

INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY[®]

March 2025 | \$4.99 | insightintodiversity.com

Women Workers In Demand

The Canadian program Jill of All Trades is proving that the skilled trades are as much a woman's domain as they are a man's.



MEANINGFUL MOMENTUM

Our mission at Santa Clara University is to integrate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into everything we do. That means putting in the necessary work and planning each day. Since its inception in 2021, the Inclusive Excellence Division has prioritized creating meaningful opportunities and support structures for our students, faculty, and staff to thrive. In addition to new inclusive hiring clusters for faculty, Santa Clara increased staff headcount to support inclusive excellence strategy and launched several initiatives aimed at creating pathways for students in critically important fields. Collaborating with Silicon Valley companies and local government, Santa Clara offers financial support and experiential fellowships for first-generation and local community college students as they pursue careers in sustainability, clean energy, healthcare, and biotechnology. By expanding their professional networks and offering skill-building opportunities, these students will emerge as industry leaders and help shape our institution's growth.



Santa Clara
UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS **March 2025**



20

The Diversity Statement Debate

Universities weigh the role of diversity statements in hiring.



22

On The Cover: Skilled Women Wanted

Jill of All Trades is powering women's success in the skilled professions.

14

Partnership Aids Refugees

Chicago-based center helps displaced Ukrainians start anew.

16

Rural Student Challenges

Higher education access declines in rural communities.

18

Making Space to Regulate

Sensory-friendly spaces support neurodiverse students' unique needs.

SPECIAL REPORT

Human Resources



24

Solving the Jobs Puzzle

Tracking job boards effectively bridges data gaps in higher education hiring.



26

Hiring for Keeps

Public Service Student Loan Forgiveness offers colleges and universities a great recruitment and retention tool.



28

HR's Evolving Role

Exploring the challenges and strategies shaping HR in higher education.

In Each Issue

From Our Editor **7**

In Brief **8**

New Directions **10**

Ask The Recruiter **12**

Closing Insight **50**

SIXTH YEAR HEED Award Recipient & 2024 Diversity Champion

SECOND YEAR Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award Recipient



Lehigh University

is committed to creating a

Community of Belonging

Lehigh is honored to be among the select colleges and universities named 2024 Diversity Champions, and a recipient of the 2025 Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award.

At Lehigh, our libraries are community hubs that promote programs, policies, and initiatives that encourage and celebrate cultural diversity. Library and Technology Services staff works to expand collections with underrepresented authors, create welcoming learning spaces, promote inclusive teaching and learning practices, and ensure that academic materials and technologies are accessible and inclusive to all.



We invite you to learn more about our Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Plan at Lehigh



LEHIGH
UNIVERSITY

SPECIAL REPORT

Academic Libraries

34

Library Inclusivity Grants

Library grants encourage innovative projects celebrating inclusion and belonging.

40

Data Discovery

Academic libraries advance precision medicine with help from NIH.

42

Empowering Early-Career Librarians

Resident librarians gather, grow, and gain expertise at inaugural summit.

46

Family-Friendly Library Design

The renovated UDC library offers a functional, community-focused space for all.

48

Advancing Diverse Research

University libraries are leading innovation in access to inclusive research and scholarship.



30

LEAD Award

Insight Into Diversity announces the recipients of the 2025 Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award.



32

Books Building Bridges

Book clubs inspire belonging and spark dialogue.



36

Freedom to Read

Legislation fights censorship and promotes academic freedom.



44

Promoting First-Gen Success

Libraries offer innovative solutions for first-generation student success.



Shaping the Future WITH DIVERSITY

Whether you're seeking a fulfilling career or an educational journey grounded in diversity, equity, and inclusion, Lasell University is where your potential can truly flourish. Discover more about our diverse community and how we're shaping the future of inclusive excellence at Lasell.



Lasell.edu | Newton, MA 02466

INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY®

© 2025 Potomac Publishing, Inc.

March 2025 | Volume 104 | No. 6 | ISSN 2154-0349
All logos, marks, and editorial content in Insight Into Diversity magazine and on insightintodiversity.com are licensed to Potomac Publishing, Inc. and fully protected by U.S. copyright and trademark laws. Any reproduction in whole or in part, or use by others, is strictly prohibited without the express written consent of Potomac Publishing, Inc.

Contacts:

- Lenore Pearlstein | Publisher
- Holly Mendelson | Publisher
- Katy Abrams | Executive Editor
- Debra Boyd | Director of Research
- Daniel Hecke | Creative Director
- Erik Cliburn | Senior Staff Writer
- Misty Evans | Staff Writer
- Courtney Mullins | Staff Writer and Publishing Coordinator

Insight Into Diversity Editorial Board:

Linda Akutagawa
Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc.

M. Cristina Alcalde, PhD
Miami University

Richard Baker, JD, PhD
Rice University

LeManuel Bitsóí, EdD
Brandeis University

Venessa A. Brown, PhD
Consultant

Sheila Caldwell, EdD
Southern Illinois University System

Karen A. Clinton Jones, PhD
Binghamton University

Jermaine Cruz, JD
Albany Law School

Andriel Dees, JD
Greenwood Asher & Associates

Archie Ervin, PhD
Consultant

Lee A. Gill, JD
University of Louisville

Xiomara Giordano, MSed
Empire State University

Gretchel Hathaway, PhD
Franklin & Marshall College

Lisa McBride, PhD
Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth

Robin R. Means Coleman, PhD
University of Virginia

Lauren Morimoto, PhD
Sonoma State University

Maureen Outlaw, PhD
Providence College

Sharrel Pinto, PhD
Belmont University

Paulette Patterson Dilworth, PhD
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Menah Pratt-Clarke, JD, PhD
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Shirley J. Wilcher, JD
Consultant

FROM OUR EDITOR

Dear Readers,

The landscape of hiring in higher education continues to be under political scrutiny, particularly regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Across the country, legislative and ideological attacks are attempting to dismantle DEI-focused hiring practices under the false premise that they prioritize identity over merit. This rhetoric misrepresents the true goal of equitable hiring: ensuring that candidates are evaluated on their qualifications, not excluded because of their race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, among other things.

DEI in hiring has never been about giving unqualified candidates an advantage. It exists to correct long-standing inequities that have, for too long, privileged certain applicants while systematically disadvantaging others.

Historically, hiring decisions in academia—as in many industries—have often been influenced by informal networks, unspoken biases, and structural barriers that made it difficult for qualified candidates from underrepresented backgrounds to receive fair consideration. DEI policies work to ensure that characteristics such as a candidate’s race, social affiliations, or personal connections are removed from the hiring process.

Higher education is responsible for preparing students to enter a world and workforce that is increasingly diverse, interconnected, and global. That preparation is strongest and most effective when employees reflect the students they serve. A truly equitable hiring process seeks to ensure that students see themselves in the faculty who teach them, in the administrators who support them, and in the staff who help shape their academic and college experiences and journeys.

This isn’t about identity politics; it’s about building institutions that genuinely embody the values of access, opportunity, and excellence for all.

Higher education professionals must resist efforts to strip DEI from hiring processes. Not because it is politically expedient, but because it is ethically, financially, and academically necessary. If we believe in the promise of education as a tool for progress, then we must also believe in an employment system that upholds that promise—for our institutions, for our students, and for the future of academia itself.

To the human resources professionals who work tirelessly to uphold fair and equitable hiring practices: we see you, we appreciate you, and we recognize the challenges you may face.

In the midst of political pressure and shifting policies, your role remains critical to the integrity of higher education. You are not just hiring employees; you are shaping the future of our institutions. Your work ensures that colleges and universities continue to serve all students equitably, and that higher education remains a space where talent, dedication, and expertise—not privilege—determine opportunity.

Stay the course. Your efforts matter, and they are making a difference.



Katy Abrams



Program Shows Promising Results in Diversifying Teacher Workforce

The future of teaching is looking brighter—and more inclusive—thanks to a California State University (CSU) initiative that puts equity at the head of the class.

As the largest producer of credentialed teachers in the state, CSU colleges have made significant strides in recruiting, retaining, and supporting candidates from diverse backgrounds through a targeted effort to ensure that K-12 teachers better reflect their student population.

The CSU Center for Transformational Educator Preparation Programs (CTEPP) is closing out a four-year initiative called the Transformation Lab, which engaged with 10 California colleges to address systemic barriers in existing programs. The lab launched in 2021 with four participating colleges, expanding to add six more in 2022. Each campus team received guidance from improvement coaches, adopting practices such as culturally responsive supervision, strategic recruitment of underserved

candidates, and partnerships with districts to secure job opportunities.

The initiative also fostered partnerships, including a California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) collaboration with local school districts to boost the hiring and retention of Latino teachers.

“Our university teams have used improvement science methods to investigate specific problems of practice in their programs and then they’ve taken action so that aspiring Black, Indigenous, and other teachers of color can thrive,” said Shireen Pavri, PhD, assistant vice chancellor of educator and leadership programs, in a CSU press release. And those efforts yielded notable results.

Key achievements of the Lab include:

- Retention for underserved students earning single-subject teaching credentials increased by 10% at Sacramento State University.

- Completion rates increased for Black teacher candidates at CSU Bakersfield and CSU Northridge by 17% and 31%, respectively.
- Assessment pass rates improved at CSU Long Beach and Cal Poly Pomona.
- Teaching placements for underserved candidates doubled at Stanislaus State University.

CTEPP continues to support professional development programs like the CSU Equity and Excellence Certificate Program and is actively seeking funding for future initiatives. California leaders also advocate for a more inclusive teacher workforce through CalStateTEACH, CSU’s systemwide online teacher preparation program, which focuses on recruiting men of color and serving both urban and rural communities.

These efforts underscore CSU’s ongoing commitment to fostering inclusive excellence in California’s classrooms, ensuring that all K-12 students see themselves reflected in their educators. ●

N.C. A&T Receives NIH Grant to Research Alzheimer’s in Black Americans

The Center for Outreach in Alzheimer’s, Aging and Community Health (COAACH) at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T) has secured a five-year, \$4.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to advance research on Alzheimer’s disease in middle-aged Black Americans.

The NIH R01 grant, considered the “gold standard” for independent research funding, will support the Black American United Memory and Aging Project (BA-UMAP), designed to explore the social, cultural, behavioral, environmental, and biological factors that influence memory loss.

Led by COAACH Director Travonia

Brown-Hughes, PhD, the study will explore biopsychosocial factors influencing cognitive outcomes in 600 Black participants aged 55 and older. Collaborators include Johns Hopkins University, Clemson University, William Beaumont Hospital at Michigan, and Wake Forest University School of Medicine’s Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity.

Conducted entirely online, the study will provide biological sample collection kits to participants with postage-paid mailing envelopes, ensuring accessible participation options for those involved.

“This research holds the potential for earlier detection, more effective treatments, and tailored prevention strategies,” Brown-Hughes said in a statement. “We aim to reduce health disparities and address a critical need in Alzheimer’s research within Black communities.”

Black Americans are disproportionately affected by Alzheimer’s disease, with older Black adults twice as likely as White adults to develop the disease, according to the Alzheimer’s Association. Despite this, they are less likely to receive a diagnosis, highlighting

the importance of culturally-tailored research and interventions.

“Amid broader calls for social justice, greater strides must be made to eliminate discrimination and other forms of bias to ensure all Americans have access to high-quality dementia care and support services and opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, Alzheimer’s research,” said Brown-Hughes.

COAACH has been at the forefront of Alzheimer’s research and community outreach, aligning with N.C. A&T’s mission as a historically Black university and land-grant institution. Recently, COAACH received an additional \$150,000 grant as part of the North Carolina Registry for Brain Health, further enhancing its efforts to connect residents with research opportunities and improve brain health awareness.

Abdellah Ahmidouch, PhD, dean of N.C. A&T’s College of Science and Technology, praised the grant as a significant step toward health equity. “This work exemplifies our dedication to advancing science and serving underrepresented communities,” he said. ●

Robinhood Partners With HBCU for Financial Literacy Education



Students at Howard University participate in the Money Drills program through a partnership with Robinhood. (Photo courtesy of Howard University)

Howard University is teaming up with Robinhood Markets, Inc., a financial services company dedicated to making financial markets accessible to people of all income levels, to redefine for student-athletes what it means to win both on and off the field.

