

WOMEN

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IN HER OWN WORDS

Some Pitfalls of Public Engagement

By Anna Piela

Public engagement is often an indicator of prestige and impact for both scholars and universities. Institutions value the media attention and financial impacts that engagement brings. Unfortunately, they rarely offer advice on negotiating boundaries with the media.

Media Requests

Women and minority scholars, who are over-represented in contingent positions in the academy, are especially vulnerable to being exploited by predatory journalists. Talking to the media can give you a sense of validation because of the recognition of your expertise. As women and minorities lack access to the senior academic positions that make it easier to build professional relationships and networks, they may be more eager to talk to the media.

Much advice on media engagement for scholars focuses on how to be accommodating. In “Here’s What to Do If You’re an Academic Who Wants to Talk to The Media” at *The Forbes*, Matthew Gabriele stresses that academics should respond to media requests promptly, educate journalists, and direct them to other sources where required. Such an approach promotes the “ever helpful” or “can-do” attitude into which women and minority academics are socialized.

Not Getting Credit When Credit Is Due

I only realized how problematic advice could be after I got burned.

Following the publication of my essay in *The Conversation US*, I received an interview request from a freelance journalist writing for a prestigious European news organization. Preparation took me two hours; the interview took an hour. I asked her to plug my forthcoming book, *Wearing the Niqab: Muslim Women in the UK and the US*. Later she told me that although my contribution had informed her article, my quotes were cut by the editor. My work would not be credited.

To add insult to injury, a few months later, a top American lifestyle magazine published an article that was suspiciously similar to my original article in *The Conversation US*. It was based on an identical idea, had the same structure, the title used the same words, it had the same stock

photo illustration, and offered the same conclusions. My email to the editor and tweets pointing this out were met with silence.

Not crediting others’ ideas or plagiarizing them is unacceptable. Plagiarism is not just about the verbatim wording but also repackaging someone else’s ideas as your own, which is much harder to trace. In the culture of ubiquitous reposting, the original source seems to matter less and less. There is even a name for mixing original reporting with uncredited sources—a “clip job.” Some journalists may appropriate material because of time pressures. It’s common practice to “transform” secondhand sources (such as people quoted in someone’s research) to firsthand sources because the latter are more valuable.

Common Experiences

I asked my academic peers (most of whom asked to remain anonymous) about their experiences of public engagement. I received many frustrated responses. LW, an adjunct professor in the Midwest, said she was interviewed by a journalist who then promised to send her a link to the article but never did. Her email inquiries went unanswered. “I was particularly disappointed as I felt that an article in international press would be helpful in my job search at the time,” she said.

FN, a lecturer from England, said, “I don’t do much media now due to TV/radio journalists recording me, and then using it as script without credit; being used for background

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in articles without credit, etc. I got to a point where I stopped talking to journalists (documentary makers, individuals seeking to sensationalize the subject, etc.) as it was too frustrating." FN now also warns graduate students to never share their findings prematurely because if they are published without crediting the author, the student's research may no longer be considered as "original," which is the primary requirement for doctoral-level work.

AR, who left academia to work for a non-profit in Scotland, says that she witnessed these practices too. "My colleague did lots of work to produce a series of videos. In order to disseminate these videos to a wider audience, my colleague spoke to a journalist who then ran the article about the videos, without mentioning the [organization] or my colleague. The article read as if the journalist/newspaper had themselves produced the videos." Now they only work with journalists they trust.

Kate Lister, the author of *The Curious History of Sex* (2020), says, "I fear that being gouged like this by journalists is almost a rite of passage." A lot of interactions with the media left her with a bitter taste in the mouth. In one case, she shared her ideas with a writer from a high-profile lifestyle magazine and in another, a podcast documentary producer. "They took my ideas and I never heard from them again," she says.

Advice on Public Engagement

Having learned the rules of media engagement the hard way, Lister has some advice for scholars who are hoping to talk to the media about their work:

I now ask [the journalist] flat out why they want to speak to me and what part I will play in the final article/documentary/podcast. This is where they will dangle the possibility of taking part in whatever it is [that] they're doing. They'll say something like "Right now, we're talking to experts to see who we could use." Or they might say they are researching X

and hoping to talk to you about an article.

You need to be really firm about what you want from them! Say: "Are you asking me for a quote for the article, or to provide sources for you?" or "Are you asking me to work as an academic consultant?" If it sounds like they are auditioning you for a show, tell them they can have ten minutes of your time for free, and then you will charge them as a consultant. Your time and resources are very valuable! Do not feel shy about saying you want to be quoted in the article or about pushing them to say if it's likely you'll be in the final cut.

There is another "public engagement" scenario you might want to avoid. Lister notes, "Documentary workers

Corrections

In "Creating Space in Higher Education" in the November issue of *WIHE*, kYmberly Keeton was originally quoted as saying "When it comes to librarianship, African American women are paid more than Black men, by the numbers, and Black men are offered more positions as directors and given more positions of tenure-track assistant professorships or being presidents before Black women." The quote should be instead "African American women hold positions as directors, whereas Black males are offered Dean's positions from what I have seen thus far in the field."

"OppNet Shrinks Opportunity Gap for Underrepresented Students" in the December issue of *WIHE* mentioned that AiLun Ku interned for the Equal Justice Initiative. She did not; instead she interned at the NYU Law School Public Interest Law Center. 

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who want you to be the ‘talking head,’ but also want you to do all the [background] research too! These are two separate jobs! Don’t let them pressure you into working for free.”

If you are keen to talk to journalists as a public scholar (pro bono), try to ensure that you are getting mentioned in the final piece. You do not need to be quoted verbatim, but a simple statement like “The author wishes to thank X for their contribution” is sufficient. It situates you as an expert. Get a journalist’s full contact details—it will be harder for them to ghost you if you can call them.

Mentioning a fee (even if you have never charged money for talking about research) may signal that your time and work should be valued.

If the journalist is unable to guarantee crediting you or is not clear on how your interview will be used, consider whether you are still willing to spend time talking to them. If you feel you need media exposure, you’ll (probably) be better off publishing an op-ed under your own name. 📌

Dr. Anna Piela is a scholar of gender and Islam at Northwestern University IL. She earned a PhD in Women’s Studies from the University of York, UK.

Women and Minorities in STEM Fields Program (USDA)

Scope: The Agriculture Department’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture seeks applications for the Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS), which supports research, education/teaching and extension projects that increase participation by women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Deadline: Jan. 21, 2021.

Funds: Four awards of up to \$100,000 per year. The maximum project period is three years.

Eligibility: State agricultural experiment stations, colleges and universities, university research foundations, other research institutions and organizations, federal agencies, national laboratories, private organizations or corporations, and qualified individuals.

