

In Context

# Race on Campus

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**C**olleges across the country are gripped with questions of racial inclusivity as students demand more recognition, more support, and more change. Their demands and protests draw attention to continuing racial disparities in higher education, where African-Americans make up a small portion of professors, presidents, and selective-college enrollments. This collection of recent news and commentary from *The Chronicle* can provide a starting point for discussion of what might be done to improve the climate and conditions on your own campus.

# What It Feels Like to Be a Black Professor

By JOHN L. JACKSON JR.

A young child scribbling on a blackboard perched atop an easel in the hallway of a two-bedroom Brooklyn apartment. That's one of my earliest memories. I'm writing my ABCs and spelling out three-letter words, fingertips and palms caked white with chalk. For as long as I can remember, probably from about my second birthday, this was my afternoon routine, a ritual mandated by my stepfather, who would periodically make stops at the chalkboard on his way out the front door, or to the bathroom, just to confirm that I was demonstrating the kind of progress that he expected.

He was determined to make sure that I was better prepared for school than all the other kids on the block. More to the point, he had convinced himself that I already was. The man loved to pump me up with positive reinforcement about my intellectual abilities, my God-given gifts—only further enhanced by his judicious enforcement of my daily chalkboard regimen.

By the time I started kindergarten, I was more than ready for public school. And I did well, both at the original elementary school I attended (with mostly Afro-Caribbean and African-American classmates) in East Flatbush and at the second one (with a majority of Jewish and Italian kids) just a 15-minute drive south in Canarsie. In junior high and high school, I read and read and read. When I scored in the 90s on a test or paper, I would hear tongue-in-cheek (mostly) questions about why I hadn't gotten the full 100. I got the point. I had to be the best. I needed to outcompete everybody in my classes. "What did the chiney girls get on the test?" my Trinidadian stepfather would ask.

We never really talked about racism in my house, and certainly not as the reason for why I had to do well. In fact, I never heard my parents talk about race at all. When we moved to Canarsie, a lower-middle-class neighborhood, there were ample opportunities for them to wax xenophobic—or at least frustrated and incredulous—about the ethnic whites in our housing project or in the coveted single-family brick houses just across the street. But if they did, I wasn't within earshot.

Many academics have written about the differences between how African-Americans and black immigrants from the West Indies or Africa deal with racism. They offer various theories for why those differences exist and how they affect black people's lives. Many of those scholars would find the lack of race-talk in my household predictable, given that my mother and stepfather were both from the Caribbean. But I grew up think-

## THE TAKEAWAY

No amount of publishing or acclaim will exempt you from the burdens that come from being black in higher education.

ing of myself as an African-American, and not just because my biological father and his family were from the Deep South.

Most of the black kids I went to school with, West Indian or not, were raised on hip-hop. America was our reference point, and though our race-talk generally consisted of little more than retelling Eddie Murphy and Richard Pryor jokes about how blacks and whites behaved differently in similar circumstances, we read ourselves quite fully into the saga of America's sordid racial history.

Although my stepfather didn't talk about racism per se, he had a kind of natural fearlessness about him, an aura of invincibility, that I believed would have met racism—and any would-be racist—with a swift kick in the ass (or at least a couple of lashes from his belt). But he made it clear to me, even early on, that I didn't have the luxury of being mediocre. My stepfather couldn't intimidate some admissions officer into punching my ticket for college, and the strict mandate about studying hard and getting good grades must have been predicated on his assessment of the challenges that growing up a young black man in America would bring.

**S**ome African-Americans still wax nostalgic about how much harder black people used to work. You know, “back in the day.” It is a subplot in the story about segregation's golden age of black-on-black harmony and mutual benevolence. Racism was so awful and humiliating, they claim, that blacks had no choice but to stick together and give everything their all, to work as hard as they possibly could. Being unexceptional was the kiss of death for a black person in “a white man's world.” Those who were exceptional might not get much more than the white world's castoffs. Still, plodding along in uninspired mediocrity was hardly a fruitful alternative.

Of course, some black people would always be mediocre—and in a white-supremacist state, mediocre blacks “proved” the rule of racial inferiority. They made the race look bad. Mediocre whites were individual underachievers, but racism demanded that mediocre blacks stand in for the inherent, God-given limitations of their entire race. Plus, whites controlled most of the important social and economic institutions in the country, and the weaker members of their social networks could still benefit from those connections. Blacks didn't have the luxury of being average if they still wanted a chance to succeed.

We had to be—as the elders explained—“twice as good as whites” to get the jobs that whites didn't even want.

“Twice as good as whites” is about recognizing that America is a place where whites and blacks can do the exact same things and achieve very different results. That is one textbook definition of what racism looks like. “Twice as good” means that “average” portends different things for blacks and whites.

But there has long been another argument afoot in the black community—the “culture of poverty” theory. Some of its biggest proponents include various neo-cons like Thomas Sowell and celebrities like the comedian Bill Cosby, though the latter's touting of “respectability” seems ironic given the controversy now swirling around “America's dad.” I hear versions of “the culture of poverty” whenever I speak to audiences about race in America, black or white audiences. The argument is simple and turns “twice as good” on its head.

There may have been a time when blacks championed high achievement, say the “culture of poverty” proponents. Blacks didn't have what they deserved, so they fought harder to get it. But now African-Americans have grown comfortable with having less, content as second-class citizens, less angry about their social marginalization. They once fought tooth-and-nail for equal rights; now they're resigned to their own inequality. They once protested and marched and faced down dogs for the right to vote. Now they've

lost respect for the ballot, even though there are legislators who seem committed to making it harder for them to vote. The recent protests about police violence in Ferguson, New York City, and elsewhere seem like throwbacks to some bygone era, a temporary speed-bump of agitation along a lengthy highway of black apathy.

According to the “culture of poverty” crowd, blacks don’t want to do much of anything. Instead, they think everything should be handed to them. Forget about being “twice as good”; for the 21st-century black person, “half as good” is more than good enough. While “twice as good” thinking is a critique of racism, culture-of-poverty partisans attack any talk of racism as little more than a justification for do-nothingism.

Those who believe that a “twice as good” ethos has been replaced by a “culture of poverty” mentality maintain that many black people are so busy fetishizing race and racism that they don’t pull themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps and take responsibility for their lives.

Bill O’Reilly, the Fox News host, is only the most prominent figure who declares that the real “conversation on race” that liberals are afraid to have is a conversation about blacks being on the lookout for scapegoats, for external forces that explain away their own underachievement: I didn’t get good grades because the test is biased. I didn’t get the job because the employer must be prejudiced. The bank won’t give me a loan because the loan officer is racist. It is raining in my neighborhood because the clouds are bigots. Someone or something is always out to get them.

There are all kinds of statistical regressions demonstrating, other things being equal, the many ways in which racism does account for different social outcomes. Think of the [audit studies](#) where identical résumés have black-sounding versus white-sounding names at the top. The Biffs end up getting called in for job interviews much more often than the Leroy’s.

This argument—that blacks have gone from promoting the idea of “twice as good” to embracing the idea that something closer to “half as good” is fine—is absurd and strategically brilliant at the same time.

First of all, it sets up a scenario wherein talking about racism at all is only ever a crutch. People who see racism must be the ones looking for handouts and celebrating their victimhood. Critical analysis and social critique be damned: To see race or racism is to be lazy—and racist. Period. It means kicking back on your heels and waiting for “the white man” to give you everything you want. “Why should I have to work hard?” the thought-bubble in black people’s heads is supposed to be saying. “My forefathers built this country. They worked enough for all of their offspring. We are owed our reparations.” They want their bling, the argument goes, and they want it handed to them on a silver platter.

This is exactly why there is such demonization of “the welfare state.” Charles Murray, Lawrence Mead, and other “culture of poverty” theorists have convinced many lawmakers that food stamps and other government handouts are Trojan horses of psychological self-destruction. Here the “culture of poverty” argument closes: If blacks think they can get everything without doing anything and you combine that with Americans’ penchant for lavishing praise on their children for mediocrity, the result is a perfect storm of racial underachievement, lowered expectations, and undeserved entitlement.

As I see it, blacks are not clamoring for half-as-good-opportunities. If anything, they feel like “twice as good” might get them less than it once did.

**T**ake my own tribe: black academics. A few years ago, a series of odd coincidences and scheduling serendipities found me breaking bread with some of the most successful blacks in academe. They have each won all kinds of prestigious awards. Their work has been well cited within their disciplines and beyond. They are tenured at some of the most distinguished institutions in the country. And, down to a person, they felt underappreciated, disrespected, and dismissed as scholars. They had achieved everything, yet they felt that many of their white colleagues treated them with little more than contempt or utter indifference. It was disheartening to hear.

These senior scholars of color described being ignored by administrators, maligned by others in their fields, and somewhat alienated from the centers of their disciplines—even when they ostensibly constituted, by reasonable criteria, the very centers of those disciplines.

The first time I heard such a tale, over lunch at a coffee shop in California, I tried to dismiss it as an isolated incident, one person's idiosyncratic experience. Maybe he was hypersensitive. Maybe I had caught him on a bad day. But then I met other senior and very successful scholars (in Michigan and Massachusetts, in New York and North Carolina) with similar stories to tell about humiliating slights that they interpreted as race-based disrespect. I had to admit that something more was going on than thin-skinned bellyaching.