Through the launch of Money Drills, Robinhood's first partnership with a historically Black college or university, Howard's student-athletes are gaining the financial playbook they need to secure brighter futures. This groundbreaking initiative equips participants with skills to navigate the growing opportunities—and challenges—of a changing athletic financial landscape.

Money Drills educates participants about budgeting, saving, investing, and credit management. This partnership comes at a pivotal time, as NCAA rules now allow student-athletes to profit from their name, image, and likeness. Despite lucrative opportunities, many professional athletes face financial instability post-retirement, with 65% of NBA players and nearly 80% of NFL players encountering significant financial issues within a few years of ending their careers.

The program's launch featured workshops led by Planned to A.T.—a nonprofit that teaches financial literacy through gaming—and a guest lecture by former NFL player and finance educator Brandon Copeland. The event also included appearances by Howard Athletics Director Kery Davis, School of Business Dean Anthony Wilbon, and former NBA player Etan Thomas.

"Technology serves as a powerful democratizing force in the financial system—we've utilized it to usher in a new generation of investors and equip them with educational tools that welcome them into financial markets," Mary Elizabeth Taylor, Robinhood's vice president of global government and external affairs, said in a press release, emphasizing the program's broader mission.

Howard joins a growing list of universities using this program, including Florida State University; University of California, Berkeley; and Duke University. They will be the ninth NCAA Division I school to join Money Drills. Since its inception over two years ago, the program has seen 95% of the participants report improved personal finance management skills. ●

FIND YOUR PLACE.

Ninth and tenth grade at Bard Academy, then start college early at Simon's Rock. Join us at our new campus in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY.

Apply today for Fall 2025.

Bard Academy at SIMON'S ROCK
bardacademy.simons-rock.edu

Bard College at SIMON'S ROCK
simons-rock.edu

Astronomy
Botany/Biology
Computer Science
Diagnostic Ultrasound
Digital Media Arts
English
French
History
Interior Design
Mathematics
Medical Dosimetry
Nuclear Medicine
Nursing
Physics
Software Development
Theatre Arts/Drama

Hiring Tenure-Track Assistant Professors!

TRANSFORM EDUCATION. INSPIRE LIVES.

WHY CHOOSE BELLEVUE COLLEGE?

- Competitive annual salary range: \$81,757.08 – \$114,664.94
- Comprehensive benefits
- Professional growth and development opportunities
- A community committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion



APPLY TODAY!

bellevuecollege.edu/
work-at-bellevue



BELLEVUE COLLEGE

Bellevue College is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Please see policy 4150 at bellevuecollege.edu/policies.

Congratulations to these higher education administrators on their new roles!



Kimo Ah Yun, PhD

President
Marquette University

First Black President



Norris Edney III, EdD

Associate Dean of Students for
Belonging and Communities
Vanderbilt University



Kristi Mindrup, PhD

President
Western Illinois University



Debra Haggins, PhD

Dean
Hampton University School of Religion

Inaugural Position



Sarah Parker, EdD

President
Washington State College of Ohio



Ariella Robbins

Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Villanova University



Rotesha Harris, EdD

President
Knoxville College



Dexter Wakefield, PhD

Director of Land Grant Programs and Dean
Alcorn State University
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences



Darrin Martin, EdD

President
Bluefield State University



Jerry Wallace, EdD

President
Potomac State College

Has your campus recently hired a new administrator? Insight Into Diversity wants to publish your news!

Send your announcements to editor@insightintodiversity.com.

OVER 200 INSTITUTIONS HAVE USED VIEWFINDER® CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEYS!

Each Viewfinder® Campus Climate Survey includes:

- Customization with unlimited survey edits
- Unlimited email invitations
- Unlimited responses
- Definitions of terms throughout survey
- Surveys can be read by major screen readers
- Customized email invitation
- Option to include post-survey focus group invitation
- Option to offer incentives
- Weekly reminder emails sent to complete or start the survey
- Weekly summary reports with survey results
- Raw data in SPSS and/or CSV format within 3-5 business days of survey closing
- Additional language translations available (additional fees apply)
- Customized Dynamic Dashboards

BONUS ITEMS!

- "DEI Best Practices: A Compilation of Data, Programs, and Policies Led by Insight Into Diversity HEED Award-Winning Institutions" Report (\$495 value)
- 10% discount on an Insight Into Diversity unlimited job posting subscription



To learn more about Viewfinder®,
visit viewfindersurveys.com
or contact Lenore Pearlstein at
lenore@viewfindersurveys.com.



Ask the Recruiter

Andriel Dees, JD, Vice President for Executive Search at Greenwood Asher & Associates, has led efforts in strategic diversity leadership within higher education through her roles as Vice Chancellor for Equity and inclusion Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and as Chair for the Equity Action Collaborative for the National Association of Higher Education Systems.



How can higher education's human resources officers navigate the changing landscape in 2025 and beyond, and move toward impactful leadership?

Human Resources in higher education has evolved beyond providing transactional processes or compliance measures for universities and colleges. Modern HR leaders must think strategically, be a partner across all of the organization, and serve as a key advocate of transformation for the college or university workforce. For those who aspire to become a leader in human resources, there are some key topics to consider:

Strategic Alignment with Institutional Goals

A strong HR leader cannot function in a silo; they must be at the table and participating in the essential conversations to ensure that there is a good balance of workforce who are aligned to support institutional goals, particularly around enrollment management for students.

Climate, Communication, and Culture Matters

Many titles for HR leadership are now incorporating the term "culture." The climate and culture of an organization is much more richly layered and complex than ever before. Each employee has value, and the organizational culture should reflect the balance of independent value with collaborative and organizational outcomes. For example, as institutions increasingly embrace hybrid work models, effective HR leaders will help the organization become more adept at communicating through technology, keeping a level of high engagement among employees, regardless of their remote, hybrid or onsite status.

Working Knowledge of a Unionized Environment

According to an August 2024 report from the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education there has been a surge in unionization of employees, particularly in the area of graduate student workers. Student workers at all levels are an essential part of an academic structure. Regardless of whether a university is unionized or not, it is essential that a successful HR leader stay abreast of these changes and ensure employees have a way to engage with the idea of a collective voice, and promote a better university experience for all.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access, and Belonging (DEIAB)

There has been a significant backlash toward the work of DEIAB, through a variety of extreme tactics ranging from small changes to job titles of those supporting the work to complete dissolution of related offices and programs, as well as multiple state and federal legislative restrictions. The reality is that the higher education workforce still does not reflect the student populations they serve, and as a result there remains a chasm in outcomes for our student populations. Work to rectify this must be woven into the fabric of an institution, and today's HR leaders need to remain diligent to see that the policies and practices of their university are open to creating and retaining a diverse workforce.

Retention is a Holistic Practice

Universities have seen a rise in employees leaving higher education altogether, for a variety of reasons ranging from compensation, campus climate, a need for more flexible work arrangements, and career trajectories. Looking at an employee beyond what they bring to the work product and understanding their motivations, communication styles, even outside hobbies and talents, helps to build a sense of connectedness and belonging. Further, it is equally important to set the tone between an employee's work life and personal life so that while an employer understands the employee as a whole person, the two are able to set boundaries so that work doesn't seep into an employee's personal life. Working at a university should be positive addition to an employee's well-being and an adept HR leader will take into account these attributes, as well as others, in considering the value of an employee to the university.

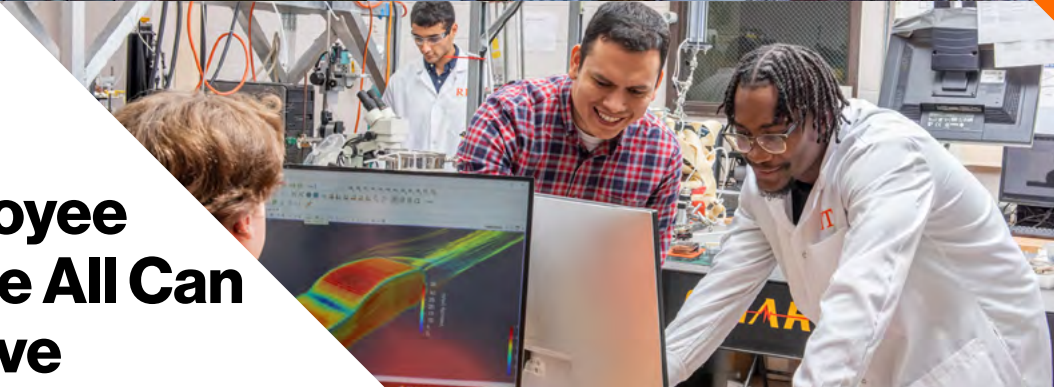
Overall, the human resource leader in today's higher education environment needs to be a proactive partner in order to effectively support their institution in a way that articulates the value of being in a mission driven industry, and ensure that all people have a chance to achieve whatever goal or dream they desire for themselves, their family, and their communities.

If you have a recruitment question you'd like to ask Andriel, please send it to Katy@insightintodiversity.com and your answer may be featured in a future issue!



RIT-HR:

Creating an Employee Experience Where All Can Innovate and Thrive



Innovation is at the core of everything we do at Rochester Institute of Technology. We are a complex research institution comprised of nine colleges plus two degree-granting schools that offer dozens of Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degree programs, as well as non-credit programs for more than 20,000 students. Our 4,000+ U.S.-based faculty and staff deliver on RIT's mission every day.

RIT-HR is driven to cultivate a workplace where people can bring their best selves and best ideas every day because we believe RIT isn't just a place to work, it's a place where we all play a vital role in our collective success and impact on the world.

RIT-HR manages a wide array of functions to enhance the overall employee experience, including organizational design, staff recruitment, benefits administration, employee relations, learning and development, compensation, and well-being. We are committed to attracting, retaining, and supporting

exceptional talent and empowering employees to grow and thrive. RIT-HR embraces a philosophy rooted in collaborative partnership. We work with university leaders to ensure a positive work environment, promote professional learning and growth for employees, aligning with RIT's mission. RIT-HR is intentional in developing and fostering an inclusive work environment where employees feel valued and empowered

"Our steadfast commitments to creating an inclusive environment and to supporting employees' well-being make RIT a community where everyone can thrive and experience a sense of belonging," said Jo Ellen Pinkham, Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer.

We're consistently offering programming and resources from training and professional development opportunities to



campus-wide events that promote inclusion and cultural awareness all in a supportive environment. We believe these initiatives strengthen our university and benefit all RIT employees by equipping them to thrive in our global society, promoting collaboration, sparking creativity, and enhancing problem-solving through diverse perspectives.



LEARN MORE ABOUT RIT AT RIT.EDU



Cultivating Hope

Chicago's EduHub Helps Ukrainians Recover and Restart By Courtney Mullins

More than 10 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes since Russia's invasion in 2022, with an estimated 300,000 seeking refuge in the United States, many through the Uniting for Ukraine program developed under the Biden administration. After New York City, Chicago has welcomed more Ukrainian refugees than anywhere else in the country.

In response to the large numbers, the National Association of Higher Education Systems Refugee Resettlement Initiative has partnered with City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) and the Association of Innovative and Digital Education in Ukraine to establish Український Освітній Хаб в Чикаго, the first Educational Hub for Displaced Ukrainians (EduHub) in the U.S.

Historic Ukrainian Village, situated in the city's West Town neighborhood, has been a bustling center of culture and support for Ukrainian immigrants since the 1800s. As the closest CCC campus to the neighborhood, Wilbur Wright College offers an established local community, with familiar sights and sounds, alongside tailored in-person and online resources.

Tens of thousands of Ukrainians displaced by the war now have access to psychosocial support, vocational training, and essential education to help rebuild their lives—all free of charge. Virtual services became available in July, and the physical space opened on December 9, 2024.

Since opening, the hub has offered comprehensive programs for both youth and adults in areas such as language acquisition, IT training, digital and financial literacy, entrepreneurial skills, career development, and more. Participants can access online and in-person classes covering topics including navigating the job market, crafting resumes, understanding employment law and tax systems, and mastering effective interview techniques.

Interactive game nights are also organized to help overcome language barriers while supporting learning in a fun and engaging way.