Areas: The USDA said WAMS projects should focus on the purpose of one or more of the FY21 need areas: Curriculum Design, Materials Development and Library Resources; Faculty Preparation and Enhancement of Teaching; Instruction Delivery Systems; Scientific Instrumentation for Teaching and Research; Student Experiential Learning and Student Recruitment; and Retention, Mentoring and Educational Equity.

www.grants.gov; FON# SDA-NIFA-WAMS-007852

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As of Dec. 1, 2020

College Enrollment Is Down

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center released data about college enrollment in early November. With 76% of colleges and universities reporting enrollment numbers, enrollment decreases continue. *Education Dive* notes, “Colleges reported 4.4% fewer undergraduates than a year ago as of Oct. 22, compared to a 4% lag as of late September.” However, the enrollment declines are not happening equally at all institutions or for all students. Community colleges have taken a harder hit, a 9.5% drop in enrollments, as have the enrollments for first-time college students. There have also been steeper declines in international student enrollment in U.S. institutions. There’s been a 15% drop in their undergraduate enrollments and an 8% decrease in their graduate enrollments.

Additionally, there are 13% less freshmen at schools this year. It should be noted that the enrollment decline impacted all age groups, both traditional and non-traditional students. And yet, these numbers aren’t quite as dire as the earlier predictions from the spring, which projected a 20% enrollment decline for colleges and universities. Some have even suggested that the decline for community colleges might not last long as these schools tend to have an enrollment bump during a recession. Still, it’s too early to tell if that will be the case.

But these numbers don’t tell the whole story of which students aren’t enrolling in college right now. Take for example Native students who are choosing to not attend college during the pandemic. According to *The Christian Science Monitor*, the freshman enrollment for Native students “at public, four-year colleges is down 22%; at community colleges, it’s fallen by almost 30%.” And not enrolling in college directly after high school has consequences. Students “who postpone enrollment are far less likely to graduate from college than those who enroll immediately after high school.” This dramatic drop in Native student enrollment declines has also deeply impacted tribal colleges; they’ve lost first-time students at three-fourths of these schools. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium reports an average loss of 75% of first-time enrollments at tribal colleges, which is not good at all. It’s hard to say if tribal colleges will have better enrollments in 2021 because who knows what will happen next year. But it is clear that the ramifications of sharply declining enrollments in 2020 could have long-term consequences for these institutions and their survival.

—*Education Dive* on Nov. 12, 2020 and *The Christian Science Monitor* on Nov. 20, 2020

Gender Gaps in High School Career and Technical Education

In a report, *Public High School Students’ Career and Technical Education Course-taking: 1992 to 2013*, the Department of Education found that 88% of public high school graduates had credits in career and technical education (CTE). Most of the credits were in finance, marketing, or business. There were some slight gender gaps that are important to note. The report showed that men “were slightly more likely than

women to earn credit in CTE fields” earning “an average of 2.88 CTE credits compared to 2.34 for female students.” In 1992, men had more credits in business-related disciplines, but by 2013, women erased the gender gap and had more CTE credits in business. Women also had more CTE credits in health care and related fields. Men still earned more credits in engineering and design, but the gap between men and women had decreased some by 2013. These data about CTE credits mirror some of the data about the disciplines that women and men choose in college and what they get advanced degrees in, as well as the fact that there are more men in STEM and more women in health care disciplines.

—*Women in Academia Report* on Nov. 25, 2020

Controversial New Study on Gender and Mentorship of Women Scientists

A study, “The Association Between Early Career Informal Mentorship in Academic Collaborations and Junior Author Performance,” published in *Nature Communications* has stirred up controversy. In the study, researchers from New York University’s Abu Dhabi campus analyzed over 200 million scientific papers published over a period of more than 100 years to identify millions of mentors and their mentees. What they found was that “opposite-gender mentorship may actually increase the impact of women who pursue a scientific career.” Yes, that’s right. They asserted that early-career women scientists had “more successful” careers (determined solely by their academic publications) if their mentors were men. However, the researchers didn’t stop there (though Newswatch thinks that maybe they should have). They further argued that their “findings suggest that current diversity policies promoting female–female mentorships, as well-intended as they may be, could hinder the careers of women who remain in academia in unexpected ways.” As the kids say, shots fired.

It should be no shock at all that folks didn’t react well to the researchers’ conclusions. A neurobiologist from Rockefeller University NY, Dr. Leslie Vosshalla posted an open letter to the journal on Twitter. She emphasized the “flawed assumptions and flawed analysis” in the study. Moreover, she wrote that the study’s “message—avoid a female mentor or your career will suffer—is being amplified by your journal.” Although that message might not be what the authors intended (which is being generous), it is the message that comes across. Moreover, the researchers’ conclusions feel a bit like an attack on women mentoring women in STEM.

Nature Communications is now investigating concerns about the study. Newswatch would note that she too has concerns about the study because of the other studies that show the importance of women mentors for other women in fields dominated by men like STEM. Early-career women scientists need to not only have mentors who are women, but women students need these women scientists as role models too. Additionally, the study only follows women who stayed in the academy, so the gender of mentors of early-career scientists who left academia is missing entirely. How many women scientists, who had men mentors, left higher ed altogether? That data might give a more accurate portrait of how gender plays into mentorship because many STEM fields remain unwelcoming to women.

—*Women in Academia Report* on Nov. 25, 2020

Gender Bias in Teaching Assistant Evaluations

A graduate student at the University of Florida, Emily Khazan, was one of the co-authors of a study, “Examining Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching for Graduate Teaching Assistants” appearing in the *NACTA Journal*. The study examines a large online course, which was asynchronous, in which half of the students were informed that their teaching assistant (TA) was a man with an accompanying photo of a man, and the other half were informed that their TA was a woman paired with a picture of Khazan. Khazan was actually the only TA for the class and communicated primarily in writing in the online learning management system. The researchers analyzed the end-of-term evaluations. The evaluations showed “that the male TA scored higher on course evaluations, while the female TA got five times as many negative reviews.”

What the study found is not surprising and confirms previous studies that have shown continued gender bias in teaching evaluations. Women tend to receive more negative comments than men. That a woman received *five times as many* negative reviews than a man is deeply concerning, especially because both groups of students had the same TA all along. The study also found that women students were more apt to give negative reviews to their TA who was a woman. Even more distressing, “all of the female students assigned to the fake male profile gave positive evaluations.” Students appear to expect and respect men as instructors more than they do women. This study and previous ones show that teaching evaluations are biased and shouldn’t be used as the sole way to evaluate instructors’ performances in the classroom. Evaluations are flawed instruments that exacerbate gender bias, which is already a serious problem in higher ed that is far from being solved.

