in non-redesigned sections.

Both Humboldt and Dominguez Hills block-enrolled summer participants in cohorts to address the negative climate researchers have identified in introductory STEM courses characterized by a sense of competition rather than community.

The report asserted that this strong cohort experience was evident at Humboldt, as numerous faculty and staff commented on the Klamath Connection students “traveling in herds” and always spending time together. One student at Dominguez Hills noted “a lot of community within STEM majors” from taking summer and fall courses with the same group of peers.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Pullias Center study’s main takeaway is that the specific interventions matter less than the integration of academics and student affairs. There is little evidence that the three specific interventions used are necessary for STEM students’ success.

Rather, the value of the program came from integrating these interventions to create a cohesive educational experience for first-year STEM students and from the unified community of support that resulted.

“No matter which high-impact practice they are using, students are getting an integrated experience to make connections across different elements of the college experience and build relationships with faculty, staff and other students,” Holcombe says. “Everyone is working toward the goal of supporting these students. That’s more important than implementing a first-year experience or a summer bridge program. Those are vehicles to get to the larger goal.”

In order to make a significant difference in the persistence and graduation rates of first-generation, low-income students in STEM, the report recommended bridging the divide between academic and student affairs, altering institutional policies and practices that work against collaboration, rethinking workload and reward policies for faculty and staff to support collaboration, facilitating faculty involvement in STEM success initiatives, tapping into programs on campus that already work with STEM or first-generation issues and using data to inform program design and redesign.

“It is our hope that the lessons in this report will inform stakeholders at other institutions and organizations interested



The overall retention rate for Klamath Connection students increased by 12 percent, the highest improvement among participating Cal State campuses.

in collaborating across departmental and unit boundaries to rethink the ways in which they support first-year students in STEM,” Kezar says. “Especially students from traditionally underserved backgrounds.”

Many of the Cal State universities — including Humboldt and Dominguez Hills — are using evidence of their programs’ success to help them to continue the efforts they began under the CSU STEM Collaboratives project.

Johnson notes that the study “helped the administration

recognize that growing the program was helpful not only to students but also to the campus at large.”

“We seem well poised to expand this place-based learning community model to be available to all incoming science students at Humboldt State,” Johnson adds. “It was huge to have these data and to show campus and other external funders that this idea is worth pursuing.” — **R**

To read the full report, go to rossier.usc.edu/pullias-stem-report

UNDERSTANDING PERSISTENCE

Six-year study will show what it takes for first-generation, low-income students to succeed in college —



Adrianna Kezar, professor of education and co-director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education

As work on the CSU STEM Collaboratives study comes to an end, the Pullias Center for Higher Education is engrossed in another analysis of a program aiming to support access and success for a similar population of first-generation, low-income students.

The Thompson Scholars Learning Community (TSLC) is a living/learning community for students who are awarded the Susan Thompson Buffett Scholarship across three University of Nebraska campuses. In addition to grouping the scholarship recipients in courses, the program offers social support programs such as mentoring.

What's different about this study is its length — six years supported by the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation — and that it goes beyond measuring traditional academic outcomes to examine psychosocial outcomes that have been associated with student persistence such as self-efficacy, resiliency, mattering and a sense of belonging.

“This study is long-term and methodologically rigorous: few studies in higher education have been able to track students both quantitatively and qualitatively in a longitudinal fashion,” says Professor Adrianna Kezar, who is serving as the project's principal investigator. “Very few studies have the resources to follow students so long. We're excited about the potential to come up with some really novel insights.”

Working alongside Kezar on the study are Rossier professors Darnell Cole and Tatiana Melguizo. After six months of planning, the investigators began following the TSLC 2015 freshmen cohorts at all three schools. They will continue collecting quantitative survey data on the 2015 group for five years, while also following the 2016 freshmen for four years. They will also be following a subset of students qualitatively through digital diaries.

