Brendesha Tynes on the digital equity gap p. 18
Tracy Poon Tambascia on combating anti-Asian racism p. 11
Do police belong in schools? p. 20
How districts led by Rossier alums moved K-12 online p. 29
Dear Friends,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fight On!

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

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

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

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

Kianoosh Hashemzadeh, Editor
WILL THE SHIFT TO ONLINE LEARNING CHANGE HOW WE TEACH?

By Kianoush Hashemzadeh

How schools should teach in a pandemic, according to research

By Ross Breneman

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

In an open letter, crafted by 26 education scholars and signed to date by nearly 500 others, the researchers offer recommendations about how to make sure students feel cared for and engaged. The letter is aimed at the federal and state governments as well as local school and district administrators.

“Knowing the inequities exacerbated by this pandemic and the need to attend to students who are historically underserved and marginalized, I believed the research community needed to weigh in,” says USC Rossier Professor of Education Policy Julie A. Marsh, one of the authors of the letter. “We know the resources and supports that are essential for educators, students and parents during this difficult time.”

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

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

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

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNER

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

How colleges should partner with USC Race and Equity Center to battle racism

By Ross Breneman

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

The California Community College Equity Leadership Alliance will use a three-pronged approach to help administrators and faculty leaders learn how to better address the concerns of students and employees of color, who have long cited the persistence of racist policies and attitudes within their institutions.

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

“Merely proclaiming in written statements that Black Lives Matter is insufficient,” says USC Rossier Professor Shawn Harper, who leads the USC Race and Equity Center and created the Alliance. “I am grateful to the presidents who responded favorably to my invitation to take serious, strategic action to dismantle systemic racism, address longstanding racial-climate problems and eliminate racial inequities on their campuses.”

To date, 60 community colleges, including all nine in the Los Angeles Community College District, have joined the Alliance. California’s community colleges are responsible for the education of more than 1.2 million students each year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

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

“Tremendous strategy, in terms of the level of leadership involvement here and the people who have been involved,” said Compton College President Keith Curry. “I am convinced it is a model that people are going to want to follow.”

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

THE AUTHORS’ SEVEN MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Provide substantial additional resources to prevent looming school budget cuts
2. Implement universal internet and computer access
3. Target resources to those most in need
4. Provide the most personalized and engaging instruction possible under the circumstances, even when it is necessary to be online
5. Address the learning losses created by the crisis by expanding instructional time in ways that challenge, support and engage students
6. Offer tailored, integrated support to each child in order to address social-emotional, physical health and family well-being
7. Make decisions about teachers that support pedagogical quality and equity
An Equitable Restart: Back to School, Not to Normal

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

WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO

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

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

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

Hitte was a first-generation college student and one of only 40 Black students at Claremont McKenna. He attended a private, predominantly White high school, and at Claremont McKenna, he found himself again “trying to fit in by not finding community among other Black folks.”

He was also one of the few students on financial aid. As his peers planned exciting spring break trips, he would either return to Detroit or stay on campus. “It really hit home for me just how low-income I felt on a college campus,” he says. Following his passion for compelling narratives—sparked by his exposure to theater in high school—Hitte majored in literature; he still counts Beowulf and the novels of Toni Morrison among his favorites. At the insistence of his mother, he also majored in psychology.

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

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

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

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

While the pandemic didn’t significantly disrupt Hitte’s online courses at USC Rossier, it did change how he and Stanford’s admissions team conduct their day-to-day work. They had to pivot quickly in terms of how they conduct interview sessions and potential-student outreach, shifting these activities to the virtual realm.

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

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

“Universities need to understand how they’ve perpetuated systemic racism, particularly anti-Blackness, on their campuses.”

— Marcel Hitte, USC Rossier ME candidate

By Kianoosh Hashemzadeh
Founded by eight USC Rossier doctoral students, JENGA grows its mission and membership

By Kimmoh Hachenzendo

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

Davis came to USC Rossier School of Education from the business sector—she earned her MBA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—but one thing was missing: "There was no community." Davis says. So, she sought out other USC Rossier doctoral students and quickly created her cohort. They didn't all know each other, but quickly became friends. They didn't all know one another but quickly created a community.

The group wanted to incorporate this imagery in recognition of their African diaspora identity. Butler chose the Adinkra symbol, symbolizing how independence comes with responsibilities, "because it reminds me of the importance of being self-sufficient while being in the position to help others out." |  

"The ultimate goal of the organization," Butler says, "is persistence to graduation and getting through the dissertation process, as we know that 50 percent of doctoral students will drop out." —Mercedes Butler EdD '16

They are still close and get together often to offer one another career advice, write articles together and collaborate on business ventures. JENGA also continues to thrive on the USC campus and has expanded to include doctoral students throughout the university. Butler, Conerly and Davis are current advisor alumni on JENGA's board. As JENGA grows, it continues to provide a support network for those writing dissertations, but it also offers guidance for students before and after the dissertation, and this includes sharing information about funding opportunities.

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

Like many organizations, JENGA has shifted activities to the virtual realm because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Panel discussions and meetings are now held via Zoom, and past Virginia "Ginny" Linenberger mailed the annual JENGA dissertation awards instead of presenting them to graduates in person. A focus for the upcoming year, Roberson says, is recruiting first-year doctoral students so that, early on, they can become a part of the supportive network JENGA provides.

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

"The ultimate goal of the organization is persistence to graduation and getting through the dissertation process, as we know that 50 percent of doctoral students will drop out."

—Mercedes Butler EdD '16

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

CENTER EDGE has received multiple gifts including $100,000 from the Marc and Eva Stern Family Foundation, $67,000 from The Khayami Foundation and $58,000 from the Driving Force Institute. CENTER EDGE also received a $45,000 Baylor Technology Innovation Grant (ending Games, Character Education and Sports) project and was awarded funds for its L.A. Education Open initiative, including a $75,000 award from Great Public Schools Now and $10,000 from the Joseph Drrown Foundation.

CENTER FOR ENROLLMENT RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE (CERP) was awarded a $41,501,668 grant by the national College Advising Corps, a $200,000 two-year grant from the California Community Foundation, Los Angeles Scholares Investment Fund and a $475,000 grant from the Joyce Foundation. CERP was also awarded multiple service agreements for the 2020-21 school year, including $100,000 by the California Community Foundation to provide a college-advising hotline for all LAUSD students and L.A. area seniors, $247,000 by Long Beach Unified School District, $275,000 by Glendale Unified School District and $166,000 by Paramount Unified School District.