Most of these scholars were sharing their stories with me (their junior colleague) for my own good, in hopes of steeling me for a similar fate. Their point: No amount of publishing productivity or public acclaim will exempt you from the vulnerabilities and burdens that come from being black in the academy. Being "twice as good" wasn't enough to spare them the sting of race-based stigma.

These scholars weren't lamenting the stain of "affirmative action," the fear that people assumed their achievements were based on something other than purely meritocratic deservedness (the Clarence Thomas critique). Rather, they were arguing something close to the opposite: They had succeeded at a game stacked against them—most people in their fields knew and understood that—but the thanks they received were attempts to ignore them, to demean them with cool disinterest and a series of daily exclusions from important departmental discussions or leadership roles at their respective universities.

They were bitter and disheartened. Was I doomed for the same fate?

My stepfather might have given me my early taste of academic success, but my mother gave me my temperament. I have always tried to be a generous and empathetic interlocutor. I don't always succeed, but I try. Many faculty members reserve their empathy for students and colleagues who are just like them, based on ethnic affiliation, regional background, or any number of factors. They see themselves in those individuals and are, therefore, more than willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, in subtle ways, maybe without even realizing it. I have seen that at every place I've ever taught. It doesn't matter if the scholars are left-leaning or right-leaning, male or female, black or white. Everyone does it.

But only a small subset of scholars musters the same kind of empathy for (and investment in) people who differ from them in some substantial way. Clearly, race is one of those rubrics, but not the only one. Certain professors are less likely to go the extra mile for colleagues who are different from them, doing things "by the book" instead of thinking off-script in more humane and creative ways about what these people need—something they would be more likely to do with folks "just like them."

What modicum of professional success I might have is almost exclusively a function of the fact that I try (though don't always succeed) to take everyone I meet very seriously. It is an ethnographic disposition, I tell myself. Everyone is a more than adequate am-

bassador of his or her cultural world. It doesn't matter how educated people are; if you listen long enough and carefully enough, a good ethnographer can always learn something important. If not, the failure is the ethnographer's, nobody else's. And often people respond generously to just being listened to.

**I** smile too much. I'm working on that. I wish I had more of my stepfather's cold stare. But I also realize that smiling, genuinely and warmly smiling, is a kind of magic bullet, especially for black men in the academy.

Not too long ago, I did a kind of experiment. I am constantly telling students that "everything is ethnography," that an anthropologist is always on the clock, seeking out new ways of spying on and interpreting cultural practices and processes. So as a kind of ethnographic investigation, I went against the grain of my general tendencies and tried not to smile. I wanted to see how it would affect my social interactions.

I conducted this little test as part of a job interview. I didn't really know anyone on the search committee, at least not very well, and I decided that I would actively try not to over-smile during my interview. I wasn't going to scowl, but I would stay, as much as I could, emotionally (and facially) neutral. I couldn't stop a smile from breaking out across my face for a few fleeting seconds at least once, but I tried to suppress it immediately. I did all I could to look "serious." I crossed my right leg over my left. I sat back calmly. I answered their questions soberly but substantively (I thought), and then I left.

I don't know how I was read, but I fear that I might have come across as arrogant. Maybe even a little standoffish and "uppity." Who knows?

It wasn't a controlled scientific experiment, so I can't isolate all the variables and search for some statistically significant correlation between my demeanor and the committee's decision that I wasn't a good "fit" for the job. But I imagined that I could feel their coolness during our conversation, and I wish that I had been able to go back into the interview room and test that first response against the one that my more smiley self might have garnered.

I want to think about my smiling as a sign of empathy and generosity, but maybe I am reading myself too kindly. At my most cynical and self-critical, I call it a postmodern version of "shucking and jiving": my trying to do whatever I can to put people at ease, to listen to what they have to say, to shower them with inviting (and unselfconscious) smiles. Is this the 21st-century equivalent of the yes man?

I must not have wanted that job if I was willing to do my little experiment during the interview. But it still stung when I didn't get the nod. When I was told that I wasn't right for the post, I thought of my senior black colleagues and the disrespect they'd talked about.

Like everyone else, regardless of race, my world is full of tiny and not-so-tiny slights, major and minor humiliations every single day: a barrage of looks, comments, emails, reactions, decisions, and personal or professional rejections—intended and inadvertent—that seem to belittle at every turn. At least it feels that way, as if my daily life is organized around the reeling dash from one disrespectful dismissal to another.

The world's playlist constantly ends on a version of the same tune: "John, don't believe your own hype. You're not as good as people pretend you are. And don't you ever forget it." That little ditty does battle with my stepfather's earlier accolades. It is probably an outgrowth of those very accolades, nurtured by my nasty little subconscious, my own idiosyncratic version of academic impostor syndrome.

I spent my 20s and 30s hoping that I could credentialize myself into a kind of protective cocoon against such onslaughts, the ones I try to deflect from others and the many more I inflict upon myself. I may not have been "twice as good" as anybody, but I was going to try my damndest to reach my goals: B.A. M.A. Ph.D. Tenure. Named pro-



fessorship.

None of it is foolproof though. And at the end of the day, success might simply be based on how often and easily one smiles, on whether someone is twice or half as good at that—yet another example of something universal that might be felt a little more acutely from a perch on one side of the racial tracks that divide us.

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# The Invisible Labor of Minority Professors

By AUDREY WILLIAMS JUNE

CARBONDALE, ILL.

**R**achel A. Griffin is used to students she doesn't know showing up for her office hours here at Southern Illinois University. Sometimes they come to see her on her first day of class for the semester.

The stories, by now, are familiar: Often a friend has taken a course from Ms. Griffin, associate professor in the department of communication studies, and thinks she'll have good advice. The student sits down and tearfully describes a problem he or she is counting on Ms. Griffin to help solve. Maybe it's how to make the transition to the campus or what to do about a much-needed financial-aid check that has yet to arrive.

"I'm clearly not a financial-aid adviser, but what do you do in that moment?" says Ms. Griffin. "You hand the student a Kleenex, and you get on the phone and see what you can do."

Ms. Griffin, who is biracial and identifies as black, knew when she came to Southern Illinois seven years ago that black students at the predominantly white institution would seek her out. While other professors, particularly women of any ethnicity, struggle to balance demands for mentorship and service work, faculty members of color say that their cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds mean they receive a disproportionate number of requests.

The hands-on attention that many minority professors willingly provide is an unheralded linchpin in institutional efforts to create an inclusive learning environment and to keep students enrolled. That invisible labor reflects what has been described as cultural taxation: the pressure faculty members of color feel to serve as role models, mentors, even surrogate parents to minority students, and to meet every institutional need for ethnic representation.

On many campuses, cultural taxation — a term coined in the 1990s by Amado M. Padilla, a professor of psychological studies in education at Stanford University — is exacerbated by a student population diversifying faster than the faculty. College-going rates have increased among minority groups, and [demographic change](#) is yielding [more Hispanic high-school graduates](#). Meanwhile, the pipeline of minority Ph.D. students isn't as robust, and efforts to recruit and retain minority professors are uneven at best.

Among the largest minority groups enrolled at Southern Illinois are about 3,000 black undergraduate, graduate, and professional-school students. But there are just 31

## THE TAKEAWAY

Minority faculty members perform disproportionate amounts of mentoring and service work. Four professors offer advice on handling that unseen workload.



black tenured or tenure-track professors — a ratio of 100 to 1, according to institutional research data. The university's 24 Hispanic professors who are tenured or on the tenure track are far outnumbered by the almost 1,300 Hispanic students. (Including the institution's full-time, non-tenure-track faculty members adds 56 black and Hispanic professors to the mix.)

Retention is a priority on many campuses these days, and technology tends to undergird those efforts, with [data analysis identifying students at risk](#) of dropping out. Such measures can help, but studies suggest that minority students who have faculty mentors they can relate to tend to stick around. In a [paper](#) that outlines a framework for retaining minority students in higher education, researchers note that "informal contact between faculty and students is more critical than ever" and that colleges need to work hard at hiring positive faculty role models.

Faculty members of color nationwide describe how frequently they advise current and former underrepresented-minority students and their friends, many of them first-generation students who need extra support to navigate college life. The professors intervene on behalf of students in sticky situations with other instructors and try to educate white colleagues on the nuances of race-related issues that impact the lives of minority students. Their offices feature tissue boxes and "crying chairs." And that's just the time spent with students. Those same faculty members are also tapped to serve on a seemingly endless stream of committees, for their "unique perspective."

A more diverse faculty could lessen the effects of cultural taxation, but administrators might not recognize how often minority professors can feel overburdened or tokenized, even when they want to do the work. When it comes to service commitments and mentorship, says Ms. Griffin, "I'm always stretched thin." And that work is unseen, she says. "Where does that get documented, in terms of what faculty of color do?"

On most campuses, it doesn't. That can make diversifying the faculty seem less urgent, and complicate the lives of minority professors already there. Mentorship and committee work may benefit institutions, but they don't count for tenure or promotion in the way research and publications do. Professors who carry heavy service loads do it at a risk to their careers.