—*Women in Academia Report* on Nov. 11, 2020

DOE Rescinds Clery Act Guidance

In October, the Department of Education rescinded guidance on the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act or Clery Act, which mandates that schools “report certain crimes that happen on or near campus” and that schools “also must regularly release campus crime statistics to the public and issue a warning to campus, such as through a text message, if one occurs.” Over the last 15 years, there was one guidance document for institutions, the *Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting*, which clocked in at 260 pages. The DOE has tossed that guidance and now offers a shorter appendix (about 13 pages) that appears at the end of the *Federal Student Aid Handbook*. The rescinding of the previous handbook is just another example of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos’s attempts to reduce “the regulatory burden on institutions.” Please note that she rescinded previous guidance from the Obama administration on Title IX, and the DOE created new controversial guidance that schools had to rush to adopt during the pandemic.

The DOE claims their shorter guidance will make it easier for schools to report crimes and crime statistics, but will it? The new guidance tells colleges and universities to make their own “reasonable” interpretations of the Clery Act, but they also must make their interpretations clear to those who

review Clery Act reports. The previous handbook explained more directly to administrators what actions they need to take to be in compliance with the Clery Act. Although the new guidance might be shorter and seem more flexible, it doesn't necessarily make it easier for colleges to comply with the act. Its vagueness is actually a problem for institutions and their administrators who have to figure out how to reasonably interpret the act. The stakes are also high because the DOE has been issuing costly penalties to colleges that violate the Clery Act. The DOE fined Baylor University TX over \$460,000, the University of California, Berkeley—\$2.4 million, and Michigan State University—\$4.5 million for Clery Act violations. Other institutions that violate the Clery Act, then, could face severe fines from not following the act; and the guidance they now have might make it harder to know what compliance with Clery Act actually entails.

—*Education Dive* on Oct. 12, 2020 and *Inside Higher Ed* on Oct. 19, 2020

The Pandemic's Impact on Women's Financial Security

The hits keep coming for women during the pandemic. The American Association of University Women published a new study that shows that COVID-19 has affected women's economic security, especially women of color, more than men's. The unemployment rate for women is higher than for men with the unemployment rate for Black, Latinx, and Asian women being higher than the rate for white women. Mothers faced more job loss than fathers: "Moms of children under 12 lost nearly 2.2 million jobs between February and August, a 12% drop: fathers saw a 4% drop of about 870,000 jobs." The authors of the report point particularly to the impact of caretaking on women's economic security. They write that "the challenges of caretaking—exacerbated by virtual schooling, closed daycare centers, and isolated seniors—have taken a significant toll on the work life of many women...Because time out of the workforce affects lifetime earnings and many employers still erroneously rely on previous wages to set salaries, the impact is likely to compound the gender and racial wage gaps, which are persistent contributors to economic inequity." The pandemic will likely have a dramatic impact on women's lifetime earnings and exacerbate the gender pay gap, which means that for many women economic security will become or continue to be out of reach.

—*Women in Academia Report* on Nov. 11, 2020

First Lady Jill Biden Is Also First Professor

When her husband, Joe Biden, was VP, Dr. Jill Biden would rush from Northern Virginia Community College where she teaches to White House functions, and she was known to grade papers on Air Force 2. Now, her husband is the president-elect, but Biden won't be giving up her career and will probably be grading papers on Air Force 1. When they move to the White House in January, Biden will not quit her job but will continue to teach writing and English at the school. That makes her the "first president's wife to continue her professional career as first lady, after becoming the first second lady to do so." This is a big deal because it might set a new precedent for future first ladies or first men. Additionally, she joins previous first ladies Eleanor Roosevelt and Nancy Reagan as members of unions. Biden is also

a member of the National Education Association and could become a good go-between between the teacher's unions, who were vehement critics of the Trump administration and supported her husband's campaigns and his administration.

As first lady, Biden plans to keep pushing for "two years of tuition-free community college," which she advocated for as second lady, as well as continuing to work toward support for military families. Her new initiatives include "addressing food insecurity issues created by the pandemic, as well as tackling unequal access to technology and broadband for students." Students' unequal access to technology has become a serious problem during the pandemic, with many children lacking the necessary resources that they need to succeed in school and falling behind their peers. Hopefully, Biden's focus on education will lead to much-needed changes in K-12 education and higher education. Newswatch is thrilled that the first lady will also be first professor. Hopefully, Biden will use her knowledge about and experience in higher education to work toward fixing inequities in primary and secondary education, as well as the academy. Here at *WIHE* we're rooting for you, Dr. Biden, and look forward to seeing how you shape educational policy as the first lady.

—*Politico* on Nov. 20, 2020



—KJB

Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections Grant

Scope: The National Endowment for the Humanities seeks applications for a Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections Grant to help cultural institutions meet the complex challenge of preserving large and diverse holdings of humanities materials for future generations by supporting sustainable conservation measures that mitigate deterioration, prolong the useful life of collections, and support institutional resilience: the ability to anticipate and respond to disasters resulting from natural or human activity.

Deadline: Jan. 14, 2021.

Funds: \$1.8 million total, for up to 15 awards of up to \$350,000.

Eligibility: Colleges and universities; nonprofit organizations; and state, local, special district, and Native American tribal governments.

Areas: NEH said preventive conservation encompasses managing relative humidity, temperature, light, and pollutants in collection spaces; providing protective storage enclosures and systems for collections; and safeguarding collections from theft, fire, floods, and other disasters. Sustainable preventive conservation measures may also aim to prepare and plan for, absorb, respond to, recover from, and more successfully protect collections in the event of emergencies resulting from natural or human activity.

www.grants.gov; FON# 20210114-PF

This announcement first appeared in December issue of *Federal Grants & Contracts*. For more information about this newsletter, go to <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/19493185>



Let's Acknowledge Our Suffering

By Katie Rose Guest Pryal

If you are like me, you are struggling right now. Perhaps even more than you have been during this difficult year. Your institution reopened, and you slogged through a semester that threw incredible new challenges your way. Our nation has been disrupted by an election with conflicts unprecedented in our lifetimes. COVID-19 is spiking again, nearly as dramatically as it did at the beginning of the pandemic. You don't need me to list every horrible thing. You know what they are.

If you are like me, you are careening off track, and you don't know how to stop. What do you do? Last month, I wrote about how we must take care of our students. This column is about taking care of ourselves.

If you find yourself failing at everyday things and are unable to figure out how to do your ordinary best, you have to learn to acknowledge both.

It's okay to acknowledge that you need extra time and extra help. For example, if you feel safe to do so, you can acknowledge your need to your supervisor, and you might receive time and help. Or you might not get either of these things, but you may get your supervisor's sympathy—after all, your supervisor is likely in a similar place as you are. Most people are not having an easy time right now.

Or you might not feel safe talking to your supervisor, but you can acknowledge to yourself that you are struggling, which can make a difference between being angry at yourself for falling short and giving yourself grace in difficult, if not impossible, circumstances.