USC RACE AND EQUITY CENTER, which is directed by Shaun R. Harper and recently merged with the Center for Urban Education (CUE), received multiple grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: two grants (with CUE) totaling $800,000, $250,000 (with John Pascarella, associate professor of clinical education) for the Teacher Education Racial Equity Academy, $175,000 for “Enhancing Racial Equity in Postsecondary Service, Design, and Delivery” and $90,000 for the project, “State Policy Racial Equity Experts Institute.”

ESTELA MARA BENSIMON, Dean’s Professor in Educational Equity, has been awarded the 2020 McGraw Prize in Higher Education Racial Equity Academy, $750,000 for “Enhancing Racial Equity in Postsecondary Service, Design, and Delivery” and $90,000 for the project, “State Policy Racial Equity Experts Institute.”

JOULIE A. MARSH, professor of education policy, received an additional $457,000 supplement from the Institute of Education Sciences to focus on COVID-19 response.

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

“After slavery ended in this country, the emancipated formerly enslaved White kids as well as Black kids to go to school. The drive to pursue education, created colleges and universities, passed the law that would lead to freedom and empowerment in this country. It still is.”
—Pedro A. Noguera, Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education and Distinguished Professor of Education, in The New York Times Magazine

“College has unfortunately been more of a privilege for wealthier students, and institutions haven’t set up structures to help first-generation students who often come from lower-income backgrounds.”
—Adrianna Kezar, Dean’s Professor of Leadership, in The Chronicle of Higher Education

“Perhaps conversations about identity are ‘difficult’ not because they are inherently uncomfortable, but because they have been deemed ineffable. … what if these conversations are not actually difficult, but simply unpracticed? … Perhaps faculty members need not fewer conversations about identity but more.”
—Dersa Grant, assistant professor of education, in Inside Higher Ed

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

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

Lectures in mathematics education

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

Combating anti-Asian racism in the classroom

By Tracy Poon Tambascia, Professor of Clinical Education

AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC swept through the country and the world in early 2020, a sharp increase in discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) mirrored the spread of the virus. Fueled by racist rhetoric, the characterization of COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” or the “Wuhan flu” has created an environment of blame and xenophobia. Students have now returned to school, and whether classes are held in person or online, it’s important to recognize the damage of such language without shaming students. Terms like “Wuhan flu” and “Chinese virus” are intentionally used to signal othering and blame, and they need to be directly addressed and disavowed. Educators cannot be neutral and need to develop the ability to turn a phrase into a learning moment. For example, instructors can say: “We have heard such slurs and phrases used, and they are hurtful and damaging to the AAPI community. Why might people choose to use language like this?” They can then “unpack” or deconstruct how the use of words can intentionally signal blame. This is also an opportunity to discuss allyship and the importance of having non-AAPI people from all backgrounds engage in social justice by calling out bias and racism.

In addition, educators should deliberately normalize the presence of non-White authors, researchers and other contributors in teaching materials, such as course syllabi, assigned readings or online lectures. Educators should use examples, case studies and other learning materials that include identities that reflect the full spectrum of American society, including AAPI individuals. This strategy is not necessarily about teaching culture or history, but about including AAPI people when we talk about teachers, entrepreneurs, innovators and people in our community. Educators may need to learn about AAPI communities and unlearn common misperceptions. They can also bring their own knowledge of the AAPI community to classes, making sure to recognize the diversity of experiences, values, cultures and languages among people of Asian descent. This conversation is not just about national origin, but also about the impact of migration, the diaspora, intersecting identities (race or ethnicity and gender identity, for example) and the complex histories of colonization and geopolitics. Educators can highlight the different practices and languages of various AAPI groups, just as no one assumes everyone of European descent shares a common language, history or cultural practices. The bottom line is that educators need to push against the common perception that Asian Americans represent a monolithic whole.”

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC swept through the country and the world in early 2020, a sharp increase in discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) mirrored the spread of the virus. Fueled by racist rhetoric, the characterization of COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” or the “Wuhan flu” has created an environment of blame and xenophobia. Students have now returned to school, and whether classes are held in person or online, it’s important to recognize the damage of such language without shaming students. Terms like “Wuhan flu” and “Chinese virus” are intentionally used to signal othering and blame, and they need to be directly addressed and disavowed. Educators cannot be neutral and need to develop the ability to turn a phrase into a learning moment. For example, instructors can say: “We have heard such slurs and phrases used, and they are hurtful and damaging to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He’s been prolific in his scholarship all the while, writing or editing 15 books and publishing over 250 articles and book chapters. He’s been on the faculty at UC Berkeley, Harvard, New York University and UCLA.

“Before this whole concept of public intellectual had its most recent rebirth,” a former colleague at UCLA, Professor Walter Allen, says, “he was functioning in that capacity.”

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

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

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

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

PEDRO A. NOGUERA
Is Reimagining
EDUCATION

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

Story:
Kianoosh Hashemzadeh
Photos:
Bethany Mollenkopf
Ron Dellums, the late congressman and former mayor of Oakland, encouraged Noguera early on to consider running for Congress. “Who knew if he was serious or not,” Noguera says humbly, but he did consider going into politics. In fact, Noguera was the student body president at UC Berkeley, where he helped organize the anti-apartheid movement, which led the university to divest more than $2 billion in South African investments. This experience taught Noguera that broad movements for social change can lead to real changes in institutions and society. However, Noguera realized as he was serving on the board of Berkeley Unified and working as chief of staff to Mayor Loni Hancock in Berkeley that, “I didn’t like raising money or telling people what I thought they wanted to hear. I wasn’t cut out for politics.”

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

In 1984, shortly after he started his doctoral studies, Noguera, joined by Patricia Vattuone, who would become his first wife, left California for Grenada, the 135-square-mile tropical island in the Caribbean. There, the couple had their first son, Joaquin, and Noguera carried out his doctoral research. (Tragically, Vattuone passed away in 2006 from cancer.)

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

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

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

But after two years in Berkeley’s mayor’s office, working on some of the most difficult and controversial problems facing the city—homelessness and economic development—Noguera felt frustrated. When he took the job, he thought he was “in a position to make the difference,” he wrote in his 2003 book, City Schools and the American Dream: Redclaiming the Promise of Public Education. Noguera always knew he wanted to be a force for good. (His brother, who moved to Brownsville, Texas, “just started to change the world” among his interests.) But he realized that “perhaps I had been too naive,” he wrote. “Why should I have thought that crime and poverty could be solved by one city, even as it plagued communities throughout the United States?”