Recognizing the significant mental health needs of those affected by the conflict, the hub offers ongoing resources for emotional well-being. Every Tuesday at 6:00 p.m., Inna Bondarenko, a certified psychotherapist and member of the National Psychological Association of Ukraine and the International Association for the Improvement of Gestalt Therapy,

and reaffirm their commitment to supporting fellow Ukrainians facing profound hardships.

The Chicago EduHub is the seventeenth center in a network of similar facilities across Europe, the U.K., Japan, and Ukraine, launched by Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science to support Ukrainian refugees in high-volume regions. The Network of Ukrainian Educational Hubs emphasizes lifelong learning and helps members navigate the challenges of settling in a new country. All content

"In April 2022, the Biden administration created an unprecedented program known as "Uniting for Ukraine," allowing an unlimited number of Ukrainians sponsored by Americans to come to the U.S. and work here legally without having to go through the lengthy visa process. Uniting for Ukraine provides a pathway for Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members ... to come to the United States and stay temporarily in a 2-year period of parole."

Department of Homeland Security

creates a comfortable environment for the self-help and emotional support group—a safe space for individuals to share experiences, find encouragement, and draw inspiration.

A major challenge that many Ukrainian refugees face is the nonrecognition of their credentials. This is particularly difficult for professionals in specialized fields, who must navigate complex pathways to resume their careers in a new country.

To address this, the Community of Ukrainian Psychologists and Psychiatrists of Illinois held its inaugural meeting at the hub on December 11. The event brought professionals together to share their experiences, discuss the obstacles of continuing their careers in the U.S.,

offered is officially endorsed by the ministry, ensuring its credibility and alignment with Ukrainian national education standards.

The National Association of Higher Education Systems Refugee Resettlement Initiative is working to expand the Chicago EduHub model to other member systems to create a wider network of support for displaced Ukrainians. This collaboration between higher education institutions, local communities, and international partners demonstrates how collective efforts can provide tangible solutions for those affected by global crises. More than just a learning center, the Chicago EduHub is planting seeds of hope, with the potential to grow and flourish amid uncertainty. ●

THE DISABILITY STRATEGIST

Nathan R. Stenberg

“

Together we are championing the powerful work that is already being done at Johns Hopkins, and taking that learning and leveraging it to become a global leader in disability-led research, policy and innovation.



Nathan R. Stenberg
Director of Disability



Explore Nathan's story
WWW.JHU.EDU



JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY



Challenges Mount for Rural College Students

By Erik Cliburn

Rural colleges and universities, once pillars of opportunity for remote communities, are increasingly shedding academic programs and, in some cases, closing their doors altogether. The combination of declining enrollment, financial challenges, and systemic underfunding is impacting the educational landscape for rural students, leaving them with fewer options and fewer pathways to upward mobility.

Over the past decade, the U.S. has experienced a nationwide drop in college enrollment, with nearly 2 million fewer students in 2022 than ten years earlier. Rural-serving colleges have been hit especially hard. According to the American Council on Education, approximately 13 million Americans reside in higher education “deserts”—predominantly found in rural regions of the Midwest and Great Plains—where the nearest institution of higher education is beyond a reasonable commute.

The situation is exacerbated by numerous closures of private nonprofit colleges in these areas, alongside program cuts at public universities. For instance, West Virginia University recently eliminated 28 undergraduate and graduate majors, including most foreign language programs, while the University of Montana has phased out more than 30 programs. Regional public universities, which educate 70% of undergraduates at public four-year schools, are among the hardest hit, receiving significantly less state funding per student than flagship universities.

“The challenge that our institutions have is that they tend to be lower-resourced than institutions in urban areas, or flagship institutions,” Charles Welch, EdD, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, told the Hechinger Report. “They can’t rely on big endowments. The pandemic threw a whole additional layer on top of what

those institutions were already facing.”

Many of the cuts disproportionately target programs in the humanities and sciences, such as philosophy, physics, and languages. At the State University of New York at Potsdam, majors in chemistry, physics, and philosophy have been discontinued. Similarly, the University of North Carolina Asheville has phased out religious studies, drama, and several language concentrations. These decisions often leave rural students with access to a narrower range of academic disciplines than their urban and suburban counterparts.

The financial strain driving these changes is undeniable. Delta State University in Mississippi has seen enrollment decrease nearly 25% since 2014, creating an \$11 million budget deficit. But critics, including the American Association of University Professors, argue that some institutions exploit these drops to shutter programs expediently, prioritizing financial

metrics over educational access.

For students, the consequences are significant. When majors are eliminated they may struggle to find adequate course offerings to complete their degrees. Others are forced to transfer, often to institutions farther from home and potentially more expensive. These obstacles disproportionately affect low-income and first-generation college students, who are more likely to attend rural and regional universities.

The decline in these opportunities is also occurring as fewer rural high school graduates pursue higher education. In 2016, 61% of rural students enrolled in college immediately after high school; by 2022, that number had dropped to 55%, below the total national average.

Some efforts are underway to address the challenges. Programs such as the Small Town and Rural Students

(STARS) College Network aim to connect rural students with selective universities that offer robust financial aid packages.

“These students are not getting the same information that a lot of their peers are getting in more urban and suburban areas,” Marjorie Betley, deputy director of admissions at the University of Chicago, told PBS News. “Colleges don’t come visit them. They don’t get opportunities to ask questions.”

Additionally, initiatives like dual enrollment are gaining traction in rural states. By offering high school students the opportunity to earn college credits in vocational and academic subjects, these programs help reduce the time and cost of obtaining a college degree. However, challenges remain, including ensuring that credits transfer seamlessly to four-year institutions.

Online education has also been proposed as a solution, but it comes with limitations. Spotty internet access combined with students’ preferences for in-person learning, diminishes its appeal. Many rural students reported that online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic discouraged them from continuing their education altogether.

Without more comprehensive interventions, the reduction of higher education opportunities in rural areas threatens to deepen existing inequities. For students in these communities, colleges and universities are not just places of learning but vital gateways to careers and a better quality of life. As institutions grapple with financial realities, the challenge will be balancing fiscal responsibility with their mission to serve all students—regardless of geography. ●



STEPS BEYOND STATEMENTS

Rockland Community College

“Steps Beyond Statements” is Rockland Community College’s commitment to living our value of social consciousness. We recognize that statements that demonstrate a commitment to eradicating all forms of discrimination and supporting social justice are important, but we must go beyond them to achieve success. We have adopted an actionable plan to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for all our students.

Rockland Community College is proud to be the recipient of the HEED Award for the fourth consecutive year.





Universities Create Sensory Spaces to Support Neurodivergent Students

By Misty Evans

Universities across the country

are increasingly adopting sensory-friendly spaces to accommodate neurodivergent visitors, including those with ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) or ASD (autism spectrum disorder). These spaces, equipped with features including adaptive furniture, calming elements, and sensory-friendly tools, provide an environment that reduces stress and enhances focus.

Illinois State University (ISU) has joined this growing movement, with the addition of a sensory pod to the Milner Library quiet floor. Located on the library's fourth floor, the sensory pod features adaptive furniture and low lighting to create a distraction-free environment.

The pod is specifically designed for neurodivergent users by offering two types of seating: soft rocking chairs suitable for stimming, and convertible lounge chairs that allow people to stretch out. Both seating options are low to the ground, accommodating those with proprioceptive processing issues who may feel unsteady in taller chairs. Other features include wheelchair-accessible study carrels, soundproof study pods with adjustable lighting, and an ongoing effort to refresh furnishings to meet the needs of visitors of all sizes and abilities.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is also creating sensory-friendly areas. After collaborating with autistic students, the school introduced seven sensory rooms in locations across its campus in 2020. They are

now popular among many campus members, including neurodivergent students, as they provide a quiet refuge to de-stress and recharge.

Similarly, the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois, has found great success with its own adaptation. "[Our] sensory room is really about giving students an opportunity to learn more about how they can regulate themselves to be more functional in school, in sports, and in relationships with others by providing a variety of tools that target different sensory systems that will help them to relieve stress and anxiety," said graduate student Micaela Bessette, who helped spearhead the project, in an interview with the university.

Stimming, short for self-stimulatory behavior, refers to repetitive movements, sounds, or actions that help individuals regulate sensory input, emotions, or focus. Common examples include hand flapping, rocking, humming, tapping objects, or repeating words. While often associated with ASD, stimming also occurs in individuals with ADHD or anxiety, and even neurotypical people. It can serve as a way to manage stress, enhance concentration, or provide comfort.

Stimming is not inherently harmful, but it can become problematic if it interferes with daily life, social interactions, or leads to self-injury. Rather than suppressing it, supporting individuals who stim involves creating a sensory-friendly environment, offering safe alternatives if needed, and recognizing its role in self-regulation. Understanding and accepting stimming as a natural coping mechanism can help reduce stigma and promote inclusivity.

In Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, Bucknell University's Bertrand Library has various floors that cater to different needs. The second and third floors, for example, offer quiet carrel seating with adjustable lighting, while sensory baskets containing stress balls, fidget spinners, and lap blankets are available in all group study rooms.

The incorporation of these unique spaces extends beyond academic libraries. K-12 schools, zoos, and even sports stadiums have embraced the concept, with many becoming Sensory Inclusive Certified through independent groups like KultureCity, a nonprofit organization that trains staff at venues and then certifies those that have made relevant modifications.

Bloomington-Normal, Illinois—home of ISU—boasts seven sensory-inclusive organizations, including Miller Park Zoo and Grossinger Motors Arena.

Higher education institutions are taking this trend further, integrating these changes into broader campus life, where they can significantly enhance students' academic performance and mental well-being. As universities continue to prioritize mental health and accessibility, sensory spaces are becoming a vital part of campus infrastructure. Whether through adaptive furniture, calming environments, or sensory tools, these spaces demonstrate a commitment to creating inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive. ●

Lead the Way with Gonzaga University

Gonzaga University is committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion—creating a workplace where employees thrive. From the Inclusive Excellence Strategic Plan to the Inclusive Excellence Leadership Academy and our award-winning Student Affairs division, we provide faculty and staff with meaningful professional development opportunities. With gold-standard employee benefits, a supportive community, and a dedication to holistic well-being, Gonzaga is an exceptional place to grow your career. Join us as we continue to lead the way in higher education excellence.



Learn more at
gonzaga.edu/jobs.



APPLICATIONS OPEN NOW



insightintodiversity.com/HEED

INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY®



Diversity Statements in Higher Education: A Turning Point?

By Erik Cliburn

Diversity statements, considered a staple of inclusive hiring practices in higher education over the past several years, are increasingly under scrutiny as states implement anti-DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) legislation and colleges and universities reevaluate their impact. Diversity statements typically ask job applicants to outline their past contributions and current ideas to foster diversity and inclusion. Once heralded as a vital tool to promote equitable academic environments, they now face criticism, raising questions about their future in academia.

A Shifting Landscape

The University of Michigan (U-M) recently became a prominent example of this evolving trend. In October 2024, an eight-member faculty working group recommended discontinuing the use of diversity statements in hiring, promotion, and tenure processes. Provost Laurie McCauley approved the proposal, citing concerns over potential constraints on freedom of expression and diversity of thought. The decision followed months of deliberation, including faculty surveys and a review of peer institutions' hiring practices.

Despite eliminating these requirements, U-M reaffirmed its commitment to inclusive excellence by maintaining a substantial \$250 million budget for related programs. This signals that supporting inclusion does not necessarily have to entail mandated diversity statements, a perspective that may influence others grappling with similar debates. Throughout 2024, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University

of North Carolina System, and the University of Texas System, among others, made similar decisions to phase out these policies.

The Broader Debate

Critics argue that these statements serve as ideological litmus tests, compelling applicants to conform to specific viewpoints or risk disqualification. Surveys at U-M indicated a substantial portion of faculty believed that requiring them pressured individuals to adopt predetermined stances on moral, political, or social issues. Proponents, however, suggest that, when thoughtfully crafted and assessed, these tools can effectively evaluate candidates' ability to advance institutional missions.

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a free speech legal advocacy group that sued to block much of the anti-DEI legislation supported by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, opposes mandatory diversity statements under the same principles. Though a defender of inclusive campus environments, the organization argues that compelling employees to agree with these sentiments stifles debate, honest expression, and academic freedom.