We're All a Bit Lost

What I'm about to tell you might sound familiar.

I haven't slept through the night in months. I'm constantly anxious and also afraid (of nothing in particular, and also of things in particular). My anxiety is so bad, I even stopped drinking caffeine to help alleviate it. Zero. Not even a sip. And I own my own espresso machine.

First, there is the pandemic, looming even larger.

The election has done nothing to calm my anxiety. Even with Biden's win, many of us knew that things would only grow more unsettled after election night, and they did. The legal challenges created the unsettled place that our nation is now in. So, I've taken precautions: I've limited my social media and my news intake. I refuse to discuss politics even with my husband. I can't read the editorials, updates, and think pieces or my brain will rabbit hole to worst-case scenarios.

Additionally, my family finances, children's education and safety, and elderly parents' health all tie together in a knot in my gut that I can never untie.

But despite my constant state of being wrecked, the academic calendar rolls on. I had to grade finals. I have a deadline for my next textbook. I have a book proposal that I

have to write that is due soon. I had to get classes ready for the spring. I can't stop working just because I'm wrecked. I have to earn my paycheck to keep paying our mortgage.

Everything is overwhelming.

I know that I am not the only one who feels this way. Our ways of suffering may be different, but we are all a bit lost or a lot lost in our own ways. But before I wrote this column, my suffering was a diffuse gray cloud, something I was unable to pin down or articulate.

Finding the Words

I was talking to my colleague Ariane on the phone about how to get anything done under these conditions, especially now that the semester is coming to a close. We talked about how all of the pressures around us were converging at a bottleneck—current events, money, family pressures, and work. I told her that, after three days of doing almost nothing because of physical and mental exhaustion, I didn't know what to do to get started again. And she said, "I don't either."

Later, I texted her a chart someone shared with me on social media, created by the Colorado Healthcare Ethics Resource and adapted from research on firefighters and stress (<https://cohcwcovidsupport.org/>). The chart was a revelation to me.

It depicted stress and its symptoms as a continuum, from green to yellow to orange to red, from "thriving" (green) to "in crisis" (red). As I read the chart, I felt strangely validated.

In front of me were the words to describe how I've been feeling for weeks, months—honestly, I've lost track. And the

chart means that I'm not the only one who feels the way I do. Rationally, I know that I'm not; Ariane is proof of that. But sometimes I can't help but wonder if I'm weak. A failure. Inadequate. Deficient somehow. But the chart showed me that there is a greater pattern in the world, enough that we need a chart to track this greater human suffering.

Once I shared the chart with Ariane, she wrote back, "That's dead on."

The chart gave me the words to describe how I am feeling: "persistent fear, panic, anxiety...hopelessness." "Exhaustion." "Poor performance and difficulty making decisions or concentrating." "Restless, disturbed sleep." And more. I now had words to describe the amorphous gray cloud.

I acknowledged my suffering. I realized I wasn't alone.

Suffering, Together

Now, that I have acknowledged my suffering, I know what I need. I'm not afraid to ask for it. For example, I'm working from home. My husband's office is downstairs and mine is upstairs. But now, I get anxious by myself. I have trouble concentrating. I feel exhausted.

So, I asked my husband for help. I asked if I could work at the extra table in his office, near him, to help me stay

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Emotional support isn't something I realized I needed until I acknowledged how much I was suffering.

Women on the Move

As of Dec. 1, 2020

- **Deborah Alston** becomes senior director for alumni relations and advancement services at Virginia Union University.
- **Leslie T. Annexstein, JD**, moves from Title IX director at Howard University DC to assistant VP for equity and Title IX at American University DC.
- **Dr. Nina Lyon Bennett** moves from chair for the department of human ecology at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to assistant dean for academics at Pine Bluff School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences at the University of Arkansas.
- **Jessica Borusky** moves from lecturer in art and art history at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to director of art galleries at the University of North Florida.
- **Dr. Carol R. Bradford** becomes dean of the Ohio State University College of Medicine, VP for health sciences at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and the Leslie H. and Abigail S. Wexner Dean's Chair in Medicine.
- **Dr. Shirelle Briscoe** moves from assistant VP for undergraduate studies in the division of academic affairs to assistant VP for transfer and general student advocacy at Bowie State University MD.
- **Dr. Allison Morgan Bryant** becomes assistant dean of innovation and administration at Howard University School of Business DC.
- **Amy Campbell, JD**, moves from associate professor of law at the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law TN to associate dean for law and health sciences at the Chicago John Marshall Law School at the University of Illinois.
- **Michelle Rosenthal Clark** moves from assistant vice chancellor at the University of California, San Francisco to associate VP for development at the California Institute of Technology.
- **Dr. LaTonia Collins-Smith** moves from interim to provost and VP of academic affairs at Harris-Stowe State University MO.
- **Jessica Collogan** moves from director of the Carl Swisher Library at Jacksonville University FL to dean of library services at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.
- **Nicole Commissiong, JD**, moves from assistant dean for student affairs at the University of Oregon School of Law to associate VP, chief civil rights officer and Title IX coordinator at the University of Oregon.
- **Nicole Crawford** moves from interim to director of the University of Wyoming Art Museum.
- **Dr. Christen Crouch** becomes dean of the graduate studies at Bard College NY.
- **Dr. Stephanie Dance-Barnes** moves from interim associate provost at Winston-Salem State University to dean of the College of Science and Health at DePaul University IL.
- **Dr. Patricia Davidson** moves from dean of the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing MD to vice-chancellor of Australia's University of Wollongong.
- **Dr. Yasmine Farley** moves from director of career services at Campbell University NC to director of career services at Fayetteville State University NC.
- **Dr. Yuvay Meyers Ferguson** becomes assistant dean of impact and engagement at Howard University School of Business DC.
- **Dr. Joanne Lipson Freed** becomes provost faculty fellow for diversity at Oakland University MI.
- **Dr. DoVeanna Fulton** moves from dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and professor of history, humanities and languages at the University of Houston-Downtown TX to provost and VP for academic affairs at Norfolk State University VA.
- **Anne Garcia, JD**, moves from VP for legal affairs and compliance for The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center to senior VP and general counsel in the Office of Legal Affairs at Ohio State University.
- **Dr. Rajni Goel** moves from director of the Cyber-Security Education and Research Center to associate dean of academic affairs at Howard University School of Business DC.
- **Dr. Kathy Gould** becomes senior associate dean for biomedical research, education and career development at Vanderbilt University TN.
- **Claudia Guzmán** moves from director of student life at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay to assistant dean and director of the Multicultural Student Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- **Dr. Kathleen Hagerty** moves from interim to provost at Northwestern University IL.
- **Karissa Hoffman** moves from associate director of development for the College of Engineering at Wichita State University KS to director of planned giving and the endowed scholarship program at Bethany College KS.
- **Dr. Stacy Gee Hollins** moves from associate professor and assistant dean at the School of Business at Maryville University MO to dean of the School of Business at Harris-Stowe State University MO.
- **El pagnier Kay Hudson** moves from senior VP for human resources to vice provost for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Florida International University.
- **Brooke H. Jones** moves from managing director of investments for the in-house investment team at the Carnegie Corporation of New York to chief investment officer at Bryn Mawr College PA.
- **Dr. Robin Kelley** moves from president and CEO of the Kelley Consulting Firm NC to associate chief diversity officer for the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Gonzaga University WA.
- **Dr. Kristine Kelly** moves from executive associate athletics director for varsity sports at Dartmouth College NH to deputy athletic director for internal affairs at Vanderbilt University TN.
- **Dr. Patricia Koski** moves from associate dean of the Graduate School and International Education to dean of the Graduate School and International Education at The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