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

When a friend and principal paid Noguera a visit from East Campus, an alternative school in Berkeley, that “became a dumping ground for troubled kids,” Noguera’s political pursuits abruptly ended. The principal brought with him a serious, yet attentive. Serious, yet quick to laugh. A true “mensch,” says Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Boston and former dean of UCLA’s Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, where Noguera was a Distinguished Professor of Education before joining USC Rossier.

Born in New York City in 1959, Noguera is the second of six children. His father, Felipe Noguera, the son of Venezuelan and Trinidadian immigrants, was a taxi driver and police officer. Millennial Noguera, his mother, is from Jamaica and stayed at home with the kids, a full-time job with no limit on overtime. “People often would ask my father, ‘How do you manage to send all six of your kids to college—and to such good ones?’” Noguera recalls. “And he’d say, ‘Well, it’s because they must be their mother.’”

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

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

When it came time for his older brother to apply to college, an in-law grade teacher who saw his potential encouraged him to aim high. That brother was accepted to Harvard. “I just
We have to go beyond critique to provide real guidance on what should be done."

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

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

"Despite my working-class background," Noguera writes in a recent essay, reflecting on his time at Brown, "attending racially integrated schools had provided me with a valuable foundation of social capital that made it possible for me to advocate for myself and others, navigate rules and build strong strategic alliances with mentors, friends and associates based on recognition of our common interests."
The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted many schools online, which has exacerbated existing digital equity problems. What are some of the problems, and how has the pandemic made them even worse? It’s been well-documented that across the country we have inequities with respect to access to devices and internet connection. A Pew Research Center study from 2018 showed that 25 percent of Black teens offered or sometimes are unable to complete their homework because they do not have a device at home or an adequate internet connection. This is compared with about 22 percent of White teens and 17 percent of Latinx teens. My center conducted a survey of remote learning experiences in spring 2020 and saw similar findings. Though 94 percent of the sample of 11- to 19-year-olds had an internet connection, only 84 percent had a high-speed connection that allowed them to complete their schoolwork. Of those who reported not having sufficient high-speed internet access, 37 percent were Black, 37 percent were Latinx, 18 percent were White, 2 percent were biracial, 12 percent were East Asian and 3 percent were South Asian. When we look at cities across the country, we see similar patterns with engagement. Los Angeles Unified School District, for example, reported a 20-point gap in participation on the Schoology platform for Black and Latinx students compared with White students. We also see problems on a host of other indicators, including exposure to challenging school materials. For example, our remote-learning survey showed White students found their schoolwork challenging more frequently than Black students in the areas of English and math, and Latinx students in the areas of English, math, government and science. We’ve had similar findings with respect to participants seeing themselves represented in school materials. Whites are much more likely to endorse questions about representation across subjects than students of color. Other troubling developments include the policing of Black and Brown bodies in online classrooms. There needs to be more research on this, but we’ve seen articles reporting students being disciplined for not engaging in remote learning, including not having their videos on. One teen in Michigan was sentenced to juvenile detention for not completing her assignments. These are just a few problems on a very long list of inequities.

What are some of your current research projects, and how has the pandemic affected your work? We have a project on anti-racist remote and online learning where we are looking at what middle, high school and college students say about their experiences during the pandemic, including their sense of online community: whether they were represented in the materials online, the quality of the work they were assigned, whether they had to do worksheets instead of more meaningful kinds of activities that are culturally sustaining or interest-driven. There’s also the Lyle Spencer Award to Transform Education. It’s a first-of-its-kind, nationally representative, longitudinal online survey of 11- to 19-year-olds’ critical digital literacy skills. We’re specifically trying to understand participants’ general skills, as well as how they are able to critique race-related material. We’ve had to develop the digital literacy assessments we’re going to use along with new scales because there are none that exist that account for the skills young people need to navigate a post-2020 digital landscape.

Viral videos of Black men and women dying at the hands of police ignited the Black Lives Matter movement, and you’ve been studying the impact of these videos on Black and Brown youths. What are your findings so far? We’re finding among a sample of Latinx and Black students between ages 11 and 19 that exposure to viral videos and images of police racial violence—and that includes seeing immigrants in cages, seeing police killings—is associated with PTSD. We are currently analyzing data to help us understand whether police racial violence or online racial discrimination is also associated with suicide ideation. This is the first study; to my knowledge, to explore these associations. The idea is to use our pilot data to get funding from further examine the role of technology in Black youth suicide, as there’s been a dramatic increase.

With a lot of educators now teaching online, they don’t have in-person interaction with students. Is there anything you’d suggest they look out for? If they have a new class, it’s going to be important for them to get to know their students as individuals and know something about their parents or families and their cultures. It’s important to have one-on-one with the kids and families to get to know their strengths and interests. The more you know about this amazing human being sitting in front of you, the more you can anticipate and recognize their needs, even if it’s through the screen.

It’s also important to create an engaging learning environment, to give students assignments where they see themselves represented in the materials. Teachers have to give students space to talk about current events. Their lives should be a part of the curriculum. We also need more mental health staff so students will be able to connect with a culturally competent therapist if they are having problems.

Are there any recent technological advances that you’re excited about in terms of their potential to be used in education? Yes, one of my own apps that we’re working on. It’s called CRT metric, and it’s designed to teach kids to think critically about general and race-related messages they encounter online. It gives them a toolkit to critique and evaluate a range of digital materials. There’s actually nothing out there—not a single program—that would prepare kids for this post-2016 landscape that specifically targets Black people and conservatives. This app would help them to recognize how foreign countries can spread misinformation for economic and political ends.

We thought technology was going to make the world more equitable, but we haven’t seen that yet. Do you think we ever will? I think once we deal with anti-Blackness, and we allow more of these Black, brilliant minds to create technologies, we will see technology live up to what people claimed it would be early on.”

FALL / WINTER 2020

IN CONVERSATION

IN CONVERSATION

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

Interview: Kismoneh Hashemzadeh
Illustration: Heather Menahan

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THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN LIGHTLY EDITED FOR LENGTH AND CLARITY. FOR AN EXPANDED VERSION, PLEASE VISIT RSOE.IN/TYNES.
Graffiti-covered walls, trash-strewn hallways and gun-toting Black and Latino students who are so violent that they bash open the head of a White teacher on the cafeteria floor during lunchtime.