The Pullias Center recently completed its report on the analysis of data collected between July 2016 and June 2017, the second year of the TSLC study. Cole notes that the most surprising discovery thus far is that the survey data shows that sense of belonging isn't the most relevant psychosocial outcome, as was the assumption for a program that was designed to create a community where students feel they belong and can engage academically.

“After one year of analysis, we have found that the concept of mattering — that people value your impact and want you to do well — is more relevant than a sense of belonging at this point,” Cole says.

Using a longitudinal mixed-methods research design, the Pullias Center is seeking to identify which components of the program are most effective in developing psychosocial outcomes that contribute to academic success. Qualitative data is used to identify how program practices — such as interactions between students, program staff and faculty — contribute to psychosocial and academic outcomes.

“The rigorous mixed-methods design used in this study will enable us to learn not only whether the program was effective but also provide a nuanced understanding of the components that made it effective,” Melguizo says.

The Pullias Center is already working on an analysis of year three. The research will inform the broader field of scholarly study of higher education, learning communities and low-income college student success. It also will support evidence-based decision-making for the Buffett Scholarship program and will help partners at the University of Nebraska and colleges across the country to design their programs for maximum effectiveness.

— *Matthew Kredell*

Q+A

Cheryl Ching

PhD alumna Cheryl Ching breaks down a definition of equity —

Cheryl Ching PhD '17, who completed her dissertation on constructing and enacting equity at a community college, is recipient of the 2017 Bobby Wright Dissertation of the Year Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Throughout her graduate studies, she worked at the Center for Urban Education (CUE), and she has returned to the center this year as a postdoctoral fellow and research associate. Her work is being supported by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

We spoke to her about the meaning of equity in her research.

Why is equity such a challenging term?

For me, equity falls into the same bucket as “democracy” or “love.” My dissertation examines how a college defines what equity means. The faculty and administrators I interviewed each had their own way of expressing what equity means to them. With all of these individual expressions of equity, imagine the challenges this college and others can have with agreeing on an organizational definition. By the end of my data collection, practitioners at my research site still had trouble articulating the meaning of equity for their college.

The thing is, as I worked on piecing together the story, I found that despite the feeling of uncertainty around the college’s definition of equity, in fact, they were constructing a meaning, in part through the actions of campus leaders and faculty. So, even without an explicit document or plan that clearly stated a shared definition of equity, the college had one.

Much of CUE’s work revolves around “equity-mindedness,” which is about approaching inequalities in educational outcomes for students of color from a perspective of race, agency and change. Was equity-mindedness apparent at your research site?

I found that this college adhered closely to one facet of equity-mindedness, which is that practitioners are responsible for



their students’ learning, experiences and outcomes. The leaders continually expressed that they cannot control many of the factors that impact their students — income issues, housing instability, food security — but there are many other things they can control, and they were going to take responsibility for those things.

Were there ways in which they didn’t adhere to equity-mindedness?

For CUE, race and race-consciousness are fundamental aspects of equity mindedness. At this college, while there was a consciousness of race, equity-mindedness was sometimes used in a race-blind matter. I heard on several occasions how being equity-minded is about serving all students, not just students of color.

Why is race fundamental to equity-minded thinking?

All too often, talk about students is in the aggregate. “Our students are engaged.” “Our students are learning.” “Our students are not learning.” But CUE tries to disrupt that thinking by asking, “Who are you talking about when you say ‘students’? Who do you imagine when you say ‘students’? When you say that your teaching works for students, which students are we actually talking about?”

In particular, CUE tries to get practitioners to think about whether and how teaching, advising and other practices work for African-Americans, Latinx and other racially minoritized students since many higher education practices were not designed for their benefit. So the question becomes, how does a practice work for an African-American student, a Latinx student?

What is CUE doing to ensure that practitioners develop equity-mindedness in the way you described?