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Setting a New Precedent

By Lois Elfman

Dr. Tracy Y. Espy, president of Mitchell College CT, understands what it means to forge new territory. Since beginning her presidency on July 1, 2020, she is the first African American woman to lead Mitchell, a small liberal arts college founded in 1938.

“The liberal arts teach you how to be in relationship with people, how to critically think, how to ask questions and how to critically analyze,” says Espy, who prior to becoming Mitchell’s eighth president was the provost and vice president of academic affairs at Pfeiffer University NC.

“I like the fact that liberal arts are a forever educational focus because we’re preparing students for all kinds of things for the rest of their lives,” she adds. “All of the great liberal arts push us to critically think, to write well, to speak well, to reason well, to be...learning both inside and outside of the classroom.”

Preparation

Having attended a small liberal arts institution as an undergraduate and seeing its value in her life helps Espy understand how today’s students will similarly benefit. It prepared her to envision what she wanted to study as a graduate student, and it helps current students adapt to whatever careers they want to pursue.

Espy received a master’s degree in family studies and her doctorate in child/family-marriage and family therapy. While doing her residency in behavioral medicine for a health care system, she realized she didn’t want to work full-time in a therapy setting. Her interests went toward teaching, research, and eventually administration.

Her research has focused on systemic theory, ethnic identity and self-esteem, servant leadership, service learning, and student engagement. This has provided her with excellent preparation for her presidency.

“I understand systems and systems thinking, so it really helps me understand that what happens in one part of a system affects all other parts,” she notes. “I understand human behavior.”

“It’s helped me be very level-headed and not take things personally because in most cases it’s not personal; it’s just human behavior,” she continues. “When you look at it from a family systems perspective, you really understand that in a lot of ways organizations and institutions are like families. They all have challenges, no matter how well-endowed they are.”

“You learn how to build a community like you would be building a great family system and create healthy systems in the organization to be successful.”

Becoming a College President

Espy didn’t envision a presidency when she entered the academy but as her 23 years of experience in higher education—15 of them as a senior administrator—

unfolded, her goals evolved. What crystalized those goals was the Council of Independent Colleges’ (CIC) presidential vocation and institutional mission program.

“[I had the] opportunity to explore the potential of what I would see as a calling, more so than a job,” says Espy. Leadership development programs helped her reflect and contemplate her mission and how she wanted that to align with an institution’s mission.

The presidential program included readings, group discussions, and even a couples’ mentor for Espy and her spouse, Marvin Espy. She was able to see her strengths as well as areas she needed to strengthen.

“In a COVID-19 world, there’s a lot you cannot do, but I’ve tried to keep [Mitchell] connected to what’s happening in the community,” Espy says. “Continually building internship opportunities for our students. Now, we’re looking virtually.”

“There are some virtual things that are happening where we’ve been able to participate virtually in experiences within our New London (CT) community,” she adds. “We’re doing it in a way that’s safe and that’s keeping our community partners connected, and also allowing us to meet new people that may want to partner with our students in internships and things like that.”

Leading in Challenging Times

By the time Espy arrived on campus, Mitchell already had a task force to deal with issues related to the coronavirus pandemic. That task force examined all the different aspects of safely bringing students back to campus, which happened in the fall semester.

“We believe that an in-person experience would be very important [for our students],” says Espy. “Navigating it is obviously keeping my eyes to what’s happening on campus, but also looking at what’s happening in our local, regional community and what’s happening beyond that. This involves being informed, communicating, and trying to be encouraging and supportive of our faculty, students, and staff.”

In the fall semester, a significant amount of the student body returned to campus. All were initially required to isolate for a period with their meals delivered to them in the residence halls.

Situated in a picturesque location, the college purchased Adirondack chairs that have been placed around campus. Given the warm weather in November, students would sit outside to study, socialize, and even eat their meals because of limited space in the dining hall.

“As challenging as a college president’s job is, it has been the most refreshing time because I can look out my window and look at the shoreline,” says Espy, who enjoys the scenery around Mitchell’s campus.

At present, her presidency is taking her total focus, but eventually she would like to do research on learning

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“I really want to encourage our students, faculty, and staff to engage more intentionally in the community.”

Transformative Scholarship

By Lois Elfman

It has been an eventful 18 months for **Dr. Pardis Mahdavi**, who came to Arizona State University (ASU) in July 2019 to be director of the university's School of Social Transformation (SST). In April 2020, she was named dean of social sciences for ASU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which involves overseeing 13 diverse academic units and degree programs that serve thousands of students.

"I take leadership in higher education very seriously," says Mahdavi. "For me, education is so much about my personal journey."

When Mahdavi's family fled Iran and came to the United States, they lived in Minnesota. One day she came home from school and saw a sign that said, "Burn this house. Terrorists live here." The family soon moved to California. Her father told her, "People can take your home. They can take your belongings. They can even take your country. The one thing no one can ever take from you is your education."

This drove her desire to be in higher ed leadership so she could help others get that which can never be taken away.

"The COVID world can be really disheartening and disorienting," says Mahdavi. "I see my role as someone who's guiding folks, helping keep people grounded, helping realize the importance of our work in the world today."

Personal Journey

Mahdavi's work in higher education has been informed by her personal journey as an Iranian American woman growing up in the United States, as well as her training as an anthropologist. Her research interests include gendered labor, migration, sexuality, human rights, youth culture, transnational feminism, and public health in the context of changing global and political structures.

"I was initially studying diplomacy and international affairs, and I felt like I was constantly trying to do the work of translating, of bridge building," she notes. "I felt that anthropology allowed me to do from-the-ground-up research. I was very interested in my dissertation topic, sexual politics in Iran, and I fell in love with the method of anthropology. I fell in love with ethnography."

"I love the idea of really trying to be self-reflective about your own position and positionality as a researcher, and I love the idea of making the strange familiar and familiar strange."