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

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

The film’s “based on a true story” depiction sent a clear message about what it takes to ensure safety and boost student achievement in a high school attended by students of color: zero-tolerance policies and a large law enforcement presence. America, it seemed, agreed. The film was a box office smash.
“Everyone needs to be safe in schools. No one can learn, nobody can work in an unsafe environment,” says Pedro A. Noguera, the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education, who has written extensively on racial disparities in school disciplinary practices.

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

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

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

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

Noguera says. “So several states adopted (SROs) or sworn law enforcement officers who have a presence in schools. Adrian H. Huerta, an assistant professor of education at USC Rossier, says he published research in 2019 about the kind of violence that Latino boys experience in schools, and a consistent theme emerged: the role of school resource officers.

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

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

The epidemic of school shootings that started with Columbine got people scared, Noguera says. “So several states adopted zero-tolerance policies. And with the zero-tolerance policies, you started to see more districts bringing police in.”

Militarized policing a campus looks like varsity from school district to school district, as does who’s even doing the job. The most recent Indicators of School Crime and Safety report from the U.S. Department of Education defines school security staff as security guards, security personnel, school resource officers with guns, I don’t feel safe; I feel like, ‘Wow, why do we need so many men with guns here?’”

According to the Indicators of School Crime and Safety report, 66.4 percent of public schools stated that during the 2017–2018 school year, they had one or more security staff members. Seventy at least one day per week. That’s up from 42.7 percent during 2005–2006.

The data also show that security staff are more likely to be concentrated in schools with higher minority enrollment. During the 2017–2018 school year, 65.4 percent of campuses where students of color were more than three-fourths of the student body reported having security staff. In comparison, 9.3 percent of campuses where students of color were less than one-fourth of all students had security staff.

RACIAL BIAS IN SCHOOL POLICING

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

“When I heard the school leaders say, ‘We have to ask, ‘What creates a safe and orderly environment?’” Noguera says. “And it’s not the presence of men with guns. In fact, it has the opposite effect. I see a bunch of people with guns, I don’t feel safe. I feel like, ‘Wow, why do we need so many men with guns here?’”

In the aftermath of nationwide protests and calls for defunding the police, following the killing of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement officers in Minneapolis, students, parents, teachers and community members are marching to the district to urge the LAUSD headquarters to say to the district to defund school police.
LAUSD Cuts School Police Budget by 35 Percent

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

In a statement, UTLA President Alex Caputo-Pearl said, “We know there’s a racialized context to the presence of police in schools and how aggressive they are with students of color especially.” Huerta says, “I say Black and Latino, but it’s also Native youth. It’s also Southeast Asian youth. It’s also Pacific Islanders that bear the brunt of overpolicing in K-12.”

Indeed, Parkland, Florida, school shooting survivor and March for Our Lives co-founder David Hogg recently wrote on Twitter, “Putting the brunt of overpolicing in K-12.”

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

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

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

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

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

**WHAT DOES A SAFE SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?**

Historically, school districts invest millions and millions of dollars into campus police.

Huerta says. Instead of buying military-grade equipment, we have “an opportunity to reallocate those funds into education, into health care programs, into other community service programs.”

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

Change can’t happen in a vacuum, Huerta cautions. “Instead of fixing the individual is- sues, we need bigger solutions—like bigger antebellum schools. How do we see as a society really take care of and invest in people and families and community in a real way? I think those are bigger questions that schools cannot answer by themselves.”

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

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

Keep in mind, Noguera says, “if the school is staffed by a bunch of adults who don’t know that community and who don’t understand the kids, then just bringing in counselors and social workers is not going to be good enough. They need to actually know the community which is where we’re headed.”

Nkansah-Amankra says whatever staffing or policy changes are made, it’s critical schools use an intersectional, holistic approach. “Even when school districts change their policies to have an opportunity to real-locate resources, we have ‘an opportunity to real-locate those funds into education, into health care programs, into other community service programs.”

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

“Fear should not guide our policies,” says Noguera. Instead, we need to “break the cycle of violence by asking different questions. That’s why I say you ask, ‘OK, where do we go home for two days and cool off.’”

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

“All it takes is one incident—someone coming with a gun or someone getting shot,” Huerta says. “Or someone getting beat up rea- lly bad. One viral video will make parents pause and respond like, ‘Well, now we’re going to keep the police again, because look what happened at that school. Is my kid next?’”

“Fear should not guide our policies,” says Noguera. Instead, we need to “break the cycle of violence by asking different questions. Why is it like this? Why is it like that? What was the kind of person they needed, not someone physically intimidating, I give the school credit for having the foresight to realize she could do the job.”

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

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

“If it’s two kids fighting because someone made a pass at someone’s girlfriend or boy- friend or whatever, do we really need to call the police? Do we really need to cite them for assault or battery? In the past it used to be like, the trench coats and doing Nazi salutes?” he says he asked. The reply: “Yeah, we just thought they were strange. It didn’t fit our definition of what an at-risk youth was. They had good grades. They came from middle-class families.”

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

‘YOU HAVE TO LEAD WITH HEART AND EMPATHY’

USC President Folt in conversation with Dean Noguera

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

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

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

Carol L. FOlt: As a dean and as a president, you and I both want to make sure that all that we’re doing now has a positive effect today and is an enabler for ideas ahead. Here are three examples. First, the pandemic is making us focus even more on disparities in educational access. It’s critical that we find a way to make sure people are not being left behind by the technological explosion that is happening in education. We can continue to build these fabulous online learning experiences, but we have to be deeply mindful that not all students may be able to access them. If schools don’t ensure students have access, we could see an increasing gap between have-nots and have-haves. At USC, we need to make it our mission to fight that gap in our own programs and help K-12 schools in our communities in that fight as well.

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

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

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

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

But teaching science online is difficult because so much of the learning comes from hands-on laboratory work. I’ve been so excited to hear that Dornsife is mailing out home laboratory packages to students. The good news is a lot of science begins before the high-tech and the hands-on experience.”
One of the features that distinguishes USC is its innovative approach to higher education. We also live in Los Angeles, and we’re surrounded by schools that are serving very low-income kids and are struggling. How do we make sure that USC, as an institution, is contributing to the educational life of the city?