**J**osé D. Najar keeps a small desk in his office next to his own, for the students, many black and Hispanic, who seek him out. "If they tell me they're doing poorly in class, I say, 'You come and sit here,'" says Mr. Najar, an assistant professor of history at Southern Illinois. "You're doing your work, and I'm doing my work."

Some know him from programs through the campus's Hispanic/Latino Resource Center; he's also an adviser for the Latino Cultural Association. "I'm not required to help, but I come from where they come from," Mr. Najar says. "I know the struggles."

Angela J. Aguayo, an associate professor of cinema and digital culture here, is frequently asked to speak at diversity-related events. "I've hit points where I thought, There's no way I can do all that I'm asked," she says. "So I have to make strategic choices."

After a recent panel for National Hispanic Heritage Month, three young women approached Ms. Aguayo, who identifies as Chicana. "I want to be like you," she remembers them saying. "They weren't even in my department. It brought me back to that place when I was so hungry for someone who looked like me and had made it."

The Rev. Joseph A. Brown's office in the Africana-studies department is a go-to place for minority students across Southern Illinois's campus. Father Brown, an 18-year veteran of the faculty, has been a steady presence here, mentoring countless students, not all in minority groups, some of whom have gone on to become professors themselves. He often counsels students with little family support on how to succeed in college. Sometimes he asks a student sitting in his office a question as simple as whether he's eaten today.

“You really do have to listen on two or three different levels,” says Father Brown, a full professor. “You never know who’s going to come through the door. It’s like the oasis in the desert for students.”

It feels “almost like a reunion,” says Brione Lockett, a graduate assistant in the department. Mr. Lockett first met Father Brown as an undergraduate, and now he’s pursuing a master’s degree in public administration and public health. The faculty and other students in the department are a close-knit group, he says. “They make me feel like I’ve been there forever.”

Students aren’t the only ones who ask minority faculty members for their perspectives or guidance. Administrators, for a different purpose, do the same. They often request that faculty members of color serve on committees and task forces of various kinds.

When Mary Yu Danico was on the tenure track at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, she once served on a half-dozen committees — in addition to those she volunteered for herself — at the invitation of the president or dean.

“You feel flattered that they’re asking you to be on these committees,” says Ms. Danico, who is Asian-American. “They say, ‘We need your voice there, we really need your perspective.’ But when you have so few people of color on campus, there’s only so many people you can ask.” A sociologist, Ms. Danico is now an associate dean in the College of Environmental Design. She says that later in her career, whenever she could determine that she had been asked to serve on a committee “just to be a name,” she would step down.

Faculty members of color take extra commitments in stride even as they struggle to balance them. That’s because, many say, they realize that if they don’t step up, students may not ask for or get help elsewhere, or a committee might be all white.

“We know there’s a need,” says Ms. Danico. “We know what it’s like not to be represented.”

Faculty members across the country report being acutely aware of the importance of serving as role models, perhaps spurring minority students’ interest in joining the professoriate.

“It absolutely matters” to black students “to have professors who look like you and are connected to the African-American experience,” says Novotny Lawrence, a black man who is chair of the radio, television, and digital-media department here at Southern Illinois. “The mere presence is important, and so is being willing to listen and use your position to advocate for them.”

**J**anice D. Hamlet quit her first academic job, she says, to escape the crushing weight of cultural taxation. More than 20 years later, as an associate professor of communication at Northern Illinois University, she finds her obligations more manageable, in part because her workplace is more diverse.

In Ms. Hamlet’s first tenure-track job, at an institution she declines to name, she was the sole minority faculty member. “When I was hired, the president of the college gave me a brief compliment on my credentials,” she says. “Then she said, ‘You have something extra,’ and she kind of winked at me, and I learned that the ‘extra’ was my ethnicity.” Ms. Hamlet is African-American.

Word spread to black and Hispanic students that she had been hired; sometimes they would walk by the classroom where she was teaching and wave at her through the window.

Ms. Hamlet found it increasingly difficult to mentor students and advocate for them while serving on numerous committees at the behest of administrators and teaching four courses. She was also finishing her dissertation at the time. She left the job after a year.

“I was naïve enough to think that I had been hired as an assistant professor,” she says, “but I really was there to be a one-person minority-affairs office.” Now, at a much larger institution, students have more places to turn, she says. “I can make my contributions to students of color, and all students for that matter, and there’s not so much pressure.”

Ms. Griffin, communication-studies professor at Southern Illinois, says she’s gotten better at “effectively positioning myself as a bridge.” That means setting limits. “I’m not saying that I don’t want students to ask me for help, but I can’t provide long-term emotional support for a student,” says the professor, who earned tenure last year. She also now turns down requests for feedback on papers from students who aren’t in her classes.

“My first couple of years, I didn’t have that boundary,” says Ms. Griffin, whose department chair gave her tips early on about how to deflect requests for her time. “If students asked me to read something, I would read it.”

In his interviews here, says Mr. Najar, the history professor, administrators acknowledged that he could be faced with multiple service and mentoring opportunities.

“They all had one thing to say: We want to foster an environment where you can actually get tenure,” he says. “I know I can always say no to things.”

Open communication with administrators can help new faculty members especially balance their workload. “I encourage people who are faced with institutional service work to say, ‘I’m interested in doing this, but here’s what I have on my plate,’” says Richard J. Reddick, an associate professor of educational administration at the University of Texas at Austin whose research interests include cultural taxation. “We don’t necessarily know we can negotiate.”

For the most part, faculty members of color still struggle to get administrators to recognize cultural taxation and how it affects them. Recent action in the California State University system is an exception.

In 2014, Charles Toombs, chair of the Africana-studies department at San Diego State University and a member of the system’s faculty union, joined colleagues at a Board of Trustees meeting to share a detailed account of what faculty members of color do to promote the success of minority students.

“It’s a lot of work, but I willingly do it,” Mr. Toombs, who is African-American, told the trustees. “It’s one of the most rewarding parts of my professorship.”

The appeal from Mr. Toombs and other faculty members for the system to acknowledge their extra workload paid off. The faculty union’s most recent contract takes note of it and includes a new program through which any professor with “exceptional service commitments or excessive student-contact hours” can apply for “assigned time,” which is a partial release from their regular duties.

“Just to have the recognition that on the CSU campuses there are service commitments that faculty of color have is a positive step,” Mr. Toombs says.

## HOW TO HANDLE THE INVISIBLE WORKLOAD

Here’s some advice on how to better manage teaching, research, and disproportionate amounts of mentoring and service work, from faculty members who have had to strike that balance.

### Don’t Say Yes Right Away

“Have a discussion with whoever asked you to sit on a committee and say, ‘I want to make sure I get my research done so that I’m prepared when I go up for tenure. If I do this, something else has to go. What do you suggest?’”

### Make It Count for Them — and You

“Ask students to help you with your research. That’s a way of interacting with them and having a mentoring relationship with them, while you get the work done that you need to.”

—Janice D. Hamlet, associate professor of communication, Northern Illinois U.

### Enlist the Help of an Ally

“I need a way as a pre-tenure faculty member to say no if I needed to. My white, male department chair played an amazing role in protecting my time. He said, when people ask you to do things say, ‘I’m pre-tenure. Let me check in with the chair.’ That was vital because it gave me a way to get off the hook.”

—Rachel A. Griffin, associate professor of communication studies, Southern Illinois U.

### Think of the Big Picture

“I tell junior faculty members, You don’t have to do everything. In the long run, if you don’t take care of yourself, you’re not going to be here for the students you want to serve.”

—Mary Yu Danico, associate dean, College of Environmental Design, California State Polytechnic U. at Pomona

### Keep the Goal in Mind

“It’s hard to say no — especially to students. My advice to young tenure-track faculty is to just balance everything out carefully because the service work isn’t going to be of significant value when you go through the tenure process.”

—Charles Toombs, department chair and associate professor of Africana studies, San Diego State U.

**A**t other institutions, pressure from students has pushed administrators to do more to recruit underrepresented-minority faculty members.

A black student group at the University of Cincinnati has [demanded that it hire](#) at least 16 black staff and senior faculty members over the next three years. Students at Yale University have been discussing the lack of faculty diversity there since one student [put up a poster](#) last month comparing the student and faculty populations. Last week Yale said it [would spend more than \\$50 million](#) over the next five years to expand the faculty's diversity. And at Ithaca College, a series of racially charged incidents led to student protests in recent weeks. The New York college has announced a new diversity plan that includes a goal to hire more minority faculty members.

At Southern Illinois, efforts to shift the makeup of the faculty revolve around a trio of approaches. There's a program designed to give underrepresented-minority professors access to seasoned faculty members who can guide them through the tenure and promotion process, a chancellor-provided "diversity opportunity hire" fund to recruit minority tenure-track professors, and a statewide program that awards fellowships to minority graduate students seeking degrees that lead to faculty or staff positions at an Illinois university.

Linda McCabe Smith, the associate chancellor for institutional diversity, knows how the workload can escalate for minority professors. She was a tenured faculty member at Southern Illinois before moving into administration.

"I have walked the walk," says Ms. Smith, an African-American. "I know it can be overwhelming."

She talks with deans and with the provost "so that we can work to keep these individuals protected as much as possible," she says.