Her first book, *Passionate Uprisings: Iran's Sexual Revolution* (2008) addressed issues of how Western scholars often impose their values on other cultures. Subsequent books have been *Gridlock: Labor, Migration and 'Human Trafficking' in Dubai* (2011), *From Trafficking to Terror: Constructing a Global Social Problem* (2013), *Migrant Encounters: Intimate Labor, the State and Mobility Across Asia*

(2015), and *Crossing the Gulf: Love and Family in Migrant Lives* (2016).

Mahdavi is currently working on a book that looks at social movements across the globe and what people in the United States might learn from some of the most powerful social movements in places like Iran, Tunisia, and India.

Prior to coming to ASU, Mahdavi was an acting dean at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver CO. Before that, she spent 11 years at Pomona College CA, where she was a professor of anthropology, including chairing the department, being dean of women, and director of the Pacific Basin Institute.

School of Social Transformation

Founded in 2009, SST focuses on five interdisciplinary fields—African and African American Studies, Asian Pacific American Studies, Justice and Social Inquiry, Social and Cultural Pedagogy, and Women and Gender Studies—uniting faculty and students in work creating democratic, just, and inclusive social change. Mahdavi has called it "the scholarly nexus of academia and activism."

"This access mission of social change through education really spoke to my core values," Mahdavi says.

"Innovation is something [ASU] lives and breathes. I appreciate this openness to experimentation, the high tolerance for failure, and the welcoming spirit toward collaboration."

Until her successor is named, Mahdavi is continuing to direct SST. As dean, she will continue to be a professor at the SST. In her time as

director, she's elevated the visibility of SST within ASU and nationally. The strong and talented faculty has had greater platforms to get their work out and is more frequently featured in news outlets around the country.

"Taking all the experiences of 2020 and looking at how 2020 has really showed us the important intersections between race and social justice, climate and health, SST is very well-positioned moving forward to play an even bigger role in the social sciences," she says.

Deanship

Being dean of the social sciences includes overseeing interdisciplinary units that are organized around contemporary problems rather than disciplinary orthodoxy. By example, the Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics consists of sociologists, psychologists, social workers, and others looking at family dynamics and asking questions about the role of the family. The School of Human Evolution and Social Change asks questions about social change and the future within the context of the past.

"It's a very diverse portfolio and yet I think it's the most critical portfolio because we are asking the questions of the day and...doing the research that's going to bring about the social transformation we really need," says Mahdavi,

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"2020 has really showed us the important intersections between race and social justice, climate and health."

Nonprofit CEO Works to Erase Inequity through Supplemental Education

By Mary Lou Santovec

To address decades of inequity, leveling the educational playing field for Black and Brown youth is a top priority. Becoming CEO of the New York City-based The Oliver Scholars in 2019 was the next step in Dr. Danielle Moss's efforts to purposefully transform that playing field.

Founded in 1984, The Oliver Scholars prepares Black and Latinx youth to succeed at the nation's top independent schools and colleges. It reaches high-achieving Black and Brown students—especially those not identified for gifted and talented programs in their public schools.

The program provides 10 years of "transition support" for the student's entire family, helps develop students' social-emotional skills, and instills an attitude of giving back. "This is the organization that most mirrors my own program trajectory," she says.

The application process is very selective with only 60 students per cohort accepted out of some 1100 nominations. In an almost unprecedented statistic, 100% of the Scholars graduate from high school and matriculate into postsecondary education with some 30% attending Ivy League schools.

For Moss, this latest position followed a stint as chief of staff for the New York Civil Liberties Union. Her multitude of accomplishments includes co-founding the first authorized charter school in New York state.

Uncovering the "Hidden Curriculum"

Moss grew up in the Big Apple attending a day school and after-school programs. She did her undergraduate work at Pennsylvania's Swarthmore College, where she studied American history and English literature with a concentration in U.S. Black history.

"I received a lot of encouragement from my high school guidance counselor and my mother [a research librarian at Rutgers]," to attend Swarthmore, says Moss. She later earned a MA, an EdM, and a PhD in organizational leadership and educational administration, completing her dissertation on after-school education from Columbia University's Teachers College NY.

While enrolled in graduate school, Moss taught middle school in the Bronx and Brooklyn. An "amazing" principal inspired her to become New York City's youngest assistant principal.

Moss "meandered my way into the nonprofit world" at The After-School Corporation. She became a consulting project director for the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth MD, which uses summer programs to address the unmet needs of talented Black/Latinx youth.

Even with the same test scores as their white peers, these students are less likely to be identified for gifted and

talented programs because of "teacher bias." The Hopkins program opens parents' eyes to more "rigorous" academic programs found at day and boarding schools.

"It's like they put a hole in your boat," says Moss about the funding discrepancies in public schools and her support of private education. "You can't make it to the finish line because you're too busy bailing."

Later becoming CEO of the Harlem Educational Activities Fund, Moss's leadership helped identify middle school students who are academically in the middle and not inspired to reach higher levels. The Fund did "really robust work" in the "hidden curriculum," the extras that middle- and upper-class families provide for their children to help them prepare for an elite education.

Moss served five years as CEO of the YWCA of the City of New York prior to joining The Oliver Scholars. There she worked to identify "what real equity looks like for women."

Her work with the YWCA was a "real meaningful foray into advocacy for transformation." She also started programs in STEM and leadership for girls.

The "Privilege" in Doing the Work

It's not only Black and Brown youth who encounter brick walls; barriers remain for Black and Brown women leaders. "Black and Brown women are at the bottom of everything," says Moss, pointing to racism's legacy driving discrimination in health care, jobs, and housing.

Compensation packages for Black women often lack equity with their white and Asian counterparts. Some organizations view their pay for Black women as appropriate; but in comparing Black and white women leaders one finds that because of bonuses and non-monetary benefits, white leaders are actually better paid.

Many Black and Latinx leaders, including Moss, also discover that they have the position but not the power. She's had to defend her decision making in the ways her white colleagues haven't had to.

"I don't know a Black CEO who has not been challenged by a white subordinate," says Moss. In something she believes is akin to "sabotage," "a white subordinate can complain about a decision you made and go to board members and the board members will listen."

To overcome some of these barriers, Black people in the nonprofit sector are frequently "overcredentiating," something Moss saw as problematic. "The answer to institutional racism is not for me to get another degree and take on more debt," she says.

What fuels Moss each day is the "privilege" of doing the work she's done to improve the lives of Black and Brown youth. "To know you've had the opportunity to contribute to a young person's success is deeply satisfying," she says.

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"To know you've had the opportunity to contribute to a young person's success is deeply satisfying."

The Opportunity for Service

By Nyasha Junior

“It wasn’t about the title. It was about the opportunity for service,” explains **Dr. Ivy Ruth Taylor**, the president of Rust College MS.