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

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

I’ve often wondered why it is that university towns don’t have the best public schools. I think it’s because there’s a separation, so figuring out how we engage the local community is really important. Your question brings to mind the USC College Advising Corps, which I know is a big initiative at Rossier. The program takes talented graduates, trained by our staff, and places them as counselors in local schools that would otherwise have virtually no college counseling. The results are phenomenal. For example, when one of those advisors is brought in, schools that might have had 30 to 40 percent of their students applying for college can more than double those applications and help the students successfully apply for financial aid in the next year. These results tell you that every one of those kids wants to go to college. So, more of those programs and more programs like USC’s Neighborhood Academic Initiative are desperately needed.

There’s so much political polarization these days. I’ve written a book with a conservative writer on education, touching on all the controversies of the last several years, and we did it to demonstrate that we can disagree in a reasonable manner without degenerating to name-calling and attacking each other. I’m hoping that that spirit lives in the university. How do we keep dialogue open?

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

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

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

Today, two-thirds of USC undergraduates receive some form of financial aid. In 2019-2020, the university provided nearly $445 million in need-based grant funding from all available sources, and we expect to award financial aid to over 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students by the end of this academic year. Our need-based grants have increased by 38 percent over the last five years, far outpacing tuition increases. Overall, the university has one of the strongest ways we bring in students from all backgrounds. About one of every four transfer students who attend a private Association of American University-member university enrolled at USC. We need to keep pushing those programs and ourselves further, to get out into neighborhoods where kids may not be thinking they could ever come here and help them believe that USC could be a place for them, too.

I heard you say you were a community college transfer.

I was. I dropped out of Ohio State. I worked in a bank and then as a waitress on the pier in Santa Barbara. I put myself through school at Santa Barbara City College and then at UC Santa Barbara. My own experience taught me that students who come in from less traditional backgrounds bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, and that’s one of the reasons I try so hard to open those doors.
As ever, the sun is shining on Palm Springs, California. In the parking lot of Palm Springs High School on an early September morning, a small line of cars waits under a perfect blue sky.

School staff members venture out from under the shade of parking covers, greeting the cars of parents and students, providing them with laptops for the coming school year. Palm Springs Unified School District is a non-charter district, where each student receives some kind of digital learning device. Those devices are more central than ever this year, as a way to ensure continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parent Emilianna Perez is back in line for this “tech depot” because the microphone on the first Chromebook she borrowed didn’t work. Her son is going into his sophomore year. Rommel’s oldest son needs it for college work. Her son is going into his sophomore year. Rommel Lopez picks up a Chromebook for his youngest son. The family has a laptop at home, but Rommel’s oldest son needs it for college work.

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

“One of my frustrations as an administrator of how a student can go home and the only way of how badly these supplies are needed, that there are racial disparities in access to technology and that low-income households often have to share technology. Some homes have several generations of families, or multiple families, living under one roof. Many either share the same computer, or have several computers accessing the household’s network and dragging down internet speeds. I was stunned by how fewer than half the parents and students to consider the possibility of distance learning at the drop of a hat,” Lyon says, “we didn’t have the infrastructure to do that.”

And it wasn’t just Palm Springs that experienced difficulties. In North Dakota, “One of my goals that couldn’t be met,” Lyon says, “was a technology desert. Of 50 million American students, 30 percent of students lacked either reliable internet or a home device with which to stay connected to school. Nine million students lacked both. Thus, communities with more resources were able to better cope with the changes to the school year, says Stephen Aguilar, an assistan professor of education at USC Rossier who studies digital equity.

“Often, people think of technologies in terms of products, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where technological resources, like an iPad, laptop, etc., but in reality, we live in a time where...
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“People have new skill sets and new pathways,” Lyon says. “How we deliver instruction will change forever.”

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

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

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

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

Aguilar says that districts can use the lessons learned to better understand how to take advantage of technology going forward. He recommends districts start by asking some basic questions: If we try to use certain technologies to help kids learn, are these technologies compatible with their environments? Can they be integrated into their infrastructure or environment? Can they be imbedded into an interconnected ecosystem? You can’t just give [products to] communities in need without first attending to how a given technology can or can’t be imbedded into their infrastructure or environment.

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Stephen J. Aguilar, USC Rossier Assistant Professor of Education

Aguilar says, “You can’t just give [products to] communities in need without first attending to how a given technology can or can’t be imbedded into their infrastructure or environment.”

Research from scholars at MIT and Carnegie Mellon University shows that internet access is also an equity problem, in which students who are low-income, housing-insecure, English-learners, Hispanic or Black have worse access than peers.

What’s most disturbing is that these disparities can exist even in areas with a high level of broadband distribution. Research suggests a digital redlining; much in the same way that cities, banks and other institutions have historically restricted certain racial groups from accessing capital, so too do internet companies limit high-speed internet service in low-income neighborhoods, disproportionately hurting Black and Hispanic students.

Even with the basic logistics down, there were also major instructional questions. All of these factors together meant that school districts were left to figure out how to provide every student with a device and reliable internet; prepare teachers, students and their parents to use that technology; and put in policies and standards for interaction through that technology, whether related to attendance or appearance or engagement.

Aguilar points to the rapid adoption of Zoom this past spring and how it forced families to adapt: Do they have a quiet room? Do they have multiple computers? Is their internet fast enough? Can they watch their child while they’re “attending class”?

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

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

ON THE OTHER SIDE

Monrovia, California, makes for a strong visual contrast to Palm Springs, even if both sit in the shadow of mountains. A verdant suburb just northeast of Los Angeles, Monrovia has a much smaller enrollment than Palm Springs—just over 17,000 students.

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

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

“So many families tried signing up for internet for the first time,” says Monrovia Unified School District Superintendent Katherine Thorossian Ed’99. “The company would ask for something they didn’t have—a Social Security number or a credit card.”

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

As if to illustrate that, Thorossian describes an all-staff meeting she held this summer with all the district’s teachers, asking which students were living in difficult economic situations.

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As if to illustrate that, Thorossian describes an all-staff meeting she held this summer with all the district’s teachers, asking which students were living in difficult economic situations.

“Success would be incorporating those into the curriculum,” Thorossian says. “To have proof in front of us that we could be effective on a small scale meant we could do it on a large scale, and that was powerful.”

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

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

PLANNING AHEAD

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

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

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

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TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

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

2. A sophomore in the Palm Springs School District exchanges his multimedia Chromebook for a new one.
As protestors march for Black lives, the classroom offers hope

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

As protestors march for Black lives, the classroom offers hope

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another popular resource is “Teaching History for the 21st Century,” a guide to learning about slavery from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Among the 10 essential concepts the SPLC says students in grades K–5 should learn is the idea that White supremacy “was both a product and legacy of slavery.” For students in grades 6–12, the SPLC encourages teachers to connect the legacy of slavery and White supremacy to contemporary American life by examining issues such as housing segregation.