Ms. Smith says diversifying the faculty is "an ongoing process." Ms. Griffin and other minority professors and students see limited progress. "More people available to serve the population that we have would help," Ms. Griffin says.

Though minority students often identify with professors who look like them, faculty members of color believe more white colleagues on their campuses could step up.

"Diversity is everybody's work," says Mr. Reddick, of the University of Texas. Sharing a racial or ethnic background with students isn't necessary to mentor them, he says. "White professors can connect at some level. Being [someone who cares about a student](#) is sufficient."

Still, many faculty members of color will probably continue to form a support system for minority students.

"I'm honored that someone trusts me enough to send a student to me," says Ms. Griffin. But, she says, "we need to have a more transparent dialogue about the implications of recruiting the number of students of color that we do."

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# When Pursuing Diversity, Victory Is Hard to Define

By DAN BERRETT and ERIC HOOVER

**T**hey shouted their outrage through megaphones. Last month black students at the University of Missouri's flagship campus blocked the homecoming parade to voice their concerns about racism, how they felt unwelcome on their own campus. "It is our duty to fight for freedom," they chanted, echoing the well-known activists' refrain. "It is our duty to win."

This week brought a dramatic outcome. Students who had demanded a change in leadership got it when two top administrators stepped down. By all accounts, the protesters won.

Yet that victory is complicated. "Two kings' heads rolled," as one professor told *The Chronicle*, but the campus remained largely as it was before: a veritable town of almost 35,000 students from different backgrounds, with various understandings of diversity, power, and how to get along. The university announced changes — including plans for a diversity officer and mandatory diversity training — even as it responded to threats of violence. One student said the recent protests were "just the beginning." He need not look far to see that short-term victories don't guarantee much.

People in higher education have been watching closely the events in Columbia. Some, like Calvin L. Warren, an assistant professor of American studies at George Washington University, see the ouster of the president and chancellor as satisfying but, ultimately, "an illusion of change."

Mr. Warren, whose work focuses on African-American history, [black nihilism](#), and ethics, praises the courage, sacrifice, and resolve of Missouri's student activists. At the same time, he is cautious not to make too much of the results. Symbolic gains are not the same as systemic ones.

"Because people want to believe in higher education," he says, "they translate minor changes into great victories."

Students across the country, from Ithaca, N.Y., to [Claremont, Calif.](#), mounted protests this week. They are fed up with racial injustices on their campuses and feel empowered to push for change. Many institutions — some riven by protests or shamed by bigotry — are weighing lists of demands, an array of strategies for promoting inclusion. But changing a racial climate is a long-term struggle, students, faculty, and administrators agree. And nobody, anywhere, can say exactly what it would mean to win.

## THE TAKEAWAY

Students are demanding that colleges become more inclusive, but changing a racial climate is a long-term struggle.



## Outrage in Oklahoma

Calling out overt displays of racism is relatively easy. Unacceptable behavior is more visible and easier to eliminate than systemic inequity.

That was the case in March after a [video](#) surfaced of a racist chant by fraternity brothers at the University of Oklahoma. Members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, aboard a bus, sang to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” vowing never to allow black men into their brotherhood. They used a racist slur and referred to lynching.

Protests, candlelight vigils, and national attention followed. So did a swift response from the university. David L. Boren, the president, spoke in unusually blunt terms.

“There is zero tolerance for this kind of racist and bigoted behavior,” he said at a news conference the day after the video surfaced. “These people don’t deserve to be called Sooners.” He cut ties with the fraternity’s campus chapter and expelled the two leaders of the chant.

That was the easy part. Mr. Boren’s actions may have raised First Amendment [concerns](#), but they offered a certain moral satisfaction. Meeting the [demands](#) of a group of black students called OU Unheard, a list presented months before the crisis, has been slower work.

Most of what the students are calling for is administrative: more black faculty members, more money for organizations that serve black students, and expanded retention efforts, among other things.

On some fronts, there has been progress. A vice president to oversee diversity efforts was hired just weeks after the video spread widely. Each college is taking on an associate dean or director who will focus on diversity and inclusion. Incoming students are now required to take five hours of diversity training.

## Tougher Challenges

Meanwhile, OU Unheard is seeking another change, one that is grand and nebulous: improving the university’s “atmosphere.”

That task lacks clear metrics and someone who can own it. Yes, the atmosphere is a product of institutional decisions and priorities. But it also reflects scores of choices made every day by thousands of students, faculty, and staff. Where do you sit at lunch? Do you ever really interact with people of different races? When they share their experiences and opinions, how do you react? Do you listen to what they say, however painful it may be, or do you reject it out of hand?

Being able to engage in productive, respectful dialogue is a good start, says George Henderson, a professor emeritus of human relations, education, and sociology at Oklahoma. But true inclusion, he says, requires something deeper, especially when many spaces on campus remain segregated.

Over the years, there’s been change on the campus, to be sure, and Mr. Henderson, who was the third black professor hired at Oklahoma, in 1967, has experienced it firsthand. During the ferment of the 1960s and ’70s, he says, activists sought, and won, a series of objectives: changes in the curriculum, the presence of black administrators, and efforts to attract and retain graduate students of color. “We declared victory,” he says.

But it was fleeting. New minority faculty members were hired, but many soon left, he says, because the campus had not truly embraced them. “Progress,” he says, “was illusory.”

Even these days, says Mr. Henderson, a diverse student body or faculty should not be the only end goal. A certain number does not guarantee inclusion.



Faculty members tend to stick to their own group, he says. So do students. “I hear as many black students say they’re more comfortable with black people as I hear white students say they’re more comfortable with white people,” the professor says. “At what point do we say we feel comfortable with people on campus without the qualification?”

For students, the series of crises on campuses across the country, linked by social media, can be both empowering and exhausting. “Mizzou is OU!” OU Unheard recently [posted](#) on Twitter, referring to a new hashtag campaign to share what it’s like to be a black college student. “Educate those who do not know how it feels to be #BlackOnCampus!”

The catalog of racial incidents can also eclipse one another, and collective amnesia can set in, as one activist suggested in response. “It’s like we forget the SAE thing JUST happened.”

## Slights and Harassments

Not long after Capri’Nara Kendall, a black woman, enrolled at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, a white classmate asked her if she was there on an athletics scholarship. Other students would ask her the same question, which always made her feel unwelcome. Yes, she had received a scholarship, an academic one.

Two years ago, Ms. Kendall helped create the viral Twitter campaign #BBUM (Being Black at the University of Michigan). Students used the hashtag to recount their experiences on the campus. Many felt angry and isolated, they said, describing a slew of racial harassments and slights. The social-media surge carried Ms. Kendall and other members of the university’s Black Student Union to the forefront of a national discussion of race. Frustration, funneled into 140 characters, reached students far and wide, inspiring similar campaigns on other campuses.

Soon high-tech expression gave way to old-school tactics. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day last year, the Black Student Union delivered seven demands to Michigan’s administration. They included providing emergency funds to students struggling financially, a new campus multicultural center, and increasing the BSU’s budget. Members of the group started meeting with administrators weekly.

Although Ms. Kendall, now a senior, credits the university for meeting some of the demands, she still worries about the dearth of students who look like her. The enrollment of black students has dropped since 2006, when Michigan voters approved a ban on considering race in college admissions. This year, less than 5 percent of all students on campus are black, down from almost 8 percent in 2005. One of the BSU’s demands had been to increase that number to 10 percent. “I probably won’t see that in my lifetime,” she says. “I can’t say students of color are satisfied.”

Recently, Michigan announced plans to recruit more high-achieving, low-income students, part of a broad plan to expand campus diversity without considering applicants’ race. Making the campus more welcoming, Ms. Kendall says, depends on enrolling and retaining more underrepresented-minority students (almost 13 percent in this year’s freshman class, compared with 10 percent last year). The campus climate can’t improve,

**At the U. of Michigan, black enrollment has dropped to less than 5 percent. ‘I can’t say students of color are satisfied,’ says a student leader.**

she says, unless the university enrolls more students of color.

In Ms. Kendall's experience over the last two years, that climate hasn't changed much. She was pleased to see so many white students turn out for a "die in" following the deaths of two black men, Michael Brown in Missouri and Eric Garner in New York, in encounters with the police. Nonetheless, she doesn't think many white students are concerned about the minority students' experiences — or their feelings. This week a black friend relayed an exchange on a campus bus: As she was reading about the protests at the University of Missouri, a white student tapped her on the shoulder and warned her against similar action in Ann Arbor.

Such stories remind Ms. Kendall why she got involved with the Black Student Union in the first place. Yet pushing for change, like the universitywide race-and-ethnicity course requirement the group demanded, is tiring when you're taking 15 credits, working part time, and preparing to graduate. "I'm not going to lie," she says. "I'm kind of burnt out."

As the BSU's leader, Ms. Kendall is not about to abandon activism. She planned to meet on Friday with Michigan's president, Mark S. Schlissel, to discuss the university's strategic plan for increasing campus diversity. "The momentum has not died, but it's like, OK, where do you go from here?" she says. "I see the same cycle of students becoming activists, exposing issues the university is having, and the university giving them just enough so that the PR dies out."

Longtime observers have seen that cycle, too. Protests come and go; college bureaucracies endure.