"FIRE's concerns about DEI statements rest not on opposition to diversity but to any mandate that faculty endorse specific views," the foundation wrote in a policy brief. "It would be equally unacceptable to require faculty to affirm the importance of values like 'patriotism,' 'individualism,' or 'capitalism.' Universities can promote DEI without infringing individual rights by releasing institutional

Advocates Believe That Diversity Statements:

Promote Inclusivity and encourage a more welcoming academic environment by prompting candidates to reflect on and commit to inclusive principles. This approach helps institutions ensure that prospective faculty are dedicated to supporting a diverse student body.

Address Historical Inequities by ensuring that faculty are committed to creating an environment where all students, especially from historically underrepresented groups, can thrive.

Enhance Educational Outcomes through a diverse faculty who provide a wider range of perspectives, enriching the educational experience and preparing students for a more globalized society.

Foster a Culture of Accountability by encouraging institutions to hold faculty accountable for creating inclusive classrooms and engaging in service that promotes DEI values across campus.

Boost Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Faculty, fostering an environment that attracts faculty committed to promoting DEI principles and increasing retention rates among underrepresented groups.

statements, holding community events, or providing support services."

Despite declining support in some quarters, such statements remain prevalent. An analysis by Heterodox diversity-related topics in other application materials. However, the absence of standardized rubrics for evaluating them has raised concerns about implicit bias and inconsistent evaluation.

Critics Believe That Diversity Statements:

May Lead to Discrimination against candidates who hold differing viewpoints. This could narrow the pool of applicants and stifle intellectual diversity, potentially discouraging those who do not share certain ideological positions on DEI issues from applying.

Encourage Deception by incentivizing applicants to misrepresent their beliefs or experiences to align with perceived institutional expectations, undermining the authenticity of the hiring process. This could result in candidates presenting “performative” statements rather than genuine reflections on their approach to diversity.

Serve as Superficial Measures and may not effectively promote genuine inclusivity. Critics believe that such statements might be used to meet institutional goals without leading to substantive change or fostering a truly inclusive academic culture.

Diminish Academic Freedom by pressuring faculty to conform to specific ideological standards.

Shift Focus from the core qualifications required for the academic role, such as research, teaching excellence, and subject matter expertise.

Some experts suggest the core issue lies not with the concept of diversity statements but with their implementation. Requirements focusing on personal beliefs rather than concrete actions risk promoting insincere or performative responses. Alternatives, such as incorporating diversity contributions into broader teaching or research statements, or using targeted interview questions, may address these concerns while preserving the intent of fostering inclusion.

The backlash against diversity statements is often framed within larger cultural and political narratives. Detractors contend that they embody a greater resistance to inclusive values, which have become polarizing topics in public discourse. Supporters argue this opposition misrepresents their goals, which aim to ensure faculty can effectively engage with increasingly diverse student populations.

What's Next?

As institutions refine their approaches, the debate over diversity statements is unlikely to dissipate soon. Whether through formal declarations, inclusive teaching practices, or alternative evaluation methods, colleges and universities continue to grapple with how best to demonstrate and sustain their commitment to inclusion and belonging.

The evolution of these practices reflects ongoing tension between fostering inclusive excellence and addressing concerns about fairness and freedom of thought. As higher education navigates this crossroads, the challenge lies in finding approaches that advance equity without alienating employees or undermining academic freedom.” ●

The Registry® | A zrg COMPANY

Trusted Interim Leadership and Consulting Services.

Proven Success.

Addressing HR challenges, advancing priorities and accelerating progress for over 30 years.



Interim Placements ★ Consulting Services ★ RegistryInterim.com ★ 978-532-4090

Step Back, Jack

Jill of All Trades Wires the Workforce for Success

By Courtney Mullins



Students from various high schools were able to connect with local businesses and employers during the second annual Jill of All Trades event at Owens Community College in Perrysburg, Ohio, on Wednesday, November 23, 2024. Businesses attending the event and interacting with the students at vendor tables included Owens Corning, Buckeye Broadband and First Solar.

The essential infrastructure and services that underpin daily life are produced by skilled professionals. From electricians to plumbers to carpenters, the hum of industry has historically carried the timbre of masculinity. Yet despite growing demand for skilled workers, women remain significantly underrepresented in those areas. Enter Jill of All Trades, an initiative proving that the skilled trades are as much a woman's domain as they are a man's.

Launched in 2014 by Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Ontario, Canada, Jill of All Trades encourages girls in 9th-12th grade to explore careers in industries such as manufacturing, electrical, welding, machining, automotive technologies, and HVAC-R, among others. Field professionals, faculty, and postsecondary students guide young women through hands-on activities designed to build



Left: High school students got hands-on experience with a variety of skilled trades, including robotics, CNC/machining, auto service and repair, crane rigging and diesel technology, during the Jill of All Trades event. Right: Owens Community College welding instructor Tony Duris demonstrates a technique to a group of high school students during the event. The students then took the brief lesson and went inside the welding bays to try their hands at the skill.

confidence, ignite interest, and cultivate a safe and supportive environment.

From its humble beginnings, Jill of All Trades has grown exponentially. Its second annual event in 2015 hosted nearly 200 students; by 2022, the program had expanded to include 17 partner colleges across Canada.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with more than 90% of participants expressing interest in the skilled trades after attending their event. By 2026, Jill of All Trades plans to connect with 35 colleges across North America, deliver over 120 events, and inspire more than 10,000 participants annually.

In 2023, Owens Community College (OCC) in Perrysburg, Ohio, became the first U.S. institution to host the program. The event was a success, and a second one at OCC, on October 24, 2024, welcomed students from across the region to participate in workshops and engage with female mentors representing various industries.

OCC President Dione D. Somerville, EdD, confirms that a

third date is in the making. “When Conestoga ... approached us more than two years ago to host Jill of All Trades, we were honored to be selected as the first college in the United States to provide this opportunity. ... Facilitating the exploration of a future in the skilled trades is critical to our mission of education and workforce development, and we look forward to our third event in October of this year.”

Although Conestoga serves as the founding institution, the program’s expansion relies on partnerships with other colleges, industry stakeholders, and government agencies. Together, these groups create events tailored to their local communities, ensuring accessibility and relevance for participants. As Somerville describes, “Owens Community College is situated in a region that embraces the value of skilled trades and is home to meaningful careers in the trades. We are in a unique position to be a driving force for the region’s economy. At Jill of All Trades,

these young students experience why Owens is a leader in advanced manufacturing preparedness.”

The next Jill of All Trades in the U.S. is set for June 10, 2025, at the Career and Technology Education Centers of Licking County in Ohio. The gathering will continue the program’s mission to provide young women with a tangible experience learning about industries they might not have previously considered.

For many attendees, the program offers a chance to break away from tradition or expectation. Through mentorship, skill building, and an inclusive environment, Jill of All Trades is shaping a future where women play vital roles in skilled trades and technologies. It’s more than teaching skills—it’s changing lives, shattering barriers and stereotypes, and reminding the world that when the tools are in Jill’s hands, anything is possible. ●

Job Board Jigsaw

Rethinking Recruitment Reporting

By Courtney Mullins

Applicant tracking systems (ATS) are widely adopted in higher education recruitment to streamline hiring by automatically screening, sorting, and filtering candidates. While they promise a faster and more effective process, their limitations become clear when evaluating the effectiveness of job boards, a critical component of recruitment in the digital age.

Human resource departments often subscribe to multiple job boards to reach a broader pool of candidates. When applicants apply for a job they select the platform where they found the listing. This provides data for HR teams to track which boards bring in the best and the most candidates; however, this approach is complicated when

job boards partner with other job boards and aggregate listings across these multiple platforms.

Applicants who view a post on a secondary job board can only indicate that site as their source, without an option to select the original board. This data gap prevents institutions from fully understanding where their applicants are coming from.

While an ATS can be useful for managing tasks like application sorting and creating databases, they don't always offer a comprehensive view of recruitment sources.

HR teams can make more informed decisions about which job boards are truly successful by tagging job postings on job boards with a unique identifier, using parameters

on a vendor's website that can be monitored through Google Analytics, creating unique links for each job board they contract with, and asking applicants directly where they found the job listing.

The best hiring practices will combine the benefits of technology with thoughtful human evaluation, ensuring that recruitment remains equitable and mission driven.

By rethinking their job board strategies and refining how data is tracked, colleges can create a more transparent, inclusive, and effective hiring process that aligns with their core mission. ●

How HR Can Track Job Board Effectiveness?

Use Unique Tracking URLs for Job Postings ✓

- Generate a unique URL for each job board posted on.
- Use a URL shortener (e.g., Bitly) for cleaner, trackable links.
- Monitor link performance via your analytics platform.

Leverage Google Analytics for Source Tracking ✓

- Set up Google Analytics tracking for career page visits.
- Create goals or conversion events to track job applications submitted.
- Use referral reports to identify where traffic is coming from.

Ensure ATS Allows for Multiple Job Source Selections ✓

- Review ATS settings to confirm candidates can select more than one source.
- Work with the ATS vendor to explore customization options for better tracking.

Periodically Survey Applicants on How They Found the Job Listing ✓

- Add a question to the application process: "Where did you first see this job posting?"
- Follow up with a short survey after hiring rounds to validate job board effectiveness.

Monitor and Optimize Job Board Investments Regularly ✓

- Compare job board performance quarterly or semi-annually.
- Assess both the quantity and quality of applicants per source.
- Reallocate budgets to job boards that yield the best results.
- Explore new job boards or targeted platforms based on performance trends.



Pro Tip

Combining technology-driven tracking with direct applicant feedback ensures a more accurate and data-informed recruitment strategy.

Regularly refining your approach helps maximize the impact of your hiring efforts.



Elevate Your DEI Recruitment Advertising

JobElephant: Your Partner in Diverse Hiring

In today's rapidly evolving diversity, equity, and inclusion landscape, effective recruitment advertising and ROI is crucial. **JobElephant is the industry leader in compiling and analyzing the top diversity job boards and publications.**

Maximize Your DEI Budget

By tracking year-over-year data, we provide clear insights into where your advertising dollars can yield the highest return on investment (ROI). This data-driven approach ensures that your DEI initiatives aren't just lip service; they're backed by tangible results.

Thought Leadership for the Future of DEI Recruitment

JobElephant's new 2025 DEI White Paper offers invaluable insights and long-term market analysis. Stay ahead of the curve and adapt to the changing recruitment landscape with our strategic guidance.

Tailored Solutions for Your Unique Needs

Whether you're facing challenges in attracting top talent or optimizing your recruitment campaigns, JobElephant has the solutions. Our personalized approach helps you find the perfect candidates and achieve your hiring goals.

Contact us today to learn how JobElephant can transform your recruitment efforts.

NOW HIRING

HIGHER ED PROFESSIONALS WITH STUDENT LOAN DEBT

By
Katy
Abrams

Recruitment and retention of skilled employees is a priority for colleges and universities. In the landscape of higher education, where budgets are tightly controlled and incentive options can be limited, it is imperative to use all the tools available. One with significant value to an employee—and zero cost to the employer—is Public Service Student Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), a program through the U.S. Department of Education’s office of Federal Student Aid.

Through PSLF, the average amount of loan forgiveness for an eligible borrower as of July 2024 was nearly \$65,000, making the program, which grants federal loan forgiveness to those who have made 120 monthly payments while working full time in public service for a qualified employer.

PSLF can offer significant financial relief to public service employees carrying outstanding federal student loan debt, but many are not aware that they may qualify for this opportunity, which is available to not-for-profit college and university employees who hold a balance on their direct federal student loans.

How Can HR Help?

Human resources personnel are uniquely positioned to use PSLF as part of a broader strategy to attract and retain high-quality faculty and staff. “HR can spread the word to current employees and use loan forgiveness as part of a retention and recruitment strategy,” said Julie Burrell, PhD, in a post for the

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources.

Burrell noted several ways that HR officers can efficiently share this information and work with employees who are ready to submit their requests for loan forgiveness. One suggestion is to make sure HR personnel are applying for the program themselves. “With firsthand experience, you and your team will be able to speak knowledgeably about the process,” she said.