We’re starting to think about equity-mindedness as a “competency,” and to break it down into its component parts. What is the knowledge that practitioners need to have to be equity-minded? What are the skills that they need to develop? What are the behaviors that they need to enact? What are the kinds of belief changes that need to happen in order for this concept to be real? These are the questions we are asking, and with any luck, the answers will help us refine our tools and our approach with campuses. —R

Faculty in Residence at New USC Village



USC Rossier faculty members **Ruth Chung** and **John Pascarella** joined four other USC faculty in residence at the newly opened USC Village this August. The USC Village includes eight new residential colleges, bringing USC's total to 14. Chung and Pascarella are charged with supporting the needs of the colleges' students by hosting programming, providing support and fostering a strong living-learning community. Chung works with students at Cale Residential College and Irani Residential College. "The value of a USC education is something I think we're trying to emphasize," she says, "and that includes excellence not only in teaching but in the residential college connection." Pascarella, who had previously served South Residential College, is now living at McCarthy Honors College. "We want to draw from students' diverse backgrounds, to expose them to growth opportunities they're not going to get in class," Pascarella says. "We want to connect students with alumni and cultivate a commitment to service, which aligns with our mission as a university."

Sumun L. Pendakur Joins the USC Race and Equity Center



Sumun L. Pendakur EdD '10 has returned to USC Rossier to serve as the first chief learning officer for the USC Race and Equity Center. In this position, Pendakur will lead several of the center's signature activities, including the USC Equity Institutes, the USC Equity Summit Series and the Executive Education Experiences. "I am excited to come together with center colleagues, faculty affiliates and other partners in service of a vision of racial equity and liberation," Pendakur says.

New Board of Councilors Member

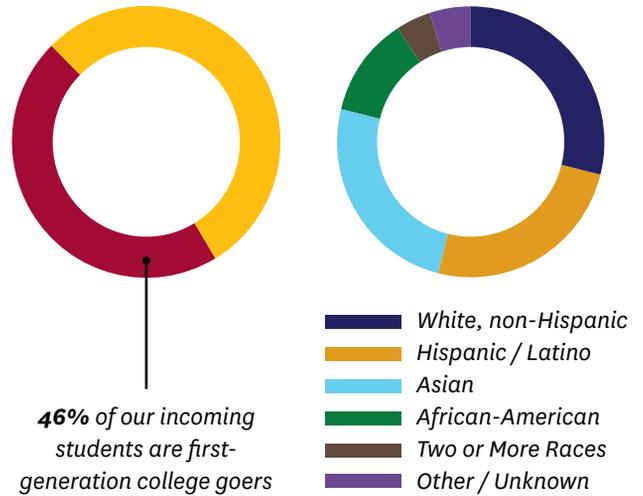
Noor Menai, president and CEO of CTBC Bank USA, has joined USC Rossier School of Education's board of councilors for a three-year term. Menai, who has directed significant support from CTBC to Rossier's USC College Advising Corps, brings decades of banking, finance and international trade experience to his position on the board. "I am honored to join the board of councilors at USC Rossier," said Menai. "Better education results in a greater society and stronger workforce; and Rossier makes an extraordinary difference with that foundation."



USC Rossier Launches Three Research Centers

- 1 **The Center for Empowered Learning and Development with Technology** will be led by Associate Professor of Education and Psychology Brendesha Tynes. Provost Postdoctoral Scholar for Faculty Diversity in Informatics and Digital Knowledge Stephen J. Aguilar will be the center’s associate director. Using a multi-disciplinary approach that promotes equity in digital learning and development, the center examines the intersections between students’ histories, cultural assets and developmental needs.
- 2 Under the direction of Professor of Education and Engineering John Slaughter and Professor of Clinical Education and Engineering Anthony Maddox, the **Center for Engineering in Education** is dedicated to mining the vast array of engineering techniques, ideas and practices to enhance learning across all disciplines.
- 3 **The Center on Education Policy, Equity and Governance** brings together K-12 Education Policy faculty members Patricia Burch, Julie Marsh, Larry Picus, Morgan Polikoff and David Quinn to examine policies designed to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for historically disadvantaged groups. The center also will train the next generation of researchers dedicated to impacting education policy and practice.