## Passing On Insights

As an undergraduate at Michigan in the late 1970s, Elizabeth James sometimes found a racial slur scrawled on her friends' doors, or her own. She once saw effigies of gorillas hanging from trees. As part of a tight-knit group of black students, she says, she didn't feel as isolated or angry as many students do today. "We were mainly just trying to hold on to a semblance of black pride," recalls Ms. James, who graduated from Michigan in 1982 and earned a master's there two years later. "We were discussing issues among ourselves rather than pushing for broader, systemic change."

Now the Black Student Union's faculty adviser, Ms. James has watched waves of activism rise and fall. Something about the latest round, sparked by the #BBUM campaign, is different, she thinks. Technology has helped students mobilize — and publicize their message — like never before.

But the Twitter age might have a downside, too. "Sometimes the speed with which things come, there's a level of impatience there," Ms. James says of students. "I'm always trying to get them to be patient with one another, to say, OK, we're about to embark on a long journey. You're going to be dealing with race issues your whole life."

To that end, Ms. James talks with students about the importance of passing on insights,

**'I'm always trying to get them to be patient with one another, to say, OK, we're about to embark on a long journey. You're going to be dealing with race issues your whole life.'**

lessons learned from protests, to younger students. She sees more of them in new roles, serving on committees alongside administrators. “For once I can say that there is a movement instead of a moment,” she says. “They’re doing the hard, quiet work that goes on behind the scenes. Sometimes, that’s when the hardest work gets done.”

But how much can happen in a year? Or four?

Walter M. Kimbrough says he can relate to the negative experiences described by black activists on many campuses. Although he believes it’s possible for them to have fulfilling experiences at predominantly white institutions, he thinks some students have unrealistic expectations. “Don’t go expecting some kind of Kumbaya campus,” says Mr. Kimbrough, president of Dillard University, a historically black institution in New Orleans. “That isn’t there.”

Some demands go beyond the power of even well-intentioned administrators. “You’re trying to change the entire culture of a campus,” he says, “and I don’t think any president or student affairs office can do that.”

Colleges, of course, play a large role in shaping students’ expectations, often touting a commitment to diversity that may not match reality. “They’re presenting themselves as some kind of utopia that doesn’t exist,” Mr. Kimbrough says. “And now students are calling them on it, pushing back against the superficial.”

## ‘Semantic Substitutes’

Higher education itself is an imperfect laboratory for enacting change. While often seen as liberal enclaves, colleges can have a harder time grappling with racism than they acknowledge, says Shaun R. Harper, executive director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania. The word “racism” is often buried in euphemism, he says. Researchers and campus officials use terms like “alienating,” “hostile,” or “unfriendly” to describe campuses, [his research](#) has found.

“The semantic substitutes we’ve embraced make it sting a lot less,” Mr. Harper says, but only for white people. It lets them avoid a sense of discomfort, which is often a necessary part of talking about race. To call a climate “chilly” instead of racist, Mr. Harper says, minimizes the gravity of the problem. It sends the message that solving it is as simple as putting on a sweater.

Some wonder if the scope of the problem is beyond higher education’s capacity to fix. Racism, or “anti-blackness,” has no real solution except its elimination, which is unrealistic, says Mr. Warren, of George Washington University. Racism was written into the U.S. Constitution. It is embedded in environmental policy, real estate, and the economy. “It’s such a juggernaut,” he says. “You can try to negotiate it,” but “you’re not going to get rid of it.”

Colleges reflect and amplify the larger culture, with all its inequities. Higher education may have distinct principles and espouse humanist values, he says, holding fast to the idea that every problem has a solution.

“Universities really want to promote the notion of the student as change agent,” he says. But that can offer them a false sense of their own power.

This week, students at Missouri found such power. They and others on campuses across the country are now coming to grips with the scale of their challenge. Go back a few decades, and racial change in higher education had a different meaning. The task was more fraught, but the goal was also simpler.

In the mid-20th century, black students were fighting to attend public flagship campuses. In 1962, that meant braving armed state troopers and angry mobs, as James Meredith found at the University of Mississippi.

## A Different Fight in 1950

Gus T. Ridgel, from Poplar Bluff, Mo., helped to break the racial barrier at the Columbia campus in 1950, and he became its first black student to earn a graduate degree, a master's in economics. At the time, his presence there was victory enough. Today's activists draw a direct line from their experience to his, calling their group Concerned Student 1950.

Mr. Ridgel, who is 89, lived through different circumstances. "I didn't encounter any overt discrimination on campus," he says. Off-campus was another matter; it was completely off limits to him.

He recalls eating in the dining hall because he wouldn't be served anywhere else. He slept alone in his two-bed dorm room because no one would share it with him. Asked if he felt isolated, he says he had little opportunity to dwell on it back then. He was speeding through his studies. To save money, he completed his two-year program, including his thesis, in one year. "I knew I didn't have any time to do any more testing at that time," Mr. Ridgel says.

Though today's black students remain small in number relative to the college's population (8 percent of the student body is black), they are not as alone as Mr. Ridgel was.

But greater visibility and greater numbers come at a cost. Today's students have cited a series of high-profile incidents in recent months. Passers-by hurled racial invective at the president of the student body, who is black; black students were similarly harassed and demeaned during a rehearsal; feces were smeared in the shape of a swastika in a dormitory. All were followed by what the activists saw as a dismissive response by administrators.

Mr. Ridgel had to fight to be admitted. The problem for today's students is that after they have gotten in, the discomfort has not ebbed. Overt discrimination may have been eliminated a long time ago, Mr. Ridgel says. But for today's students, the forces of intimidation and hostility feel no less real.

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# Making Diversity Not the Work of One Office, but a Campuswide Priority

By LEE GARDNER

WASHINGTON

**A**t the annual [National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education](#), it's not hard to get people thinking about diversity and inclusion: They already are. The challenge for the chief diversity officers, other administrators, professors, and students who met here last week lies back home — keeping those ideals on colleagues' and classmates' minds every day, not just when prompted by a complaint or a scandal.

While many colleges now have top-level administrators and offices devoted to diversity, a hot topic of conversation here was how to make it a campuswide priority. For all students and employees to feel included, everyone has to be involved.

That means those committed to inclusion have to be strategic in working with fellow staff, faculty, and students to build a diverse, welcoming community. And they have to cultivate the involvement of top administrators, linking diversity efforts to the institution's broader goals. For example, in an era when enrollment is a challenge for many colleges, and students' success is under ever more scrutiny, attracting and retaining more students from underrepresented minority groups can help increase tuition revenue as well as serve a greater mission.

National attention to racist incidents like [a fraternity's chant](#) at the University of Oklahoma in March, conference participants said, has helped drive a new wave of discussions across campuses on making diversity efforts more effective.

Such incidents highlight how much work there is to be done, said Victoria Sanchez, assistant vice provost for educational equity at Pennsylvania State University. "Now people beyond diversity offices are at a point of saying, How do we do this work?"

## Reaching Across Campus

While more and more colleges have established diversity offices, they are often small. Some conference participants represented solo operations. One diversity offi-

### THE TAKEAWAY

The issue should be on the minds of people across campus every day, not just during a crisis.

cer said during a session that, after a recent reorganization, she led a staff of three for a state system that enrolls about 60,000 students.

And diversity work encompasses a vast array of questions and challenges for a broad population of students, including racial and ethnic minority groups, the LGBTQ community, and the disabled. Diversity offices often oversee a portfolio of scholarship, student-support, and cultural programs, in addition to helping other departments think through diversity goals. Because administrators see so much work to be done, they are often tempted to take on more responsibilities, several participants here noted.

Marco J. Barker, senior director for education, operations, and initiatives in the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, counseled people in small offices to “edit what you do.” A handful of well-run programs with a demonstrable effect on diversity or campus climate are worth more to everyone than trying to do too much, he said, and doing little of it well.

He also urged participants to reach out across campus strategically, not just among deans or department heads. When assembling a committee to tackle a certain issue, for instance, he advised passing over some of the “usual suspects” — such as faculty members who are already vocal about diversity — in favor of others who haven’t been involved before. That may bring in new perspectives, he said, and develop new allies.

Successes and new programs should be widely promoted, Mr. Barker said. Tracking down the person responsible for featuring stories on the institution’s home page and building that relationship, he said, can help raise the profile of diversity throughout the college and beyond. Many people don’t know about or pay much attention to a given diversity program, he said. “If you don’t put it out there, it doesn’t exist.”

## Buy-In From the Top

Even a small diversity office or a single dedicated administrator can have an important effect. But when an institution concentrates that responsibility, it poses a risk, said Ms. Sanchez of Penn State: “The rest of the university doesn’t have to think much about it.”

That’s not the case at her institution, she said, where a number of offices, committees, and programs have focused on diversity and inclusion for decades, both at the institutional level and among colleges and schools. For the past 15 years Penn State’s Office of Educational Equity has worked under a regularly updated [strategic framework](#) for diversity that helps set priorities and goals.

Nothing is more important along the way than “active, visible leadership from the top,” said Ms. Sanchez. Diversity is one of six [institutionwide imperatives](#) set by Eric J. Barron, Penn State’s new president. He has also required the strategic framework for diversity to be incorporated into the university’s master plan.