Other tips include publicizing PSLF as a significant benefit to all employees, even adjunct, nonexempt, and part-time staff, as the program stipulates full time work as 30 hours per week or more, which can apply to some employees in those positions. Burrell said posting information about the program online, through benefits pages, and on employee portals, will help spread the word. Also, she said, “Consider appointing a knowledgeable point person on campus, like a financial aid officer, to help answer employee questions.”

Those who pursue PSLF will need their employment certified by the college or university. Ensuring the HR team is aware of the program and its requirements is essential because,

Qualifying for PSLF

Borrowers must make 120 monthly loan payments as follows:

- For the full amount due (borrowers can use the Income Driven Repayment plan to keep those payments low).
- On time (within 15 days of the loan’s monthly due date).
- While working full time for a qualifying employer.
- Loan payments do not need to be consecutive. For example, a borrower can make a series of qualifying payments, pause through forbearance (for instance, if enrolling in a graduate degree program) and then resume repayment when forbearance is terminated.

Borrowers can switch jobs, but payments only count toward PSLF when made while working full time for a qualifying employer.

according to the Federal Student Aid office, “Dates of employment can be certified by an official who has access to the employee’s employment or service records and is authorized by your organization to certify employment or service. This will often be someone in the human resources department, though in some cases it may be a direct supervisor or another individual authorized to certify.”

Putting It Into Practice

Auburn University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham offer several examples of how HR personnel can provide PSLF information and guidance for employees through online presence, partnerships with outside organizations, and direct contact.

Auburn University has retained

the investment advisory firm Johnson Sterling to provide application guidance and offer a related course led by one of the firm’s advisers through ElevatED, Auburn’s employee education center. The HR area of the university website has a page dedicated to PSLF that provides resource links, a robust list of frequently asked questions, and an embedded video by a Johnson Sterling adviser detailing the program as well as other aspects of student debt that relate to employee financial health.

On the HR web page for the University of Pittsburgh, faculty and staff are encouraged to enroll in the free Savi Essential Service Benefit and connect directly with a representative to learn more about PSLF. Current employees can schedule an appointment to review information, determine if they are eligible for

PSLF, and obtain help completing the necessary paperwork. Additionally, former employees are offered detailed assistance with the application process.

As part of the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s holistic approach to financial wellness, employees are provided with extensive online learning resources related to financial counseling, savings and retirement, family finances, student loan assistance, and more. The HR website includes an easy-to-find online tool for scheduling an in-person appointment to receive support completing PSLF forms.

As HR departments continue to innovate efforts to recruit and retain employees, sharing insight and offering support for PSLF is a great way to offer assistance for those with student loan debt. ●

14th CONSECUTIVE HEED AWARD WINNER



Millersville University is firmly committed to supporting and advancing the **diversity** and **inclusion** of its campus community.

Millersville University

millersville.edu

Millersville University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution. A member of Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education. 9494-UCM-0224-CL

The Changing Role of Human Resources in Higher Education

By Misty Evans

Human resources in higher education is no longer limited to duties related to hiring, payroll, and employee benefits—it’s about shaping the core identity of an institution. As colleges and universities face mounting challenges, HR professionals are emerging as culture builders, talent connectors, and strategic innovators. From boosting employee

Dees explained that HR officers must understand the unique histories, stories, and cultures of their institutions to ensure new hires align with organizational values. “Human resource leaders are connectors,” she said. “They need to know who the amazing professors are, who the staff are that make everything click, and what makes the university a special

diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts present a significant challenge. Despite political headwinds, Dees stressed the importance of continuing meaningful DEI work. “Even if it’s not mandated, students and employees will still demand inclusivity and belonging,” she said.

To support retention, successful HR leaders implement strategies



Podcast hosts Katy Abrams (left), Misty Evans (right) with guest Andriell Dees (center).

“Human resource leaders are connectors. They need to know who the amazing professors are, who the staff that makes everything click are, and what makes the university a special place for students.”

Andriell Dees, Vice President for Executive Search at Greenwood Asher & Associates

engagement to navigating workforce transformations, these administrators are redefining what it means to create vibrant, thriving academic communities.

During a recent episode of Insight Into Diversity’s new podcast, Beyond the Quadcast, Andriell Dees, JD, vice president for executive search at the higher education recruitment firm Greenwood Asher & Associates, emphasized HR’s critical role. “Human resources is key to ensuring that each organization has a vibrant and viable culture,” she said.

place for students.” She also noted that diverse student populations want to see their identities reflected in faculty and staff, and encouraged HR departments to create equity scorecards that highlight disparities and use the data to drive efforts.

Recruiting and retaining talent is a critical process that goes beyond traditional hiring practices. “Posting ads is part of it,” Dees pointed out, “but a lot of it is networking and intentionally building diverse pools of candidates.” The challenges around

such as professional development and stay interviews, which allow them to proactively address employee concerns before dissatisfaction leads to departures. “By the time you get to exit interviews, it’s too late,” Dees said. “You’ve lost your employee.” Dees advises colleges and universities to think beyond an employee’s prescribed roles when planning career trajectories; offering cross-training, special projects, and opportunities to explore new roles can keep people feeling valued and engaged, and foster a sense of belonging.

Technological advancements are further transforming the complex world of HR. Dees emphasized the need to adopt tools like artificial intelligence (AI) while maintaining a human-centered approach. “It’s not about being replaced by AI; it’s about leveraging it to enhance what we do,” Dees said.

Generative AI is poised to shape the future of human resources, offering the potential to enhance efficiency, automate repetitive tasks, and support upskilling efforts. However, HR professionals caution that it is vital to approach AI with a clear understanding of its limitations, inherent risks, and necessary safeguards.

Implementing an AI policy, for instance, can ensure safe and productive use within HR teams, according to the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) Higher Ed HR Magazine. “AI’s use in HR is limited to scenarios with minimal regulatory or compliance impact due to its risks, such as bias and privacy concerns,” said Rahul Thadani, senior executive director of HR systems operations at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in an interview with the magazine. “Until these risks are managed or mitigated, AI’s value will remain constrained in scope.”

However, there are many ways for HR to use AI to enhance productivity and upskill staff. AI can streamline routine tasks such as drafting and benchmarking job descriptions, creating employee communications, and designing visually engaging training materials with integrated text and images. Additionally, AI tools can help employees deepen their technical expertise by offering step-by-step instructions for advanced software features, such as creating macros or troubleshooting formulas in Microsoft Excel. By automating time-consuming processes and facilitating skill development, AI empowers HR professionals to focus on strategic initiatives that improve workplace culture and employee engagement.

As higher education grapples with those challenges and others, including generational shifts in the workforce, HR professionals are adapting to ensure their institutions thrive. “We’re in a time of change management,” Dees said. “HR leaders must think strategically, align with institutional goals, and innovate to ensure universities thrive. ... It’s about helping people thrive—and there’s nothing more rewarding than that.” ●

Hear Andriel Dees
on the first episode of



BEYOND *the* **QUAD** *cast*

and subscribe to get new
episodes as they are released!



[MiamiOH.edu/online](https://miamiOH.edu/online)



Building inclusive communities together.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
in Leadership Certificate, a fully
virtual professional
development opportunity.**

This award-winning certificate is facilitated by Miami University faculty and staff with expertise in inclusive excellence, provides applicable knowledge, research-based case studies, and clear strategies to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century and beyond.

Enroll today!



INSIGHT
INTO
DIVERSITY®

LIBRARY
EXCELLENCE
IN ACCESS AND
DIVERSITY
AWARD

2025

A.T. Still University (ATSU)
Augustana College
Binghamton University,
State University of New York
Bucknell University
California State University, Bakersfield
California State University, San Marcos
Chapman University
College of Marin
Drexel University
Earlham College
Emory University
Fashion Institute of Technology
Hudson County Community College
Kean University
Lehigh University
Maryville University
Miami University
Mount Holyoke College

Northern Illinois University
Saint Joseph's University
San Jose State University
Santa Clara University
St. John's University
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stockton University
Stony Brook University
Syracuse University
Towson University
Trinity College
University at Albany,
State University of New York
University of Lynchburg
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
University of Virginia
Virginia Tech University Libraries
Whitman College
Yakima Valley College

The 2025 Insight Into Diversity Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award Recipients



LEAD Award-winning academic libraries are honored for their unique and robust programs and initiatives that encourage and support diversity, inclusive excellence, and equitable access for all. Through these efforts—which include research, technology, exhibitions, grants, and more—students, faculty, staff, and the community are encouraged to succeed.

HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Is honored to be recognized with the Library Excellence in Access and Diversity (LEAD) Award!



This recognition underscores our commitment to:

- *Equitable access to knowledge and resources.*
- *Celebrating the diversity of our community.*
- *Fostering inclusion through innovative library services.*

We thank our dedicated staff, students, and community members for making this achievement possible. Together, we inspire learning, growth, and connection.

Visit us at www.hccc.edu

Journal Square Campus, Jersey City, NJ | North Hudson Campus, Union City, NJ



Books as Bridges

Inclusive Clubs Inspire Belonging

By Erik Cliburn



Stories have the power to cross divides and cultivate understanding, and inclusive book clubs are proving to be powerful tools for building community and advancing equity. From prisons to college campuses, they can connect diverse groups, foster dialogue about challenging topics, and create safe spaces where every voice matters. Across the country, colleges and universities are embracing this model to champion inclusive excellence.

At Saint Joseph's University (SJU), the SJU Libraries Book Club exemplifies this spirit by partnering with the university's Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, a collaboration that brings incarcerated individuals and SJU students together as peers. This dynamic program offers a transformative educational experience, exploring issues of crime and justice while examining writings by incarcerated individuals from diverse eras and cultures.

A recent event sponsored by the club centered on Lara Love Hardin's "The Many Lives of Mama Love," which featured a discussion and a panel of community members sharing personal stories about reentry into society after incarceration. This initiative reflects a commitment to bridging divides and amplifying the voices of those impacted by the criminal justice system.

Other selections, such as Sonya Renee Taylor's "The Body Is Not an Apology" and James McBride's "The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store," emphasize themes of equity, self-acceptance, and the resilience of marginalized communities.

The Stevens Institute of Technology (SIT) Samuel C. Williams Library also harnesses the power of book groups to

spark meaningful change. For the past five summers, the Anti-Racism Book Club has brought students, faculty, and staff together to explore literature that addresses systemic racism and the need for inclusion. Using a Brave Space model—a method of discussing difficult topics that engages vulnerability, perspective, fear, intentions, and mindfulness meant to build on the term "safe space"—participants delve into works like "Teaching to Transgress" by bell hooks and "So You Want to Talk About Race" by Ijeoma Oluo.

Book clubs serve as more than just gatherings to discuss literature; they are platforms for social change.

The program, spearheaded by the library in collaboration with the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, encourages open dialogue and critical thinking. More than just a reading group, it's an opportunity to foster relationships between people in varying campus roles, creating a supportive network committed to advancing equity.

Meanwhile, Virginia Tech University Libraries celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity through the Comunidad Book Club, a Spanish-language group launched in 2020.

Designed to unite native Spanish speakers and language learners, the club collaborates with organizations like REFORMA, an advocacy organization for Latino library access, inclusion, and bilingual professionals, and El Centro, Virginia Tech's on-campus hub for Latino culture, community, and support.

Comunidad provides a space for cultural exchange and community-building through discussions of Spanish literature, including Claudia Piñeiro's "El Tiempo de las Moscas" and Gabriel García Márquez's "En Agosto Nos Vemos." In 2023, a partnership with Casa Latina, a nonprofit supporting Spanish-speaking residents through education, cultural activities, and connection to vital services, expanded the initiative to include new clubs in the Roanoke area, broadening its reach and strengthening connections within the Latino community across Virginia.

These book clubs serve as more than just gatherings to discuss literature; they are platforms for social change. They inspire empathy by encouraging participants to step into others' shoes, confront biases, and imagine new possibilities for justice and equity. By connecting incarcerated individuals with university students, sparking conversations about antiracism, or fostering cultural pride and learning, these groups show the power of using shared stories to unite people across divides.