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

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

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

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

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

But progress has been slow and the results imperfect.

More Than Heroes and Holidays

According to a 2019 study by the National Museum of African American History and Culture, U.S. history classrooms devote only about one or two lessons, or 8 to 9 percent of total class time, to Black history. And that instruction “is sometimes lethargic, too celebratory, and lacks complexity,” LaGarrett J. King, a University of Missouri authority on Black history in the K–12 curriculum, wrote in 2017.

With no national history standards, what and how students are taught remains in the purview of states, which vary widely in their requirements. In 2014, the SPLC found that 15 states did not require any instruction on the civil rights movement. Fewer than half covered Jim Crow laws. The center gave only three states—Georgia, Louisiana and South Carolina—an A grade for their efforts. Twenty states received F’s.

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

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

The deepest dive into slavery comes in 8th grade. Students analyze the development of federal civil and voting rights legislation and landmark cases including Brown v. Board of Education and Regents of

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

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

Gamboa says one way the state’s guidelines could be strengthened is by incorporating discussions of White supremacy. That ideology was the primary justification for slavery and has continued to shape the course of the nation, yet it is not mentioned anywhere in California’s standards or its 853-page framework. California is not alone in this neglect; according to a CBS News investigation earlier this year, only Maryland and Massachusetts cover White supremacy in their social studies standards.

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

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

Lyons-Moore finds California framework more valuable for teaching Black history than the content standards. The framework “has a lot of language about equity and recommendations for how to teach English language learners,” she observed. In a section outlining the elements of culturally responsive teaching, it urges teachers to “learn about their students’ lives and make connections between
“We got where we are by social movements of people picking and screaming for change. If you just spotlight the leaders, it affects the way we engage in the political process. You can be a better citizen if your notions, I’ll wait for the next Martin Luther King.”

— Martin Gamboa, USC Rossier Ph.D candidate

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

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

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

One course, “Context for Educational Equity, Access, and Agency,” engages students in an overview of K–12 educational history and philosophy, and covers ethnic history.

“The class asks students to think about their own identities, including their racial identities, and to unpack a few experiences that have helped them to understand their identity and their positionality to students they may be teaching in the upcoming semesters,” Lyons-Moore said. “It’s a precursor to being able to teach Black history from an authentic place and not from that heroes-and-holidays place.”

“Personally, I think it should be a requirement” in Rossier’s MAT program, she added.

BREACKING THE CYCLE

There are obstacles to improving Black history instruction. For instance, while a micro-credential in teaching Black history could build teachers’ competence in the subject, many districts might be hard-pressed to fund the salary enhancement such training would provide.

National history standards could help to eliminate conflicting versions of Black history, but the last attempt, in the mid-1990s, ignited a culture war that doomed them. Lynne Cheney, who headed the National Endowment for the Humanities when it provided major funding for the national standards, was incessantly bombarded with letters from the nation” for providing a “remarkable degree of detail, support and nuance for teachers.”

Eight graders study key court decisions on desegregation and the organized resistance that delayed the integration of public schools. High schoolers analyze movement strategies and politics, and how Black Americans’ struggles for equality contributed to the rise of feminism and other movements.

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

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

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

After examining the history and social studies curriculum in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) found South Carolina’s guidelines on teaching the civil rights movement “the best in the nation” for providing a “remarkable degree of detail, support and nuance for teachers.”

South Carolina was one of only three states to earn an A in the SPLC’s 2014 report Teaching the Movement.

In kindergarten, students learn not only about why Martin Luther King Jr’s birthday is celebrated but also how pivotal figures like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Rosa Parks reflect the values of American democracy.

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FEATURE

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FEATURE

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students’ experiences, backgrounds, and interests and the content learning in school.”

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

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

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

“Students want to talk about race in America,” said Hawkins. “For new teachers it will be especially scary because they are already very vulnerable. So, we have these conversations in my classrooms at Rossier. I say, look at your student population. How will this particular lesson address the needs of different ethnic groups and special needs? It has to be done with intent and care.”

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

PREPARING FUTURE EDUCATORS

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

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

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

“We still have a lot more work to do.”

Since 2015, Rossier students in the MAT program from 2015 to 2019. “We still have a lot more work to do.”

“There is a pivotal time,” Gideon said. “I will be asking those questions with teachers in my district. How does that question is troubling for any student?’”

In kindergarten, students learn not only about the movement for civil rights, but also how pivotal figures like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Rosa Parks reflect the values of American democracy.

Eight graders study key court decisions on desegregation and the organized resistance that delayed the integration of public schools. High schoolers analyze movement strategies and politics, and how Black Americans’ struggles for equality contributed to the rise of feminism and other movements.

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South Carolina is due to adopt new social studies standards this year.
City Schools and the American Dream 2: The Enduring Promise of Public Education
By Pedro A. Noguera (Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of USC Rossier) and Esa Syed (assistant professor at California State University Long Beach).
July 2020 / Teachers College Press

Challenging the One Best System: The Portfolio Management Model and Urban School Governance
By Katrina Bulley, Julie A. Marsh (professor of education policy at USC Rossier), Katharine Strunk (professor of education policy at Michigan State University), Douglas Harris (associate professor of economics at Tulane University), and Ayasha Hashim (assistant professor of educational policy and leaders at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill)
November 2020 / Harvard Education Press

Islamophobia in Higher Education: Combating Discrimination and Creating Understanding
Edited by Shafaa Ahmed (professor of clinical education at USC Rossier and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice) and Darnell Cole (associate professor of education at USC Rossier and co-director of the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice)
August 2020 / Stylus Publishing

Equity in Science: Representation, Culture and the Dynamics of Change in Graduate Education
By Julie R. Posselt (associate professor of education at USC Rossier)
September 2020 / Stanford University Press

The Autobiography of Malcolm X
Malcolm X and Alex Haley
“Even if you are not a Black reader, this narrative will cause you to think differently about the value and power of cultural perspective in leadership.” — Michele Turner BS ’71, EID ’74, Executive Director, USC Black Alumni Association