That can help engage individual administrative and academic units, some of which are “more attuned to diversity” than others, Ms. Sanchez said. A vague expectation that all departments think about diversity may not be enough to “raise the floor” for the entire institution, she said. “If the person at the top says, ‘This is my expectation,’ it happens in ways that it doesn’t happen” otherwise.

## Everyone’s Challenge

To make diversity and inclusion everyone’s responsibilities, some institutions are taking a new approach. Last summer, for example, Virginia Tech got rid of its Office for Diversity and Inclusion and the vice president’s position that went with it.



In their place, the university set up the [President's Inclusion and Diversity Executive Council](#). Led by Timothy D. Sands, Virginia Tech's president, the group, which meets monthly, [includes](#) 13 vice provosts and deans, plus six "inclusion coordinators" who are charged with raising issues and proposing effective strategies.

The idea is to spread out the responsibility. The former office was sometimes "scape-goated," said Dannette Gomez Beane, director of the Office of Graduate Recruiting and Diversity Initiatives and an inclusion coordinator on the council. "People would turn to that office for help and support, but also would turn to it for blame," she said, when a problem wasn't easily solved. (The university plans to hire a new vice provost for inclusion and diversity, but the president's council will remain in place.)

The new structure is supposed to force decision makers at Virginia Tech to assess all units' needs in terms of diversity and inclusion, as well as their progress. Ideally, Ms. Beane said last week, it will encourage people from the highest levels on down to stop asking why someone isn't doing something. They should start asking, she said, "What should I be doing?"

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# Helping Black Men Succeed in College

By BEN GOSE

**C**ameron Slater spent nearly a decade on the streets in Little Rock, Ark.—he says he saw four friends die within three months—before he enrolled at Pulaski Technical College after a nudge from his pastor.

In his first year, he and his friends noticed some adults on the campus, in North Little Rock, who always seemed to be chatting with black male undergraduates. “We thought they were probation officers,” he says.

The adults were actually academic coaches at the Network for Student Success, a Pulaski effort supported by the U.S. Education Department to improve retention and graduation rates among black male students. Mr. Slater gave the program a try. He was assigned a “success coach,” who helped him identify academic goals. He was advised to sit at the front of his class and introduce himself to his instructors. He was urged to dress in a shirt and tie and to overcome his natural shyness to speak in front of groups.

In his second year, Mr. Slater was elected student-body president. He earned an associate degree in business administration from the community college in 2013, and is now working toward a bachelor’s degree at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

“Once I got into the network, I saw that it was just a bunch of brothers in there cracking jokes—that studying was not all about being uptight,” he says. “I started pulling more and more people in, and letting them know that this is where they needed to be if they wanted to be successful.”

The higher-education struggles of black men are well chronicled. Over the past 15 years, dozens of colleges have started programs designed specifically to get black men enrolled and help them graduate. So far, they are still significantly outnumbered and outperformed on campus by black women. But efforts to improve their experiences are likely to accelerate since President Obama’s announcement in February of the My Brother’s Keeper program, which includes philanthropic pledges of \$200-million to help young black students.

Many African-American boys fall behind early in their schooling and never catch up. Fewer than 20 percent are proficient in math and reading in both fourth and eighth grades. Just over half graduate from high school. Only a third of black men in the United States who attend four-year colleges graduate within six years, compared with 45 percent of Hispanic men, 57 percent of white men, and 64 percent of Asian men. Only 17 percent of all black male students who enter community colleges will earn certificates or associate degrees or transfer to four-year insti-

## THE TAKEAWAY

Campus programs designed to support black male students are spreading. And many of them appear to be working.

tutions within three years.

Advocates say the new programs aren't just about helping African-American men, but are also key to meeting overall goals related to college completion.

"We've got to address the performance challenges in this cohort if we're going to raise America's overall attainment level," says Arlethia Perry-Johnson, director of the University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative.

The oldest programs have been around for a decade or more. Ohio State University's Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male, which opened in 2004, provides a four-day program just before classes start to 50 to 60 black male freshmen each year, about a third of the black male students in the entering class. The program emphasizes soft skills—such as motivation and study habits—rather than academic instruction. "We have found that these soft skills tend to have a greater effect on how successful young men are on our campus," says James L. Moore III, an education professor who directs the center.

Each fall the Bell center holds the Gathering of Men, a networking event for black male students, professors, and community professionals. In February it organizes a two-day, off-campus retreat for black male students from Ohio State and other universities. The weekend event features a diverse schedule, including research-paper presentations, yoga, and sessions on financial literacy and how to deal with police officers they might encounter.

**T**he Bell center's programs appear to be paying off. Ohio State's six-year graduation rate for black male undergraduates is now 67 percent, an increase of 30 percentage points since 2002, notes Mr. Moore.

L'nard Tufts, an Ohio State senior majoring in mechanical engineering, says he was often the only black student in his freshman engineering classes. The Bell center's orientation program, he says, introduced him to other "academically minded African-American males whom I could lean on for support."

Mr. Tufts also participated in the center's Leadership Institute, a series of seminars that helped him develop skills that he is tapping this year as founder of a student group, Dexterity 43210. The organization (its name matches Ohio State's ZIP code), which drew 70 students for its first meeting, intends to create an "overly complex contraption," he says, and enter it in a Rube Goldberg competition at the Center of Science and Industry, in Columbus.

At the University of Maryland at College Park, black undergraduates helped start the Black Male Initiative in 2005, amid concerns about the relatively small number of black professors on the campus. The group initially met on Saturday mornings for undergraduates and black administrators and professors to get to know one another. Now it holds a monthly community forum on issues such as racial profiling and the criminal-justice system, and arranges volunteer opportunities in local schools for black male undergraduates.

"It started as a tool to help retain black males on a campus that is, in the view of students of color and staff, 'chilly' in terms of the cultural climate," says Solomon Comisong, a co-founder of the initiative and assistant director of the university's Nyumburu Cultural Center. "It's not just for academic reasons that students aren't retained."

The Georgia university system's African-American Male Initiative has programs on 27 of the 31 campuses. The system encourages participation by providing matching grants of up to \$30,000 per year. Since the effort's inception, in 2002, the number of bachelor's degrees earned systemwide by black men has increased 82 percent, to 2,353 in 2013, officials say.

Each institution designs its own variations. The Georgia Institute of Technology, for

example, offers a multiweek immersion program for new black male students, so that they will more quickly appreciate the level of study required to be successful. Less-selective institutions have created programs that help at-risk students with “intrusive advising”—abrupt interventions delivered in person when they cut class or fail assignments.

“We don’t have a cookie-cutter approach, because we don’t have a cookie-cutter system,” says Ms. Perry-Johnson, director of the systemwide initiative.

**S**ome of the most innovative programs nationwide are at community colleges, which enroll more than 70 percent of African-American men who attend public colleges. Some of those institutions, including Baltimore City Community College, receive federal support for their programs from an Education Department program designed to help predominantly black institutions.

Baltimore City is receiving \$2.37-million over four years for a program that offers mentoring and tutoring as well as bus tickets and books. In addition to helping students financially, the freebies encourage students to attend workshops on topics like time management, note-taking, and balancing academic work with family responsibilities.

All participants also participate in what the program’s director, Duane O. Reid Jr., calls “community mentoring”—including volunteering in local elementary schools and at a soup kitchen.

The program is on track to graduate about 70 African-American men within three years by next fall, he says, a rate of 45 percent. That’s well above the college’s overall graduation rate for black men, which is roughly 5 percent.

Brian Jones, a 43-year-old native of Washington, D.C., who has battled drug addictions and had numerous run-ins with the police over the past two decades, made his way to Baltimore City in 2012 after completing a six-month drug treatment program. The midlife quest for a college degree hasn’t come easy. Mr. Jones had a three-month relapse with synthetic marijuana (“spice”) last January and has flunked algebra twice. But he’s back on track this semester, has nudged his GPA up to 2.6, and hopes eventually to earn a bachelor’s degree in social work from nearby Coppin State University.

He says he is in touch every day with a case manager and an academic adviser supplied by the program, which requires regular check-ins. “I’ve spent a lot of time wasting my time,” Mr. Jones says. “Now I think I still have time to correct the mistakes that I’ve made.”

**S**ome scholars say the recent protests in Ferguson, Mo., highlight the need for changes in how colleges help black men succeed, even though the shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, by a police officer there had nothing to do with higher education.

“Black men are criminalized in our society, and that affects how police officers and others interact with them,” says J. Luke Wood, an associate professor of community-college leadership at San Diego State University. “Teachers may be thinking, ‘Do I to want this student to come to my office hours? Maybe as a white female, I don’t want a black male coming to my office to meet with me one-on-one.’”

Mr. Wood, co-director of a research collaborative that studies efforts to help minority men at community colleges, says many black men are leery of higher education to begin with—they may view it as a female sphere, or may hesitate to seek academic help because of a fear that they’ll look dumb.

“In our research, we’ve found that it doesn’t matter how well you teach—if you don’t have a relationship with these guys first, they’re not going to be open to the information,” he says.

Shaun R. Harper, an associate professor of education at the University of Pennsyl-

vania and executive director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, argues that colleges need to spend far more time and money helping professors understand how their actions, or even unconscious biases, may have a negative impact on black men.