Universities like SJU, SIT, and Virginia Tech are proving that the simple act of reading together can drive profound transformation, nurturing inclusive communities that celebrate diverse perspectives and foster deeper understanding. ●

Bucknell University

CONGRATULATES

THE ELLEN CLARKE BERTRAND LIBRARY



Bertrand Library plays a central role in Bucknell's mission to educate students for a lifetime of critical thinking informed by a deep understanding of different cultures and perspectives.

LIBRARY ACCESS INITIATIVES

- Personal librarian service for first-year students
- Technology for Students in Need program
- Digital accessibility education to make campus more welcoming for all



Join Our Efforts
bucknell.edu/careers

Bucknell
UNIVERSITY





Library Grants Empower Creative Inclusivity Projects

By Erik Cliburn

Miami University Libraries (MUL) is making waves with its Inclusive Excellence Grants Program, designed to spark fresh, belonging-driven ideas across its community. This opportunity invites creative minds to craft projects celebrating inclusivity, reinforcing MUL's mission to cultivate a welcoming and equitable space for all.

Administered by the MUL Inclusive Excellence Committee, which supports efforts not typically covered by departmental budgets, this funding prioritizes initiatives that embody creativity, collaboration, and meaningful impact, encouraging participants to take calculated risks and explore novel solutions. Since its inception, more than two dozen Inclusive Excellence Grants have been awarded, totaling over \$25,000.

Preference is given to proposals connected to MUL's mission, staff, collections, and ongoing efforts. Past opportunities have spanned a variety of areas, including student engagement, employee training, and external partnerships. All staff members of MUL, including those from regional campuses, are eligible to apply.

Applicants may request up to \$1,500 per project, and awards must be utilized within the fiscal year. Proposals involving external partnerships or speakers are welcomed, provided they align with funding

guidelines and demonstrate a clear collaborative benefit. The program's transparent evaluation process includes a three-criteria review by the Inclusive Excellence Committee: alignment with MUL's values, adherence to grant purposes, and feasibility within the financial parameters.

A number of notable activities have been funded by the program. One such effort was the creation of a Leisure Reading Collection, which curated an array of e-books and audiobooks focusing on diversity and inclusion made accessible through Axis 360—a digital media platform that gives users access to thousands of published works. Another project, Asian LGBT Movie Nights, featured weekly film screenings during Pride Month. These events celebrated and raised awareness of Asian LGBT narratives, fostering greater understanding and visibility on campus.

A grant was also awarded to support the Digitization of Mississippi Freedom Summer Audio Collection, which converted reel-to-reel tapes into digital formats, making this valuable historical resource widely accessible. The Libraries Are for Everyone Art Project received funding to empower student creation of temporary artworks reflecting inclusivity, displayed prominently outside of King Café to engage and inspire the community.

The Training for Freedom Workshop—an innovative initiative focused on empowering participants with knowledge and skills rooted in social justice and activism—included expert-led sessions and interactive discussions about historical and contemporary civil rights challenges. Additionally, funding for the Professional Development on Open Education initiative brought in a guest speaker to provide actionable insights on making education more accessible and equitable.

Accessible checkout stations for King Library received support to introduce cutting-edge technology designed to accommodate patrons with disabilities. These stations feature adjustable touch screens for ease of use, voice-guided navigation, and compatibility with assistive devices like screen readers and Braille displays. By addressing barriers to access, these changes significantly enhanced the user experience, making library resources more inclusive and universally accessible.

Inclusive Excellence Grants serve to exemplify MUL's dedication to fostering an inclusive academic community. By supporting innovative projects and empowering staff to bring their ideas to life, the awards ensure that MUL continues to be a hub for learning, collaboration, and progress. ●



Mount Holyoke College is honored to be recognized again with an **Insight Into Diversity** magazine **Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award**.



Mount Holyoke, a gender-diverse women's college in South Hadley, Massachusetts, champions inclusive learning that connects students, faculty and staff from all backgrounds to dynamic opportunities — and one another. With a focus on intellectual curiosity, rigorous scholarship and cross-disciplinary study, Mount Holyoke promotes academic excellence that fosters purposeful leadership. We are proud to have our Library, Information, and Technology Services recognized for upholding these values and commitments through practices such as:

- Implementing LibCal as a way for students to electronically reserve time in a study room without the need to physically navigate the library.
- Diversifying furniture in our study rooms and in our Archives and Special Collections to meet a wide array of needs.
- Promoting collaborative innovation in the teaching and learning of languages and cultures on campus through the Little World Libraries Project organized by students, faculty and staff.
- Organizing an exhibit that celebrates the 10-year anniversary of Mount Holyoke's gender-inclusive admission policy and another exhibit that covers the history of the Clapp Laboratory building, which highlights the research and career of

Cornelia Clapp. The 1871 alum is part of Mount Holyoke's legacy as a top baccalaureate source of earned scientific doctorates by women.

- Providing a collection of iPads for American Sign Language (ASL) translation services at in-person, hybrid and remote campus events.
- Collaborating on various projects across campus that amplify the experiences of underrepresented populations and foster deeper understanding.



Learn more at
lits.mtholyoke.edu.

Freedom to Read



Protecting Academic Inquiry

By Erik Cliburn

As debates over censorship

and intellectual freedom in the United States grow louder, a rising tide of 'Freedom to Read' laws has emerged to counteract the escalating implementation of book bans.

These laws—adopted by states including New Jersey, Maryland, and California—aim to safeguard access to literature in schools and public libraries. While the national conversation often focuses on K-12 education, these measures carry significant implications for higher education institutions, particularly as they strive to foster inclusive environments and uphold academic freedom.

Book bans have surged in recent years, with a dramatic 200% increase in the 2023–2024 academic year, according to PEN America. Titles ranging from Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" to the "Hunter x Hunter" manga series have been pulled from shelves under laws that critics argue are overly broad and politically motivated.

In Tennessee, for example, House Bill 843 prohibits public K-12 school libraries from carrying materials containing "nudity" or "excess violence" in addition to content deemed "patently offensive." The vague language of this bill and its potential for broad interpretation has led districts like Wilson County Schools to remove over 400 books, including acclaimed works by Angie Thomas, Jodi Picoult, and John Green.

Backlash against these bans has spurred legislative efforts in other states to protect access to books. In April 2024, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore signed the Freedom to Read Act, positioning the state as a leader against what some describe as "politicized attacks" on education. The law prohibits arbitrary censorship of books in schools and libraries and emphasizes the importance of literature that encompasses a wide range of representation.

"When libraries are emptied of books, students are deprived of a robust education that supports their intellectual development," Kasey Meehan, director of PEN America's Freedom to Read program, wrote in a

statement following a string of book bans throughout the nation.

Higher education institutions stand to benefit significantly from these protections. College libraries often collaborate with public school systems as well as regional and local libraries, sharing resources and expertise. Restrictions on K-12 collections can disrupt these partnerships, limiting access to foundational texts and research materials. Additionally, prospective college students exposed to book bans may enter higher education with a constrained perspective, potentially impacting their academic preparedness and openness to an array of viewpoints.

"Our core values as librarians are found in the Library Bill of Rights, which holds that libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide

information and enlightenment," says Russell Hall, a reference and instruction librarian at the John M. Lilley Library at Penn State Behrend. "We believe people are free to choose what they want to read, and to determine what their own children can and should read, but do not have the right to impose their will upon others who are free to make that choice for themselves."

California's Freedom to Read Act, signed into law in late 2024, provides another example of proactive measures to combat censorship. The legislation prohibits book bans based on the race, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or political affiliation of the author or subject matter. Beginning in 2026, state-funded libraries must also establish transparent policies for adding and removing materials.

The Library Bill of Rights

Defending Intellectual Freedom on Campus

University libraries have long been guardians of knowledge, but recent challenges to intellectual freedom have spotlighted their pivotal role in upholding the principles enshrined in the Library Bill of Rights. This foundational document, adopted by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1939 and amended multiple times since, outlines libraries' obligations to provide equitable access to a myriad of materials, resist censorship, and protect patrons' privacy.

"Book banning has surged at an alarming rate in recent years, with a record number of bans reported last year," reads an October 2024 statement released by the ALA. "Librarians nationwide are facing verbal abuse, death threats and, in some cases, even criminal charges and jail time. As bastions of intellectual freedom, public libraries are at the forefront of this battle. ... Upholding diverse perspectives and a broad range of ideas is not only essential to the core mission of libraries, but to our democracy."

For college libraries, these principles are more than aspirational—they are integral to fostering an environment of free inquiry and critical thought. University librarians are tasked with curating collections that reflect the breadth of human experience and scholarship, often navigating contentious debates around controversial materials.

The stakes are particularly important in higher education, where access to varied perspectives is vital for academic rigor. Challenges to library materials can hinder students' ability to engage with complex issues, from historical injustices to contemporary social movements. Furthermore, restrictive policies like those in some states, which mandate extensive scrutiny of library resources, risk narrowing the scope of available materials.

"Ban advocates try to frame their efforts as objective policy rather than an ideological agenda," says Joel Burkholder, a reference and instruction librarian at Pennsylvania State University, York. "It's about intimidating educators from using any books or materials that might even be remotely controversial."



KEAN

Nancy Thompson
Learning Commons



The Nancy Thompson Learning Commons at Kean University is a proud recipient of the 2025 Insight Into Diversity Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award



“Our core values as librarians are found in the Library Bill of Rights, which holds that libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment. We believe people are free to choose what they want to read, and to determine what their own children can and should read, but do not have the right to impose their will upon others who are free to make that choice for themselves.”

Russell Hall

Despite these advancements, challenges remain. Legislative efforts in states like West Virginia and Utah continue to promote book bans through broad definitions of “obscenity” and streamlined procedures for removing materials statewide. West Virginia’s House Bill 4654, for example, seeks to criminalize educators and librarians who provide materials deemed “obscene” to minors, with penalties of up to five years in prison. Such laws create a chilling effect among educators who fear legal repercussions.

In higher education, these trends underscore the need for vigilance. Academic institutions have long championed intellectual freedom as a cornerstone of their mission, yet they are not immune to the ripple effects of K-12 censorship. College libraries serve as critical repositories of knowledge, and any restrictions on their ability to provide resources could compromise their role in fostering informed, engaged citizens.

Furthermore, faculty members—particularly those in education and library sciences—often rely on partnerships with public schools for research, training, and student teaching opportunities. Legislative restrictions jeopardize these collaborations, potentially hindering professional development and innovation.

Advocacy groups and educators have rallied to counter these threats, emphasizing the broader societal value of unrestricted access to literature.

Lawmakers in New Jersey passed a similar Freedom to Read Act in December 2024, prohibiting schools and libraries from banning age-

appropriate books based on an author’s background or the material’s viewpoint.

“The Freedom to Read Act cements New Jersey’s role on the forefront of preventing book bans and protecting the intellectual freedom of our educators and students,” Gov. Phil Murphy said in a press release. “Across the nation, we have seen attempts to suppress and censor the stories and experiences of others. I’m proud to amplify the voices of our past and present, as there is no better way for our children to prepare for the future than to read freely.”

These legislative victories offer hope, but experts caution that sustained advocacy will be essential to ensure their effectiveness. Colleges and universities play a pivotal role by supporting initiatives that promote intellectual freedom and by integrating impacted literature into curricula. Hosting events like Banned Books Week, creating partnerships with public libraries, and conducting research on the impacts of censorship contribute to this movement.