How Women Rise: Break the 12 Habits Holding You Back From Your Next Raise, Promotion, or Job
Sally Helgeson and Marshall Goldsmith
“As women, we can sometimes unconsciously limit ourselves. This is an excellent book for any woman who wants to identify behaviors that are holding her back from taking the next best step in her career.” — Melissa Moore EID ’74, Superintendent, El Segundo Unified School District

Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable
Patrick Lencioni
“This book provides great insight on the importance of productive communication with your staff.” — Manuel Burgos EID ’77, Principal, Northview High School

What are you reading?
Recommendations from Leadership Month speakers

MONUMENTS HAVE TOPPELED. BUT WILL HIGHER ED’S COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE LEAD TO CHANGE?
By John Brooks Slaughter

The dearth of underrepresented minority persons on the faculties of our major research universities is higher education’s Achilles’ heel, and its shame. This is particularly true for the STEM disciplines. While the presence of Black tenure and tenure-track faculty in most universities, has pledged to support diversity and equity initiatives. Many have expressed allegiance to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and an intent to eliminate any vestiges of racial discrimination in their organizations. Confederate flags and emblems have been banned, the names of known racists and slave owners that had been on buildings for decades have been removed, and statues of Southern Civil War generals have been toppled. But questions remain: How long can this emergent commitment to justice and inclusion be sustained, and will it lead to lasting improvement in the condition of Black Americans?

The accelerating racial and ethnic demographic changes occurring in the nation, will determine how it teaches and educates the leaders and productive citizens of tomorrow—and who will be the recipients of that education. Although numerous encouraging transformations have taken place, I find many of the effort to hire and retain members of those subpopulations in senior academic and administrative positions and faculty. Given the increasing presence of Black and Brown students in the college-age population, the constament decline in the proportion of White students as well as the potential decrease in international students due to the pandemic and changes in immigration policies, colleges and universities must diversify their undergraduate enrollors or ultimately close their doors. The same imperatives do not exist for graduate students and faculty.

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

OPINION

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

AS A RESULT OF THE BROAD, DEMONSTRATIVE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE BRUTAL AND SENSELESS MURDERS OF GEORGE FLOYD, BREONNA TAYLOR AND ERIC GARNER AT THE HANDS (AND KNEE) OF POLICE OFFICERS, THE KILLING OF AHMAUD ARBERY BY ARMED SIGILGIATES; AND THE MOUNTING RECOGNITION OF THE LONGSTANDING PRACTICE OF OPPRESSION AND SYSTEMIC RACISM AGAINST BLACK AMERICANS, MULTIPLE INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, HAVE PLEDGED TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY AND EQUITY INITIATIVES. MANY HAVE EXPRESSED ALLEGIANCE TO THE BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM) MOVEMENT AND AN INTENT TO ELIMINATE ANY VESTIGES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS. CONFEEDERATE FLAGS AND EMBLEMS HAVE BEEN BANNED, THE NAMES OF KNOWN RACISTS AND SLAVE OWNERS THAT HAD BEEN ON BUILDINGS FOR DECADES HAVE BEEN REMOVED, AND STATUES OF SOUTHERN CIVIL WAR GENERALS HAVE BEEN TOPPELED. BUT QUESTIONS REMAIN: HOW LONG CAN THIS EMERGENT COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE AND INCLUSION BE SUSTAINED, AND WILL IT LEAD TO LASTING IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDITION OF BLACK AMERICANS?

HIGHER EDUCATION IS A PREFECT STORM CONSISTING OF A PANDEMIC DEEMED TO CHANGE FOREVER THE WAY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OPERATE, A SOCIETY CHARACTERIZED BY POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP AND SOCIAL AND RACIAL DRIVENESS, AND THE PRESENCE AND IMPENDING THREATS OF CATASTROPHIC CLIMATE CHANGE. HOW IT RESPONDS TO THESE “WICKED” MANIFESTATIONS, AS WELL AS TO THE ACCELERATING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES OCCURRING IN THE NATION, WILL DETERMINE HOW IT TEACHES AND EDUCATES THE LEADERS AND PROACTIVE CITIZENS OF TOMORROW—AND WHO WILL BE THE RECIPIENTS OF THAT EDUCATION.

ALTHOUGH NUMEROUS ENCOURAGING TRANSFORMATIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE, I FIND MANY OF THE

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1960s

DANIEL BASALONE BS ’62 and Carmen Basalono celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on July 23. Before retiring in 2009, Dan served for 47 years in various positions in the Los Angeles Unified School District including school principal. In retirement, Basalone is currently serving as a founding board member for the Children’s Museum of Idaho and completing nine years as a commissioner on the Meridian, Idaho, urban renewal board.

DON BRANN BS ’66, EdD ’82 is founder of California’s Small Schools Districts’ Association (SSDA) and the Da Vinci Schools. He recently stepped away from the El Segundo City Council after eight years, but still serves as board president of the Da Vinci Schools and past president of SSDA. He is also a search consultant for California district boards seeking new superintendents. Don was the state trustee in Inglewood Unified and served as superintendent of five other California districts spanning five decades. He is not retiring!

1970s

STEPHEN A. RALLS DDS ’74, EdD ’79 assumed the office of president of the American College of Dentists in September 2019. He earlier served as executive director of the American College of Dentists and president of the American Society of Dentistry. Ralls is recognized as an expert in interdisciplinary research and clinical practice.

WILSE BISHOP MS ’76 went on to earn her doctor of public administration from the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy. She now serves as the director of the Center for Public Administration and Policy.

1990s

MELANIE CRAWFORD BS ’93, MS ’91 is associate professor of psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research focuses on developmental psychopathology and social-emotional development in children and adolescents.

JOYCE PEREZ ME ’03, EdD ’09 is director of health and biocultural science education at the K-12 setting.

2000s

RACHEL MADSEN ME ’02 is an associate professor of higher education and leadership at Missouri State University. She has published numerous articles and chapters on issues related to higher education and leadership.

JOYCE PEREZ ME ’03, EdD ’09 is director of health and biocultural science education at the K-12 setting.

2010s

CHARLES FLORES EdD ’10 recently published an article in the California Association of Professors of Educational Administration Journal that he co-authored with Rebecca Cheung and Soraya Sabio Sutton, both former colleagues at the Principal Leadership Institute at UC Berkeley. The article, “Tipping the Balance: Social justice leaders aligning with marginalized youth to increase student voice and activism,” discusses the manner in which social justice school leadership can balance the need to disrupt the hierarchical relationships between leaders and students, in service of marginalized students.