“You can spend hundreds or even thousands of hours helping a black student learn to be resilient and resist harmful racial stereotypes,” Mr. Harper says, “but if the guy goes back into a classroom and the professor is still behaving in a racist manner, or has unchecked assumptions about the student’s background, that resilience only goes so far.”

Yet directors of some student-focused programs say they still see large numbers of students who need almost daily support in order to succeed in college. Kareem Moody, who directs the Network for Student Success program at Pulaski Tech, divides incoming students into groups on the basis of the amount of help they will need. A “green” student, for example, has strong academic skills and motivation and might need advice merely on course scheduling. But a “red” student, like Mr. Slater—someone who has struggled academically, is uncomfortable with college instructors, or perhaps has had run-ins with the law—will receive far more help.

“You have a lot of fatherly talks with those guys to close the door on some things that they might be upset about,” Mr. Moody says.

Mr. Slater, who still spends 15 hours a week at Pulaski working with the network, now shares the lessons he learned from Mr. Moody, which helped him reach the University of Arkansas. For example, email an instructor early, he tells new students, if you know you’re going to miss a class or turn in an assignment late.

“Life happens to all of us,” Mr. Slater tells them. “You want your professor to remember that you’re one of his bright students.”

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# A Liberal-Arts College Intervenes to Diversify Its Faculty

By VIMAL PATEL

**L**ike the country in general, faculty members at American colleges have become more ethnically and racially diverse over the past two decades. Eighty-five percent of full-time and part-time faculty members at all colleges in 1993 were white; by 2013, the latest year for which national data are available, that figure had fallen to 72 percent. Even so, academe doesn't yet mirror the U.S. population, which was 63 percent white in 2013.

Diversifying the faculty remains a challenge particularly at liberal-arts colleges. They are typically in rural settings or located outside major cities, areas that are often racially and ethnically homogenous, notes the Consortium for Faculty Diversity in Liberal Arts Colleges. They also usually hire academics who have experience at other liberal-arts colleges. The job candidates are usually white and come from upper-class backgrounds, some administrators say.

## The Problem

### LACK OF FACULTY DIVERSITY

In 2011, when Beau Breslin became dean of the faculty at Skidmore College, in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., minority and international professors represented 21 percent of its tenured and tenure-track positions. While most institutions focus diversity efforts on hiring black, Latino, and other underrepresented minority faculty members, Skidmore wants also to recruit more Asian-American and international professors "to replicate what's out there in the world," says Mr. Breslin.

It's not just a moral issue, but also one of better preparing students for their lives after they leave college, he says. Skidmore needed a more ethnically and racially diverse faculty to remain relevant.

"We were becoming dinosaurs," he says.

### THE TAKEAWAY

At Skidmore College, members of search committees must justify their choices in terms of race and ethnicity.



## The Approach

### A BETTER-INFORMED SEARCH PROCESS

The key to making Skidmore more diverse, Mr. Breslin says, was changing how the college searched for and vetted faculty hires.

In 2012 Skidmore started offering workshops to two members of every search committee — the chair and a designated “diversity advocate.” The consultants teaching the classes covered such topics as how to craft a job ad that emphasizes diversity, how to recognize implicit bias, and how to make candidates feel welcome during the campus interview.

Delivering the information in four segments, as opposed to delivering it all at once, increases the likelihood that professors will remember it, administrators say, and shows that diversity is an institutional priority.

“Lots of schools will do the one-and-done approach to training the faculty to search,” Mr. Breslin says. “It simply doesn’t give faculty the impression that you care about the importance of diversity and inclusion.”

In addition to the educational interventions, administrators themselves step in near the end of the process to evaluate whether diversity has been properly weighed.

Once a committee begins winnowing applicants, Mr. Breslin and the associate dean meet with the chair and the diversity advocate and ask them to justify their short lists.

“If they come to me with 10 names, and nine of them are white men, and that’s not what’s represented in the applicant pool,” Mr. Breslin says, “then we tell them to go back to the drawing board.”

## The Challenges

### FACULTY SKEPTICISM

Some faculty members were skeptical of any involvement by central administrators or consultants in searches. Others, like John Brueggemann, chair of the sociology department, worry that the focus on race could have led the college to ignore other important types of diversity, including class, sexual orientation, and academic concerns.

“Sometimes you can end up thinking about the color of a candidate, and you may lose track of other things that have been important in the past, like teaching experience or making sure we have certain core topics covered in our curriculum,” Mr. Brueggemann says.

Mr. Breslin also hears professors say they want to hire the most qualified candidate, not the diversity candidate. That, he says, allows for a teachable moment.

Mr. Breslin, who earned his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, acknowledges his own privilege, saying he’s a “white, male, heterosexual, upper-middle-class, Ivy League guy.”

Historically, he often explains to faculty members, applicants like him have been the main conception of a great faculty candidate — the person who went to an elite college and was able to amass an excellent publication history and teaching record, often partly because of the financial resources that allowed him to do so.

“That is one demonstration of significant chops when it comes to teaching our students,” Mr. Breslin says. “But it’s only one perspective of what makes for excellence. If we’re in the business of having a faculty that really does mirror the community, we have to have many perspectives of what constitutes excellence.”

## The Results

### INCREASES IN MINORITY AND INTERNATIONAL FACULTY MEMBERS

In the three years since the administration took a more active role in faculty searches, 22 of the 45 tenure-line searches have resulted in the hiring of a minority or international faculty member. Moreover, in 2011, such faculty members represented 21 percent of 183 tenured or tenure-track positions. They now are 33 percent of 190 such positions.

The less-tangible results, Mr. Breslin says, are the shifts in institutional culture. He would frequently tell committees to overhaul their searches, but the need to do that has dropped in the last year. “A commitment to having a diverse faculty is the new normal,” he says.

Mason Stokes, an associate professor in the English department who has chaired four searches since the workshops began, says he has noticed a gradual change in the college’s environment around inclusive hiring.

“With each new search,” he wrote in an email, “more of my colleagues have gone through the workshops, and this productively decentralizes responsibility for hiring.

“In other words, it was no longer just me, as chair, who had to ‘police’ the process, or even the designated ‘diversity advocate.’ I began to see a critical mass of folks invested in getting this right.”

Even Mr. Brueggemann, the sociology chair, who has voiced some concerns, says he’s pleased with the results so far. But he cautions that not all institutions will experience Skidmore’s success.

“There are people in the conversation who think diversity at all costs, at the expense of any other ideals,” Mr. Brueggemann says. “There are other people who are suspicious of any diversity effort. Dean Breslin is trying to thread the needle, and I think he’s mostly got it right so far.”

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# ‘A Little More Every Day’

## How you can eliminate bias in your own classroom

By KATHLEEN TARR

**E**very three years as part of their minimum continuing legal education, California lawyers are required to complete one credit hour on “recognition and elimination of bias in the legal profession and society.” The State Bar of California added that requirement decades ago as a consumer-protection measure. Obviously, clients cannot secure equal access to justice if the evaluation of their claims is based upon irrelevant personal characteristics.

I’ve always found it curious that many colleges and universities do not require their faculty members to complete similar training. Not only do the experiences of bias on college campuses profoundly affect instructors, but also students are subjected to inequitable treatment in evaluations of their work, in mentorship opportunities, and in many other ways.

Most academics acknowledge the existence of bias in every enclave throughout the United States, but we are less likely to see bias in ourselves or how we contribute to the inequities within our environments. Without such recognition, our solutions to bias and discrimination are frequently focused outwardly when we all know that the only real change comes from within. Colleges and universities should require employees to regularly complete a continuing-education course on bias and discrimination, but until that happens, there are steps we as educators can personally take to lessen the effects of personal bias on our students’ (and colleagues’) experiences in academe.

**Evaluate the work, not the worker.** When it comes to grading (versus other forms of feedback), whether you alter a grade based upon seemingly beneficent considerations or nefarious ones, privileging one student’s work over others’ harms all students. Whether you lower the bar for students you suspect received poor high-school educations or raise it for students you believe had advantaged educations, you are not actually helping students by demanding less, or more, of them. That fact becomes more obvious when you bump a grade a third in either direction because you like — or resent — a student, but it is problematic either way.

In evaluating the worker instead of the work, you open the door to the influence of subconscious emotions about a person’s immutable characteristics. A friend who teaches at the university level in Norway was shocked when I told her I graded my own students’ writing. In Norway, she said, “universities exchange papers for grading.” Objectivity is compromised by mere humanity. Educators who engage personally with their students are psychologically vulnerable to bias in grading.

For the most part here in the United States, we grade our own students’ work. The

### THE TAKEAWAY

Recognizing unconscious prejudices is the first step toward putting an end to them.

challenge, then, is to establish an environment in your classroom in which students (and you) expect objectivity. I tell my students that I am holding them to NCAA, rather than Olympic, standards. While they might begin the season with a pulled hamstring or a hatred of running, or they may hit the track every day of the week and improve their sprinting form tenfold, they still must cross the finish line with a specific qualifying time to advance to nationals (the 'A').

Students must be held to rigorous standards in the evaluation of their work before one even considers the impact of personal bias. It is perfectly natural to be more lenient with people you like, admire, or pity. That is why you must neutralize the effects of that tendency with conscious purpose, evaluating the work that is submitted, not the worker.