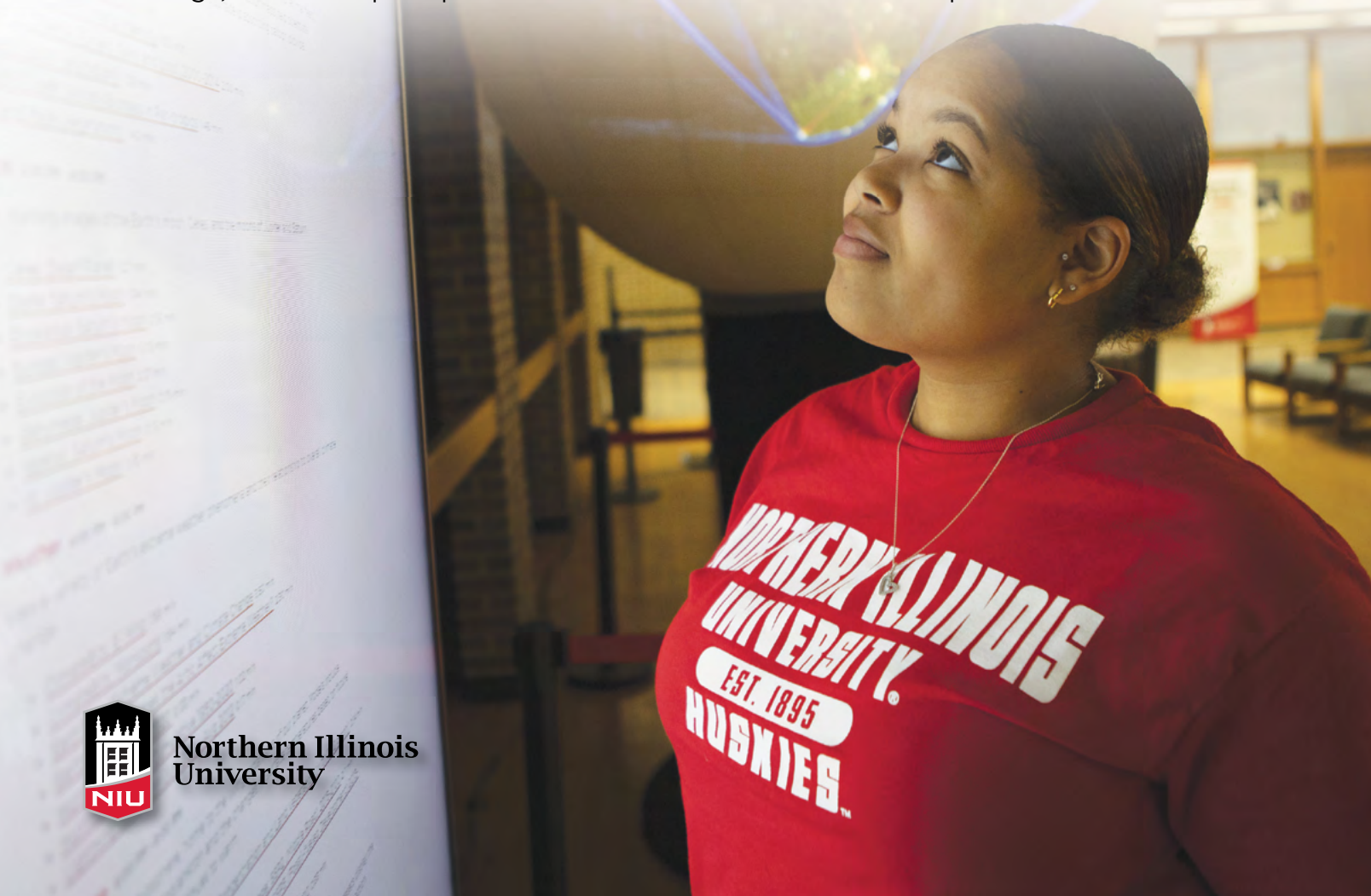
In the face of rising censorship, the adoption of Freedom to Read laws represents a critical step toward preserving access to literature and ideas. For higher education, these protections are not merely symbolic, they are essential to maintaining the integrity of academic inquiry and ensuring that future generations are equipped to navigate an increasingly complex world. By championing the right to read, colleges and universities affirm their commitment to fostering an inclusive and intellectually vibrant society. ●

Fostering Belonging: Curating Collections for a Diverse Community

Northern Illinois University Libraries is proud to have been honored twice with the Insight Into Diversity magazine's Library Excellence in Access and Diversity (LEAD) Award. This recognition highlights our commitment to fostering inclusive excellence that goes beyond just sharing information.

Our core values — collaboration, creativity, curiosity, integrity, kindness and service — define who we are. Whether it's through the collections we showcase, the exhibitions we curate or the spaces we build, we aim to inspire and support scholarly, artistic and career success at NIU. We're dedicated to creating dynamic spaces and embracing cutting-edge technologies that empower our community to thrive.

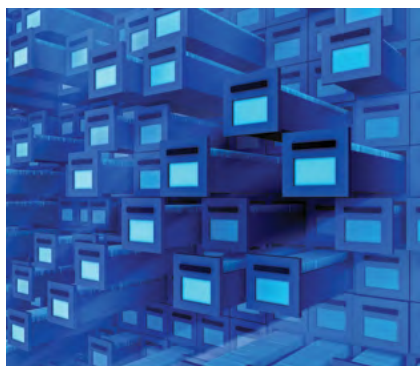
Above all, we strive to be a place where everyone feels a sense of belonging. We welcome students, faculty, staff and the wider community to engage, explore and discover. Together, we cultivate knowledge, art and unique experiences that make our libraries a vibrant part of NIU's culture.



Northern Illinois University

Northern Illinois University is honored to be recognized as a **Diversity Champion** and four-time recipient of the **Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award** from Insight Into Diversity magazine.





NIH Is Leveraging Libraries for Data and Discovery

By Courtney Mullins

Academic libraries are instrumental in connecting researchers with emerging data resources. A project led by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is strengthening that connection. The All of Us Data Training and Engagement for Academic Libraries Program (All of Us) equips college and university libraries with the training and resources needed to support researchers working with health and biomedical data.

Central to the initiative is the All of Us Research Hub, which brings together scientists and people from a range of backgrounds to advance precision medicine through one of the largest and most diverse health care datasets ever assembled. With contributions from over 500,000 participants—80% from underrepresented communities and 50% identified as racial or ethnic minorities—the dataset is optimal for tailoring care to address health disparities.

While aggregate data in the hub can be explored through the public data browser, researchers can register to gain proprietary access to the Researcher Workbench, which offers advanced tools designed for in-depth analysis. When users register for the workbench, they provide details about their projects, enabling other participants and the public to see how the data is being used.

To protect participant information, all data is encrypted and identifying details removed. Researchers must undergo ethics training and agree to a code of conduct, and partner organizations must meet strict data security standards before collecting, transferring, or storing information.

Members of the Academic Libraries Program cohort are granted registered access to the secure, cloud-based researcher workbench, where they can not only analyze a vast array of de-identified biological, environmental, and health information, but also explore and learn from the projects of their peers. Additionally, cohort members receive specialized training in health data management, participate in regular meetings to share strategies, and acquire funding to enhance resources.

Through NIH, All of Us has already advanced cancer and diabetes care and improved disease prediction.

The program began with a pilot cohort of 15 institutions in 2023. After an open call for applications, libraries at 10 new schools joined: Grand Valley State University; North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University; San Jose State University; Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College; State University of New York at Buffalo; University of Illinois at Chicago; University of Mississippi; University of

Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus; University of South Dakota; and University of the Incarnate Word.

Associate Head and Associate Professor of Scholar Support and Data Services Savannah Kelly, PhD, and Assistant Professor of Scholar Support and Data Services Shelby Watson, PhD, at the University of Mississippi Libraries, facilitate workshops in R and Python to help users navigate the workbench effectively. R, strong in statistics and widely used in fields like bioinformatics and economics, and Python, known for its versatility in machine learning and artificial intelligence, are both open-source programming languages that enable researchers to analyze large datasets, automate tasks, and build complex models, enhancing research efficiency. In addition to the workshops, outreach is being conducted with underrepresented faculty and students and mini grants are being offered to support interdisciplinary research using the dataset.

Through NIH, All of Us has already advanced cancer and diabetes care and improved disease prediction, with a long-term goal of enrolling over 1 million participants and building a global network of 10,000 researchers to help understand the factors that influence health. Their Data Training and Engagement for Academic Libraries Program is paramount to supporting researchers, promoting inclusive research practices, and addressing health disparities through innovative, data-driven approaches. ●



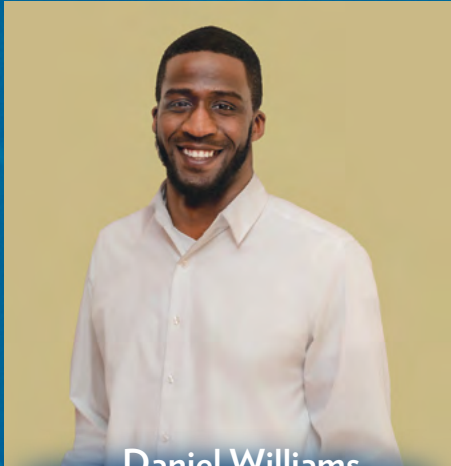
Jonathan Young
Charleston



Tanisha Washington
Midlands



Julia Skinner
Midlands



Daniel Williams
Charleston



Maybell Johnson
Orangeburg



Cora Twitty
Catawba

Celebrating Black History Month



Booked for Success:

The Inaugural Resident Librarian Summit

By Courtney Mullins

Resident librarians—early career librarians who participate in a residency program at an academic library—are invaluable to the daily operations of the library where they are assigned. While they gain great experience, some can struggle with navigating the role in relative isolation. To meet this need, several universities collaborated to establish the Resident Librarian Summit, an event dedicated to supporting budding library professionals as they begin building their networks.

The event was motivated by a need for broader institutional support for resident librarians, who benefit from long-term mentorship after returning to their home institutions. Access to structured mentorship programs and ongoing professional development helps lead to greater retention and success in the profession.

In September, resident librarians and program coordinators from American University, Duke University, North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Washington and Lee University gathered at the University of Virginia for the inaugural Resident Librarian Summit.

The event was coordinated by Roberto Silva, head of Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at Virginia Tech's Health Sciences and Technology Library, along with his colleague Eric Glenn, director of belonging, engagement, and organizational development for the university's libraries.

"I was thrilled that we, as coordinators, had the opportunity to create a space where residents from various institutions could come together to connect, amplify one another, and highlight their valuable



Resident librarians and program coordinators gathered at the University of Virginia for the inaugural Resident Librarian Summit. (Photo courtesy of the University of Virginia Library)

contributions to the field," says Silva, alluding to the event's theme: Connect, Amplify, Spotlight.

Attendees exchanged ideas, expanded professional knowledge, and deepened their understanding of the evolving academic library landscape. From data services and metadata to collections, open education, and publishing, the summit was tailored to align with each participant's unique interests and career goals while also addressing the growing demand for specialized skills.

To empower librarians with the tools and confidence to make meaningful contributions to their institutions, the structure encouraged both formal learning and informal networking. This allowed attendees to share open dialogue and gain fresh perspectives on issues such as supporting

underrepresented student populations, integrating emerging technologies, and enhancing access to digital resources.

Emphasizing the importance of community and mentorship was a central goal of the summit, and the resident librarians benefited from connecting with seasoned professionals who provided guidance on the complexities of the academic library ecosystem.

"Our goal was to cultivate a strong sense of community by fostering an environment that encouraged meaningful connections, supported professional development, and promoted interuniversity collaboration," says Silva. "I truly believe we achieved that, and we are already looking into hosting another summit this summer 2025." ●

A COMMITMENT TO ACCESS & OPPORTUNITY

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are woven into the very fabric of Suffolk University. We have been providing students with access to transformational learning opportunities that begin in the center of Boston and reach across the globe.

Through student, faculty, and staff recruitment and support; community engagement; curriculum development; and research, the University community works to advance equity for every student, every day.

Learn how we manifest the core values of our mission at suffolk.edu/dei.



SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY | BOSTON

SWARTHMORE CELEBRATING DIVERSITY. DEVELOPING LEADERS.



At Swarthmore College, we are committed to cultivating a campus where differences in identity and experiences are celebrated as an integral part of developing future global leaders. We commemorate our continuous efforts to build a diverse, inclusive, and equitable working and learning environment that encourages dialogue, education, and support.





Libraries as Lifelines

Empowering First-Generation Students to Succeed

By Erik Cliburn

Academic libraries are playing an increasingly critical role in aiding first-generation college students, implementing programs designed to more closely meet their specific needs. Institutions such as Emory University, Earlham College, and Chapman University have developed creative strategies that deliver vital resources and open pathways for achievement. These efforts underscore the transformative influence of libraries in advancing inclusion and fostering a sense of belonging.