Fall 2017 Entering Class



ASHE to Recognize USC Rossier Faculty



The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) will present two USC Rossier faculty members with prestigious awards at its annual conference in November. Professor of Education Adrianna Kezar (top) will receive the ASHE Research Achievement Award for published research that advances the understanding of higher education in a significant way. And Assistant Professor of Education Julie Posselt (bottom) will be honored with the Early Career Award, which recognizes a scholars who are no more than six years beyond receipt of the doctoral degree.

Honor Roll 2016–2017

Thank you to all of our donors who generously supported the USC Rossier School of Education during fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016–June 30, 2017). Your gifts play an essential role in supporting student scholarships, programs and faculty research.

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Margaret "Maggie" Chidester EdD '95 (center) received the Widney Alumni House Award in September at the 2017 Volunteer Recognition Dinner. With her are Patrick Auerbach EdD '08, associate senior vice president for Alumni Relations, and Jamie Lee, president, USC Alumni Association Board of Governors. Maggie was recognized for her 17 years of service to the USC Rossier Board of Councilors.



Paying It Forward

Dean Karen Symms Gallagher and Professor Pat Gallagher invest in USC Rossier students —

By Stephen Lucasi



Scholarship students Toni Richardson and Jake Roth share a common vision with Dean Karen Symms Gallagher and Professor Pat Gallagher.

When Karen Beatty and Pat Gallagher met as undergrads at their work-study jobs at Western Washington University, neither aspired to be an educator. Karen, now the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of USC Rossier, wanted to be a lawyer, while Pat, now a professor of clinical education, was majoring in physical sciences and biology.

“There are always those people who know from childhood that they want to be teachers,” Karen says. “But there are many others like us who don’t start pursuing a teaching career until their late 20s or early 30s, when they also face a greater burden in financing their education.”

Karen, who was first in her family to attend college, and Pat recognize the important role scholarship support played in allowing them to pursue careers in education. It helped them immerse themselves in their studies and move into a new field without amassing huge debt. So, when they started giving back to Western Washington, they designated their gifts to scholarships for students who, like themselves, were transitioning from their first careers to pursuing their passion for teaching.



Karen Symms Gallagher and Pat Gallagher

The Gallaghers also have been giving quietly and generously to support scholarships at USC Rossier, inspired by the talent, diversity and great potential of the students. “I have yet to meet a student who is going into teacher education without a strong commitment to being here,” says Pat. “They are smart, articulate, eager, excited to be in the

program, and they’re going to be really terrific teachers.”

This commitment can be found among students across all Rossier programs.

“They want to be leaders,” adds Karen. “And they want to make a real difference.”