**Acknowledge that bias exists.** Essential to any such evaluation is accepting that bias operates everywhere and on a daily basis. Consider a recent experiment in which Nextions, a consulting firm, distributed a legal memo to different law firm partners written by the fictional associate "Thomas Meyer." Half of the partners received a memo in which Meyer was identified as African-American, while the other half received one in which he was described as Caucasian. The partners were then asked to edit the memo for all factual, technical, and substantive errors. "The exact same memo, averaged a 3.2/5.0 rating under our hypothetical 'African American' Thomas Meyer and a 4.1/5.0 rating under hypothetical 'Caucasian' Thomas Meyer. The qualitative comments on memos, consistently, were also more positive for the 'Caucasian' Thomas Meyer than our 'African American' Thomas Meyer," [concludes a study](#) led by Arin N. Reeves

Some of the comments for Caucasian Thomas Meyer included "has potential" and "good analytical skills" while "can't believe he went to NYU" and "average at best" appeared on African-American Thomas Meyer's memo. The feedback was simply a result of unconscious confirmation bias shaped by the society in which we all live. As a result, "when expecting to find fewer errors, we find fewer errors. When expecting to find more errors, we find more errors."

Nextions's recommendations as a result of the experiment include distributing their study for discussion, conducting a similar experiment in-house, training employees on subconscious bias, and making the subjective more objective.

Students experience constant evaluation of their work. Given that, it is imperative that colleges take these recommendations to heart. Until then, however, you can take the initiative.

**Self-assess.** Trying to assess your own biases can be daunting. Luckily, the nonprofit [Project Implicit](#), created in 1998 by three scientists interested in implicit cognition, offers an easily accessible start. It has created a [variety of tests](#) online by which you can explore your thoughts and feelings on race and gender or on mental-health issues, for example.

Don't presume you are fair to those groups that share your identity. I am not homosexual, for instance, and yet I've discovered that one of my particular biases privileges LGBT persons.

Note that while I recommend self-assessment of your biases, I am not advising complete and public transparency. While it may feel empowering to reveal your bias in public, be aware that some people still believe any admission of bias is an admission of guilty behavior. To be so transparent is an individual choice, and not a decision you should take lightly.

**Actively listen.** So often we engage in conversation with our main intention being to persuade someone that our view is correct. "Everything's an argument," asserts the rhet-

orician Andrea Lunsford, and frequently, we approach conversations with “winning” as our paramount concern. Bias certainly operates more readily when we react quickly without thorough consideration. Active listening can break that pattern.

To truly understand what someone is conveying, you must tune out, or at least reconcile, what you are hearing with the information you are providing on your own. For example, as a brown-skinned woman, whenever I say “diversity,” listeners often automatically presume I am talking about race. Sometimes they think I am also talking about gender. Rarely do they think I am talking about professions. But in a room full of Ph.D.s, diversity may be a nod to my J.D. The word can include class or disability. Frankly, when I say diversity I am usually aware of myriad categories.

If you’re not listening actively, it’s all too easy to project your own biases onto a speaker and reduce that person to a stereotype. When I was in college, a TA commenting on my analysis of tort law and hate speech said, “You sound like one of those black nationalist types.” Maybe you would never say something so egregious. Just keep in mind that you may hear plenty that is not actually being said (or written), and your biases influence the final voice.

**Don’t expect a finish line.** Just as strength gains deplete once you stop lifting weights, you will lose advances against your own bias if you cease self-assessment and stop taking countermeasures. I keep a diversity and bias assessment — for my own personal use — that tracks assignments and course grades by perceived student demographics, including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. That means I can easily identify any patterns that might develop because they are charted in such a way that they stand out (data graphs are essential). But just the very fact that I am tracking this information maintains my own sensitivity to issues of bias in my classroom.

Because the question is not whether there is bias in your classroom. The question is, “What are you doing to eliminate it?” Hopefully the answer is, “A little more every day.”

*Kathleen Tarr is a lawyer and a lecturer in Stanford University’s Program in Writing and Rhetoric.*

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# White Like You: The Challenge of Getting White Students to Grapple With Racial Identity

By STEVE KOLOWICH

WASHINGTON

**W**hen Frances E. Kendall talks to college leaders about race, she tends to hear a lot of facts and figures about minorities. Three percent black. Five percent Asian. Three percent Latino. And maybe one or two Native Americans.

And then the numbers stop.

“No one says, ‘We have this many white students,’” says Ms. Kendall, a consultant who works with colleges on race issues.

“What they believe they have is this many students of color,” she says. “And the remainder are not students of another color, but are just students.”

Whiteness is the prevailing racial atmosphere on most college campuses. Yet while students of color perceive that constantly, white administrators, faculty members, and students just don’t see it, says Ms. Kendall.

How to open their eyes? That is what Ms. Kendall was hoping to help college officials figure out this week during a two-day seminar here at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education.

Having better conversations about race on college campuses does not just mean building multicultural centers and academic programs where students of color can learn more about their own racial identities, says Ms. Kendall.

It also means teaching white students that they are white.

## THE TAKEAWAY

To help foster productive discussion, one expert suggests “calling people in” rather than “calling people out.”



## Privilege and Struggle

Lately conversations about whiteness on college campuses have centered on the idea of “white privilege,” and they tend not to go very far. Last spring a white, male student at Princeton University took exception to being asked repeatedly to “check his privilege.”

The student fired back in an op-ed for *The Princeton Tory*, a right-leaning student publication, in which he described his grandfather’s struggle to build a life in America after being driven out of Poland by the Nazis.

“Maybe my privilege is that they worked hard enough to raise four children, and to send them to Jewish day school and eventually City College,” he wrote in the essay, which drew national attention.

That is a common response, says Robin DiAngelo, a former associate professor of education at Westfield State University, in Massachusetts.

Ms. DiAngelo, who recently left academe to serve as director of equity for a nonprofit service provider for senior citizens, says white students often reject the premise of white privilege by citing the various other ways that their people have overcome oppression. But that misses the point, she says.

“They see this as mutually exclusive, that you can’t have struggles and be privileged,” says Ms. DiAngelo. “You have to think of privilege as the lack of struggle in a very specific and profound aspect of life. It does not mean no struggle, just not *that* struggle.”

The toughest cases, according to Ms. Kendall, are not necessarily the students who dismiss the concept of white privilege, or even those who seem to [celebrate their privilege](#). It’s the well-meaning white students who acknowledge the problem but believe they’ve already solved it.

“White liberals, they’re the hardest,” says Ms. Kendall. “They believe, and many were raised to believe this, that the best thing is to be colorblind. Which, of course, none of us is.”

Ms. Kendall, a slightly built 68-year-old white woman with short gray hair and the vestiges of a Texas accent, cultivates a disarming presence that is useful in her line of work. She was not shy about challenging seminar attendees when she felt they were being ignorant or disingenuous. But she always did so gently, and with reassurance — a method she referred to as “calling people in” rather than “calling people out.”

She knows how easily people can become frustrated and withdraw from discussions of race, especially if they sense that the conversation is happening on someone else’s terms. (White people are especially sensitive to this, says Ms. Kendall, because they are not used to it.)

“It’s definitely a balancing act,” says Ms. DiAngelo. “You want to push people right up to their learning edge, but not go past it so that they shut down.”

## Puncturing Students’ Skepticism

During the seminar, Ms. Kendall asked the attendees how they might persuade white students on their own campuses to confront their whiteness in a productive way.

“Ideally, you have a place where the conversation can go for an hour or two and people feel comfortable,” said Alex Bruce, who helps manage residential programs at Indiana University at Bloomington. “Realistically, in my world, I don’t see that happening.”

Student-affairs officials might be able to use free pizza and other tactics to entice some students to such a workshop, said Mr. Bruce. Drawing in students who are skeptical of the very concept of white privilege is a harder challenge.

“In my situation, I picture my bros on campus,” he said. “How do I engage those bros in this conversation? That’s a tough one.”

It's especially tough because most white students have the ability to opt out of any sense of racial awareness, said Sherri Benn, an assistant vice president for student affairs at Texas State University. "They can always escape back into just being white."

Even for those who are eager to talk about whiteness — like, say, white people who flew to Washington for a conference on race and ethnicity and who chose to attend Ms. Kendall's seminar — the conversation is not easy.

After several black attendees spoke passionately about how difficult it is to work on college campuses where white privilege reigns but is seldom acknowledged, Ms. Kendall asked the white people in the room to talk about how hearing that made them feel.

One woman tried to express her support, but struggled to find the right words. "Please, keep sharing your experiences," she said, blushing a bit. "Keep persisting."

At this Ms. Benn's brow furrowed. Ms. Kendall noticed, and asked her to speak her mind.

Ms. Benn rose from her seat and firmly explained that she didn't need any white person's help or permission to "persist." The comment had been condescending, she said. Good intentions are not going to solve any problems, and neither is guilt.

"I just need white people to own your stuff," she said.

*Steve Kolowich writes about how colleges are changing, and staying the same, in the digital age. Follow him on Twitter @stevekolowich, or write to him at [steve.kolowich@chronicle.com](mailto:steve.kolowich@chronicle.com).*

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