Taylor is the twelfth president and the first woman president at Rust College. Founded in 1866, Rust College is United Methodist-affiliated, private, liberal arts HBCU (historically Black college or university) in Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Path to the Presidency

Taylor had a non-traditional path to higher education administration. In Texas, she worked in urban planning and community development. Also, she was a lecturer at the University of Texas at San Antonio in the department of public administration. In 2014, while serving on the City Council of San Antonio, she was appointed mayor of San Antonio, a city with over 1 million residents. She filled the vacancy left when Julián Castro resigned to become the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Taylor was the city’s first African American mayor and second woman mayor and oversaw a budget of more than \$2 billion. In 2015, she was elected to the mayoral position and served until 2017 when she lost a runoff election.

After leaving the mayor’s office, Taylor enrolled in the executive doctoral program in higher education management at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education. She earned her EdD in 2020 after defending her dissertation entitled “Understanding the Role of HBCU Boards of Trustees in Advancing Institutional Quality and Ensuring HBCU Survival.” Taylor earned an MA in City and Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1998. In 1992, she received a BA in American Studies from Yale University CT.

Taylor came to Rust College in part because of an experience with another HBCU. While mayor, she served on the board of trustees at Huston-Tillotson University TX, a private HBCU in Austin. That experience sparked Taylor’s interest in higher education administration. Taylor explains, “I really felt that leading an HBCU would be a way that I could have a strong impact on transforming lives.”

Taylor started her new position on June 1, 2020. She seeks to build on the legacy and successes of her predecessors at Rust College. Despite the difficulties of operating during the coronavirus pandemic, she has worked to get to know her faculty, staff, and students. Taylor says, “The best thing of course is the students. The interactions with the students are inspiring, and they remind you why you get up and go to work every day.”

HBCUs

Because Vice President-Elect **Kamala Harris** attended Howard University DC, HBCUs are again in the main-

stream press. Taylor did not attend an HBCU and has mixed feelings about her time at non-Black institutions.

She shares, “I didn’t feel that one person that I met on the Yale faculty or staff was invested in my success or really cared what happened to me one way or the other. I mean, they were accessible, and I enjoyed classes. But no one questioned me about what my talents, skills, or passions were. What I was going to do after graduation. Or what I wanted to do with my life.”

Taylor argues that HBCUs have consistently proven their importance and relevance. She believes that HBCU student success is caused in part to the tremendous investment of faculty and staff. She says, “HBCUs do a tremendous job in supporting Black students and in successfully shepherding them to graduation and on to distinguished careers.” In particular, Taylor contends that Rust College is well-positioned to assist students. She explains, “The support and the family-oriented environment that we provide makes it possible for students with extremely challenging circumstances to be able to succeed.”

Vision for the Future

The Rust College motto is “By their fruits, ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). Taylor is already working to ensure future harvests. She is confident that her previous experience in public policy and governance will be beneficial in her new role as president. She is accustomed to working with diverse groups of stakeholders, gathering facts, developing action plans, and prioritizing.

Her vision for the future of Rust College includes updating curricular offerings and improving their physical plant and digital plant. She is working to collaborate with other higher education institutions to expand offerings and opportunities for Rust College students. She has begun partnerships with the University of Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas; Cleveland State University Cleveland-Marshall College of Law; and the University of Mississippi.

Advice

For women who are interested in pursuing administrative positions, Taylor says, “Don’t be dissuaded if you’re non-traditional.” She warns that naysayers and detractors will be discouraging. Taylor explains, “For folks who are passionate and who feel that their skill set is transferable and relevant, don’t listen to the people who tell you that you can only follow a traditional path.”

In sharing her desire to move into administration, one of Taylor’s colleagues recommended that she pursue a PhD and take a more traditional route of becoming faculty, department chair, dean, provost, and then president. She was shocked. Taylor recounts, “He displayed a lack of vision by not seeing the talent and experience that I could bring to the table. I mean that was just astounding to me.”

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“I really felt that leading an HBCU would be a way that I could have a strong impact on transforming lives.”

Stay Focused and Reduce Stress while Working from Home

By Halley Sutton

One of the major challenges almost all sectors have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic has been the adjustment to working from home and conducting business virtually. The transition, along with seemingly endless virtual conference meetings and the anxiety and stress over the pandemic, might have made it difficult to focus or to feel productive.

At a virtual session for the annual conference for the Society for College and University Planning, **Beth Ziesenis**, owner of Your Nerdy Best Friend, shared tips for making working from home more productive, more fun, and more focused. Read on for her suggestions.

Try New Tools

"If right now during this crazy time we don't take risks, try things that are new, and change the way we think, when will we?" Ziesenis said. To that end, she laid out several areas that might be affected by the transition to working from home during the pandemic. These include:

- Distraction.
- Stress.
- Lack of productivity.

Ziesenis said that to address these challenges, she looked up a list of the 100 best productivity tips and tools from Filtered (read more at <https://bit.ly/3hfvpuV>) and parsed it for her favorite tools and the ones she believes most meet the challenges workers are facing during the pandemic. She shared her favorite tools and techniques.

Time-boxing

"This is a very simple concept," Ziesenis said. "Many people already use checklists to organize their tasks and their days, but simply writing down that a task must be completed doesn't actually ensure you have time for it during your day," she added. "Oftentimes, people get overwhelmed by their list and can't complete it."

Instead of simply creating a to-do list, Ziesenis recommended adding events to calendars as you create a list item for them. For example, if one of your items is to create a PowerPoint presentation, block off an hour on your calendar to do exactly that. "This action has multiple benefits, including actually blocking off time on your calendar that can't be scheduled for meetings with other people, as well as helping ease the anxiety a long to-do list might cause," Ziesenis said. "This is especially important now that there's no separation between work at home and work at the office."

She recommended the following tools:

- **Calendar.** You can simply utilize whatever calendar your organization uses (like Outlook) to block out your schedule with your tasks.
- **RescueTime.** This computer software program is less about time-boxing itself than the amount of time you actually spend on a task versus surfing the internet, checking email, or other items that may distract you.

Controlling Your Devices

"Nearly everyone spends more time on their social media platforms, if they have them, than they think they do," Ziesenis said. "It's really challenging when you have it so close in reach," she added.

Ziesenis recommended the following tools to control time spent scrolling your screen:

- **Forest.** This app allows the user to set a goal for leaving their phone alone; a tree grows on the screen while the user does so. If the user picks the phone up, the tree dies. "It gamifies getting rid of distractions."

- **Stay Focused.** Once installed on your computer, Stay Focused allows users to set certain sites as limited (e.g., news sites). You can set an amount of time per day you're allowed to spend on that site, and if you go over, Stay Focused will set up a series of pop-ups reminding you to get back to work.