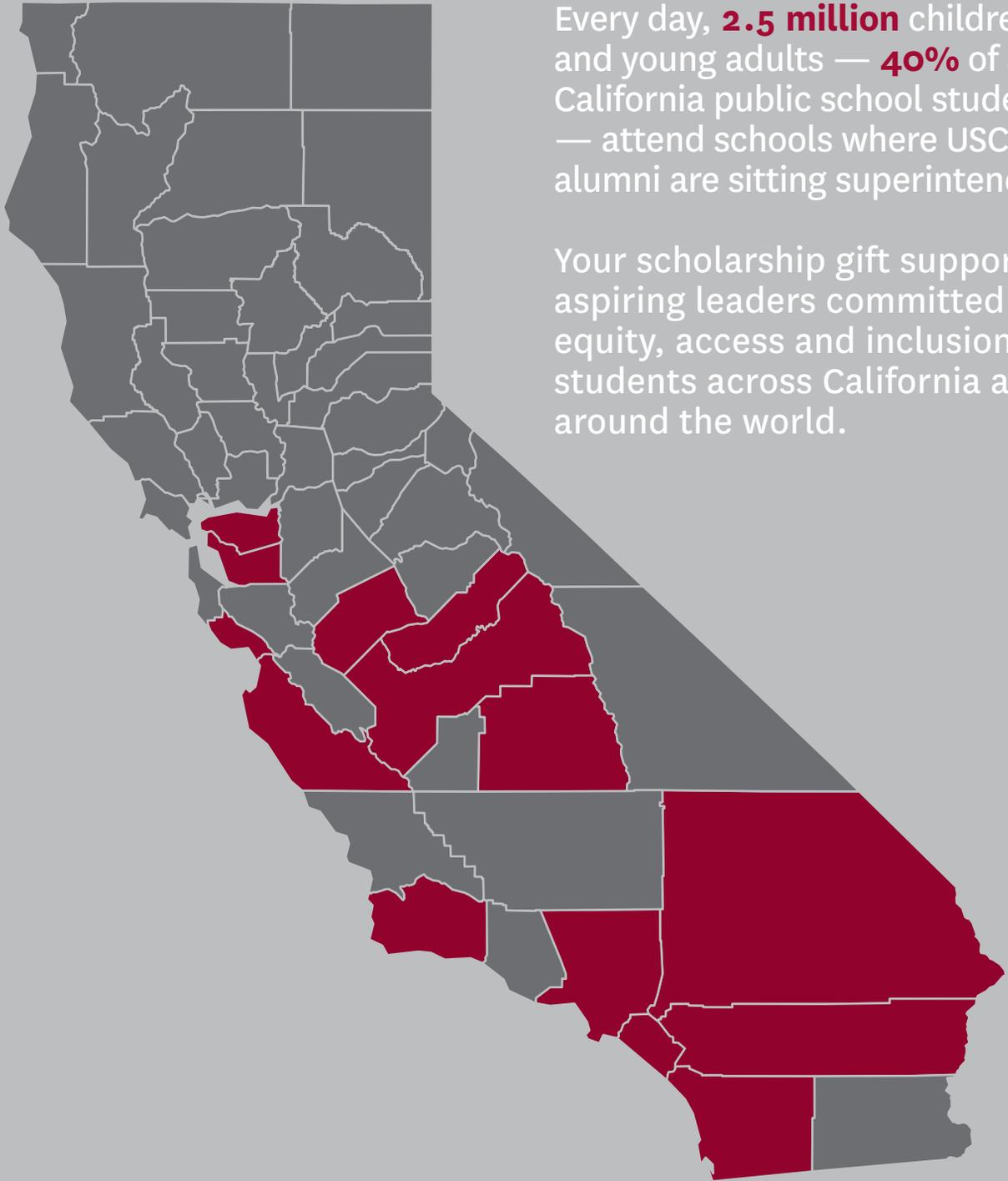
Toni Richardson is one of many Rossier scholarship recipients who is guided by a desire to help students achieve and succeed. A second-year student in the Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs program, Richardson works as a success coach at Pasadena City College, where she provides mentorship and guidance to student athletes, monitors their academic progress and helps them familiarize themselves with resources available on campus and beyond. It’s all part of what she calls a “will to serve” that she shares with many of her Rossier classmates. “I want to be a dean of student affairs someday,” she says. “But my motivation is not financial. It’s because I want to be of service to people seeking an education.”

After two years of teaching in Boston and Los Angeles, Jake Roth, an incoming Master of Arts in Teaching student, has come to Rossier to improve his craft and learn the tools of a master teacher.

To Roth, this training is the most tangible way for him to help reduce educational inequities and turn around struggling urban schools like the ones he attended and taught in. “My goal is to be a staple in an urban school,” he says. “I want to really make an impact in one setting, where I can be consistent, become a part of the community, and really see students grow.”

It is this same opportunity to see future educators learn, grow and impact their communities that has inspired the Gallaghers to invest in scholarships for Rossier students. “We like to know that our giving is making a difference,” Karen says. “As educators, we get to touch the future through the people that we prepare at Rossier. And they go off and extend Rossier’s vision to the community and to the world.” —R

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The USC College Advising Corps, a program founded and overseen by the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice, now has 46 advisers serving in high schools throughout Southern California. Last year, the advisers, who are all first-generation college graduates, met with 9,195 students, resulting in 14,269 college acceptances.