ALUMNI NEWS

JOIN MORE THAN 2,500 ALUMNI & CURRENT STUDENTS ON THE USC ROSSIER CAREER NETWORK! The USC Rossier Career Network is our online networking and mentorship platform designed to connect members of the USC Rossier Family (students, alumni, faculty, and staff). Platform features include a searchable member directory and a built-in messaging platform. Users can pose questions to the entire community, join groups, share job leads, learn about events and explore resources.

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

ALUMNI NEWS

Eight USC Rossier Trojans appointed school district superintendents

REBECA ANDRADE EdD ’16 Superintendent, Salinas City Elementary School

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

ELIZABETH EMINIHIZER EdD ’99 Superintendent, Covina-Valley Unified School District

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

RAUL RAMIREZ BA ’01, EdD ’16 Superintendent, Mesta Union School District

JENNIFER ROOT EdD ’17 Superintendent, Torrance Unified School District

ALFONSO Jimenez EdD ’12 Superintendent, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District

TIM STOWE EdD ’03 Interim Superintendent, Torrance Unified School District
LEADERSHIP MONTH GOES VIRTUAL

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

ELIZABETH ARIAS MAT-TESOL ’14 is an ESL teacher at Jaisingh Nanthi Bangalore School in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. She teaches monolingual, Chinese primary school students.

PAMELA CHARES MAT ’14, EdD ’16 welcomed soon-to-be-twin, Carolina Arias-Rosa, at the Chaires family, California wissont in Fontana, California, on June 3, 2019. She is a highly-spirited and loving baby. Pamela looks forward to raising her with UCL values and a servant leadership foundation.

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

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

Michelle Lozano ’15 graduated from Harvard University with a second master’s degree in management and is an aspiring school administrator.


MADELEINE EJDB ’15 recently received two awards: the Outstanding Leadership Award from the Harvard Alumni Association in recognition of going above and beyond the call of duty to make exceptional contributions to the campus community and longstanding impact to volunteer leadership and the Excellence in Education Leadership Award from the Harvard Latino Alumni Association in recognition for her leadership commitment, education and scholarship to support students in the Chicano/a and Latino population.

PAUL JOSE NOLAN MAT-TESOL ’15 is in Panama for the Corps Group. He teaches English language and life skills and teaching.

TERRI HORTON EdD ’18 was named chancellor of Calvary Chapel School of Worship in Santa Ana, California. Emery also received the Pew Research Center Study released in February 2020 on the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy.

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

DONNA GALLUP EdD ’19 presented graduate students; sponsor the UCLA Student Equity and Success and coordinate summer bridge programs for underrepresented institutions; promote the success of student-facing career programs. These programs aim to bridge academic theory to practical practice, and connect students with UCLA alumni in a career readiness space. Programs include alumni guest lectures, panels, skill training programs and various fellowships.

Michael Lozano ’15 graduated from Harvard University with a second master’s degree in management and is an aspiring school administrator.

TERRI HORTON EdD ’18 was selected as a keynote speaker to discuss the implications of artificial intelligence on the future of work at the World Literature Summit organized by Oxford University in April 2019. She was also featured as an expert in the PEW Research Center Study released in February 2020 on the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy.

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

Judy Mejia ’14 graduated from USC Rossier in 2013. She is an EAL teacher at Jaisingh Nanthi Bangalore School in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. She teaches monolingual, Chinese primary school students.

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Rossier’s Online EdD program helped Georgia Steele EdD ’18 achieve organizational excellence

Story: Diane Krueger

IN HER CLIMB UP THE PUBLIC-SERVICE LADDER, Georgia Steele EdD ’18 rose from call-center agent to the executive suite of Georgia’s tax collection agency—all before her 38th birthday. Steele, who today is chief performance officer of the state’s Department of Revenue, is among a growing number of leaders outside the field of education choosing to build their skill set through USC Rossier’s online doctorate in Organizational Change and Leadership.

Born and raised in Spanish Town, Jamaica, Steele grew up feeling both challenged and supported, surrounded by family. Her hardworking mom moved to New York City when Steele started high school, seeking better opportunities in the health care industry. Steele followed her to New York for college. She received her bachelor’s in business information systems from the City University of New York in 2004 and a master of public administration from Long Island University in 2010.

During college, Steele took a job at 311, the call center that fields questions related to city services. “That’s where I fell in love with government,” she says. Around that time, Mayor Michael Bloomberg set an outlandish new target for 311 calls to be answered within 60 seconds. Few imagined such ambitious efficiency goals could be achieved by a city-run agency, but Steele’s department met the benchmark.

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

She worked her way up to team leader before moving to the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission as a supervisor in 2007. She was quickly promoted to a directorship and, upon completing her MPA degree, to assistant commissioner. In 2012, Steele left New York for a position with more responsibilities in Atlanta. She also wanted to be closer to family and to provide better opportunities for her son. When she took the $45,000 pay cut to become assistant director of Georgia’s Motor Vehicle Division (MVD), “family and friends said, ‘You’re crazy,’ but I had a very straightforward conversation with God. I knew I had a greater purpose, and I had to listen to what my heart was saying,” she says.

Steele followed her to New York for college. She started high school, seeking better opportunities in the health care industry. Steele followed her to New York for college. She started high school, seeking better opportunities in the health care industry. Steele followed her to New York for college. She started high school, seeking better opportunities in the health care industry. Steele followed her to New York for college. She started high school, seeking better opportunities in the health care industry.

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

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

She didn’t need another degree to keep advancing. “But we all have that burning thing that we know we’re supposed to do,” she says. The doctorate in leadership “was calling.” Steele was interested in studying the management of a multigenerational workforce in government. “I wanted to understand how to best support people regardless of their generational cohort,” she says.

The EdD, she knew, would be far more challenging than her master’s—and she’d kept tears of relief upon completing that program. Balancing raising a teenage son, while beginning the work of implementing the largest technological system upgrade in over 20 years, and the demands of leading the day-to-day of a complex division left little free time.

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

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

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

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

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— Georgia Steele EdD ’18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After her husband died in 2008, Dundon-Berchtold created the Paul Edward Dundon Endowed Scholarship for Doctor of Education students in the K-12 leadership concentration, honoring his 20 years of service as superintendent of the Garden Grove Unified School District. In addition to their support of USC Athletics and medical research, Amy and her husband James “Jim” Joseph Berchtold endowed the USC Amy King Dundon-Berchtold University Club at King Stoops Hall in 2016.

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

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

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

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

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