Emory University Libraries' revamped Textbook Lending program has become a pillar of their dedication to minimizing financial obstacles for underserved learners. Initially established in 2016 as a grassroots effort by the First-Generation Low-Income Partnership (FLIP), the program has expanded beyond its volunteer-led beginnings. Through collaboration with Emory Libraries and the Campus Life/Emory First initiative, it has matured into a fully institutionalized offering.

The service enables students to borrow essential textbooks for high-enrollment courses via the Woodruff Library Course Reserves system. Borrowers can access physical textbooks for three-hour intervals, offering flexibility while maintaining availability of high-demand items. After a pilot expansion in fall 2024, the program now encompasses a wider array of classes and continues to prioritize physical copies due to limitations on digital textbook licensing.

This endeavor augments other university efforts, including FLIP's donation-based book collection at the on-campus Bread Coffeehouse. Together, these initiatives improve access to educational materials, ensuring first-generation and low-income students are equipped to thrive.

The Lilly Library at Earlham College delivers a tailored approach to learner assistance through the Library Immersion Fellowship Team (LIFT) Program. Designed to smooth the transition to college, the program

connects small groups of first-generation students with a dedicated research librarian for a ten-week, one-credit tutorial during their first semester.

During weekly meetings, students participate in activities that enhance research and digital literacy. The curriculum features discussions on current events, instruction in platforms like Zotero and JSTOR, and digital storytelling projects using audio and video editing tools. These sessions not only build academic capabilities but also foster a supportive peer network and meaningful relationships with faculty.

Leatherby Libraries play a pivotal role in the First-Generation Promising Futures Program, which honors and supports those without familial academic backgrounds. The highlight in 2024 was a campuswide engagement with the book "First Gen: A Memoir" by Alejandra Campoverdi, a Harvard graduate and former White House aide to President Barack Obama. The memoir, chronicling Campoverdi's experience as a first-generation student, provided a basis for discussions on resilience, identity, and social advancement.

"I didn't come from an academic home that could help me with this. These people showed me the ropes—they were always available for me to call and I feel like I would not be successful without them."

Kendra Parker

"I didn't come from an academic home that could help me with this," Kendra Parker, an Earlham and LIFT alumni, said in a press release. "These people showed me the ropes—they were always available for me to call and I feel like I would not be successful without them."

The LIFT Program also serves as an entry point to Earlham's Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, which prepares underrepresented students for graduate studies. Approximately 60% of McNair Scholars began their journeys as LIFT participants who can also apply for an immersive, fully funded study abroad experience at the end of their first year. Previous cohorts have traveled to destinations such as Scotland, Italy, and Germany, providing life-changing opportunities for personal and academic growth.

At Chapman University, the

Participants, including students, faculty, and staff, received complimentary copies of the book. The initiative culminated in Campoverdi's visit in September 2024, during which she shared her story and interacted with the university community. The program emphasized the importance of first-generation narratives while cultivating greater campuswide understanding and solidarity.

These initiatives exemplify how academic libraries can rise to meet the needs of first-generation students. By addressing issues such as textbook affordability, skill building, and community connection, libraries are uniquely positioned to empower these learners and reduce resource disparities. By embedding such programs into broader institutional priorities, colleges can ensure that enrollees receive the support, tools, and encouragement necessary to excel. ●



STUDY TIME MEETS STORY TIME AT THE UDC LIBRARY

By Courtney Mullins

Photos courtesy of University of the District of Columbia

The recently revitalized library

at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) has opened its doors, unveiling a fresh, engaging 29,000-square-foot space that welcomes all university affiliates.

From the metrics that guided the redesign, a notable finding emerged: many students who were also parents or caregivers frequently brought their children with them to the library. This revelation, combined with her own experience as a mother, inspired Outreach and Reference Librarian Meghan Kowalski to lead the development of a dedicated family-friendly area within the library.

“When we started touring the spaces they were remodeling, we identified the perfect place ... kind of separate from the rest of the main library. It was by a bathroom, it was by windows, and it was big enough that we could balance all these needs at the same time.” Kowalski says.

A former shared office space, the room was transformed into the

newly designed study area Kowalski envisioned, complete with work stations, lounge seating, and materials for children, including toys and a curated selection of books in English, Spanish, Japanese, and Korean.

To keep things accessible, these books and toys are not included in the library’s official collection. “We’re not barcoding these,” says Kowalski. “Because we understand kids fall in love with things and they’re going to take it home, and we want that to be okay. We have plenty of backups waiting to fill the space again.” Community donations, contributions from colleagues, and outgrown items from Kowalski’s own child help to maintain the supply.

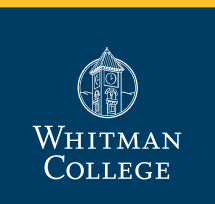
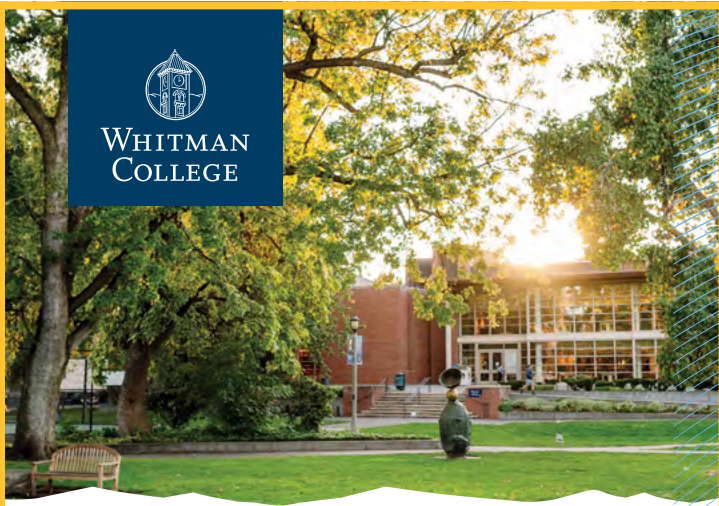
Director of the Learning Resources Division Melba Broome, who has been with UDC for 40 years, was an integral part of the library’s continual operation through two relocations before it returned to its refurbished home. “It wasn’t a drastic change, it was a process,” she says.

The renovated library is optimized for functionality, with group and individual study rooms for collaborative projects, online classes, or focused work. Compact shelving preserves essential print materials, and enhanced infrastructure includes ample charging outlets and updated computer stations to more effectively meet users’ needs.

Established in 1851, UDC is the second-oldest historically Black university in the country and the only public university in the nation’s capital. The highly anticipated remodel, part of UDC’s \$50 million capital improvement plan, began in 2022.

Other colleges looking to create family-friendly spaces may find UDC’s sustainable approach effective. Kowalski recommends the selection of a spacious, well-lit room near restrooms and the inclusion of flexible features that can be adjusted based on user feedback.

“It’s a lot like a garden,” Kowalski says. “You have to weed out what isn’t being used to give what is working space to flourish.” ●



Leading the Way

Penrose Library is a proud 2025 LEAD Award recipient, supporting Whitman College's mission of inclusive excellence.



Subscribe to the newsletter from **INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY**.

BEYOND *the* QUAD

Weekly News and Best Practices

Higher Education Discussion Forum

Exclusive Content and Special Offers

BEYOND *the* QUAD *cast*
Early Access to Podcast Episodes

AND MORE!

Become A Subscriber:



Employee Resource Groups at Tri-C

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) are employee-led groups that provide opportunities for members to engage personally and professionally and support one another to build a sense of belonging within the organization, creating opportunities for mentoring and career development.

tri-c.edu



25-0070

Shelf Awareness: Libraries Are Closing Gaps in Research Inclusion

By Erik Cliburn

University libraries are transforming the academic landscape by championing inclusive excellence in research. Institutions of higher education such as Drexel University, Kean University, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville are leading this charge with groundbreaking programs and resources that empower faculty and students.

Drexel University Libraries has prioritized inclusive scholarship by enhancing access to a broad range of resources and offering expert guidance on open access (OA) publishing. Faculty members benefit from curated collections featuring works by underrepresented voices and comprehensive consultations on integrating these materials into their research. In 2024, Drexel introduced publishing discounts that reduce financial barriers for authors pursuing OA, expanding access to research studies.

During International Open Access Week, Drexel hosted workshops like Introduction to Open Access Publishing & Resources, equipping researchers with tools to navigate OA publishing, identify credible journals, and maximize the visibility of their work. This aligns with the 2024 theme,

Community Over Commercialization, emphasizing equitable knowledge sharing. Over the past year, the library's OA initiatives have saved Drexel authors nearly \$500,000. Specialized LibGuides, collaborative campus initiatives, and support for research visibility further demonstrate the library's dedication to fostering an inclusive academic community.

The Nancy Thompson Learning Commons (NTLC) at Kean University offers tailored services to advance research among faculty and students. By providing databases, journals, and books authored by underrepresented scholars, NTLC ensures that a multitude of perspectives are represented in academic work. Faculty benefit from personalized research coaching, which assists in integrating inclusive principles into their projects and publications.

NTLC actively supports grant applications and funding opportunities for diversity-focused initiatives, alongside hosting professional development workshops on inclusive pedagogy and research practices. Its new Research Coaching program empowers both students and faculty to incorporate marginalized voices into their academic endeavors, strengthening inclusion of different perspectives in classroom curricula and scholarly output. Additionally, NTLC facilitates dissemination through Kean's digital repository, ensuring such research gains broader recognition.

At the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the John C. Hodges Library exemplifies how academic libraries can serve as community connectors and champions of inclusive research. Signature events like Big Orange STEM Saturday (BOSS) provide exposure for underserved high school students—many of whom are potential first-generation college enrollees—to STEM careers through interactive

workshops and presentations.

The Hodges Library also preserves diverse experiences in a robust digital archive. The Voices Out Loud collection chronicles eastern Tennessee's LGBTQIA+ history through a repository of oral histories, letters, photographs, and artifacts. The Rising from the Ashes project documents the oral histories of individuals affected by the 2016 Great Smoky Mountain wildfires.



Each year the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) hosts Big Orange STEM Saturday to engage with underserved high school students. (Photo courtesy of UTK)

The library's cataloging department has taken significant strides by revising classifications and metadata to reflect inclusive standards. For example, terms such as "Tulsa race riots" have been updated to "Tulsa race massacre," aligning with modern historical interpretations. The department also expanded their process of tagging literary works and musical compositions by Black and Latino creators, enhancing searchability for researchers from these backgrounds.

Through their targeted efforts equipping scholars with critical resources, fostering equitable access to publishing, and bridging gaps for underrepresented groups, these institutions' libraries are helping to shape a more equitable academic future. ●



*Where community
meets classroom.*

At Binghamton University's **College of Community and Public Affairs**, our focus is on people: our students, faculty, staff and community. Our nationally ranked programs connect world-class faculty with motivated students who want to positively impact their communities and make the world a better place for everyone.



**COMMUNITY RESEARCH
AND ACTION**

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
AND POLICY**

**TEACHING, LEARNING AND
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

**HIGHER EDUCATION
AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

HUMAN RIGHTS

**SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES**

SOCIAL WORK

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

BINGHAMTON | COLLEGE OF COMMUNITY
UNIVERSITY | AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

binghamton.edu/CCPA



Just One of the Guys

At Clemson University, junior Charlie McGee (far left) is one of the newest members of Pi Kappa Alpha (PIKE) and the first ever student with Down Syndrome to join a fraternal Greek organization on campus. Charlie is part of ClemsonLIFE, a program that prepares students with intellectual disabilities to live and thrive independently.

Photo courtesy of Clemson



INCLUSION LIVES HERE
INNOVATION LIVES HERE
IMPACT LIVES HERE

next lives here

University of
CINCINNATI



THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

A Place That's Here for You



We're here for good—and we're here for you.

UMass Amherst welcomes you to be part of a community that thrives on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Our commitment to fostering a culturally rich environment is at the heart of our academic excellence and campus culture.

Here, you'll find a stable, supportive environment designed to help you succeed—lifelong comprehensive benefits, professional development opportunities, and a vibrant community committed to your growth. At UMass Amherst, we believe in making a lasting impact.

Explore open positions today and make your mark in higher education at a place that's as invested in your success as you are.

University of
Massachusetts
Amherst