Sound and Music

"There's a variety of research that shows that the right auditory cues can enhance focus and productivity," Ziesenis said. She recommended the following two solutions to find music that will enhance your productivity:

- **Focus@Will.** Focus@Will offers a variety of different types of background music the user can customize for higher- or lower-energy tracks, as well as timers users can set automatically. Ziesenis said the app has even been running a COVID-19 sale, with the usual subscription price of \$60 per year now being slashed to \$60 for a two-year subscription.

- **Spotify.** Surprisingly, video game soundtracks were composed to help the users focus while playing games for hours, so they can be a great solution to background music that might boost your productivity.

"Another possible tool using sound that could increase your productivity and decrease stress is a guided meditation app," Ziesenis said. She recommended both Calm and Headspace. These chunked guided meditation audio clips are geared to help you keep focused in a distracting world. "Think of it as an investment in your career and not a woo-woo practice," Ziesenis said.

Take Short Breaks

According to Ziesenis, the most important tools on the original productivity list were tools designed to help you streamline your workday into focused bursts of work, followed by short breaks. Ziesenis recommends setting up a block of time where you focus purely on one task from your to-do list: say, 25 minutes or an hour. Set a timer for that chunk of time, work all the way through, and then allow yourself a short break afterward to stretch, go to the bathroom, go on a walk, or check email or Facebook before starting up another chunked set of working time.

Although this work can be done with any timer (or better yet, combined with a timed background soundtrack), Ziesenis recommended the following tool:

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Program Provides Academic Lifeline to Incarcerated Individuals

By Mary Lou Santovec

According to multiple studies, incarcerated individuals who enroll in postsecondary education while behind bars have a much lower rate of recidivism when they're released than those in the general prison population. The Center for Prison Education (CPE) at Wesleyan University CT, in partnership with Massachusetts' Middlesex Community College (MCC), not only works to increase the odds that those released from prison don't return but actually saves the state's taxpayers money.

Beginning in 2009, CPE has brought the liberal arts to incarcerated people in Connecticut's prisons. They are but one of these kinds of program. Proponents of "college behind bars" believe that there can and should be a place for learners no matter where they reside. "There's an extraordinary diversity of programs in the free world," says Allie Cislo, CPE's program manager. "There are a variety of educational pathways for most people. All pathways are intended to lead to a person's success."

College Behind Bars

The history of postsecondary education for the incarcerated began in the 1970s when Pell grants were created. The grants "were available to everyone in spite of their incarcerated status," says Cislo.

The Obama administration later created an experimental program, the Second Chance Pell grant. Along with the Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison at Bard College NY, both "created space in the field" [for prison education], she says.

Consortium schools had a "variety of offerings and motivations," Cislo notes, for offering college courses to the incarcerated. Some wanted to invest in the idea of access to higher education as a form of equity; others supported it as a collaboration between student volunteers and faculty mentors.

CPE began in 2009 with a Consortium seed grant. It operated exclusively at Cheshire Correctional Institution, a maximum-security prison for men, until 2013 when it was introduced at York Correctional Institution, Connecticut's only state prison for women.

More than 90 women applied and 19 were admitted to the first class at York in 2013. The small cohorts are because of "space restrictions at the corrections facility," says Cislo. There are currently 75 students enrolled between both facilities. She notes that CPE graduated its first cohort in 2018, a total of 25 students from both facilities (6 women; 18 men).

The Center graduated its second cohort of seven students from York in 2019. The pandemic prevented Cheshire's graduation.

"Practical Idealism"

Wesleyan's unofficial motto, "practical idealism," encouraged a group of Wesleyan students to form a joint

venture between students interested in equity and social justice and supportive faculty. When faculty voted in 2009 to create CPE, Wesleyan became the second member of the Consortium.

Wesleyan began a "public/private partnership" with MCC (located in the same Connecticut community) in 2016. That partnership enables incarcerated students to earn an associate's degree.

Wesleyan, which does admissions for the program every two years, has not changed its academic standards for CPE students. "Incarcerated students are held to the same standards as traditional Wesleyan students," says Cislo.

Applicants (who must have a high school diploma or GED) must go through several assessments and an interview before being considered for admission. Students don't always get admitted the first time they apply.

Corrections officials require prospective students to be free of disciplinary measures for at least a year before admission. Applicants must be at least two years from "coming home" (release), so they can accumulate credits.

"Curious, Engaged, and Want to Learn"

Courses are taught largely by tenured Wesleyan and MCC faculty, as well as several adjuncts. Faculty comes in once a week for a three-hour class. A study hall supports the class. Students enroll in two classes per semester. Cislo, who, in addition to being CPE's program manager, is one of the study hall supervisors. "I learn an extraordinary amount from our students," she says.

Students are "curious, engaged, and want to learn," she notes, "They have a hunger for knowledge and communication, not only for their own sake but for society in general."

In addition to the classes, CPE provides workshops on skill building, non-credit remedial classes, discussion groups, and lectures from visiting professors. Students who have math skills will often tutor those lacking them. While enrolled, students can access writing help, tutoring, and laptops. They also have cached access to research tools and can order books from the schools' libraries.

For CPE staff and faculty, it's important that students "are students first." Unless a student reveals her crime to Cislo or the faculty member, neither knows why the student is incarcerated. "I know there are students in our program with murder convictions, with drug convictions," she says. But "most students don't choose to divulge that."

Faculty who teach in the program find it's an "extraordinarily rewarding pedagogical experience." CPE offers a wide variety of courses, although Cislo acknowledged there's a heavy concentration from the humanities and social sciences. The most popular courses are philosophy, American studies, history, English, and social studies. To satisfy degree requirements, CPE has offered a class in the

"There are a variety of educational pathways for most people. All pathways are intended to lead to a person's success."

hard sciences on the environmental consequences of natural disasters.

During the program's history, CPE has offered approximately 150 classes to some 150 students who range in age from their 20s to their early 60s. Half come from three cities in Connecticut: New Haven, Hartford, and Bridgeport.

Staying in Touch

Housed in the Jewett Center for Community Partnerships, the "civic engagement hub" of the Wesleyan campus, CPE has four staff including Cislo. Originally from the east coast, she did reproductive justice work in California, prior to joining CPE. Cislo earned her BA from Reed College OR. She's also worked in nontraditional education settings including with currently and formerly incarcerated people.

Foundations and private donations fund CPE along with some Pell grants, although most students don't receive federal monies. Funding covers staff and faculty salaries, as well as administrative costs. CPE purchases students' supplies from laptops to pens and pencils. Students pay nothing out of pocket.

Although the program is "sentence blind" in terms of admissions, "some [of the students] may be serving long sentences," says Cislo. One quarter of those who are released are "coming home in the middle of their degree."

"We work to stay in touch with them," she says. "We provide academic advising and support."

CPE currently has three objectives. The first is developing a bachelor's degree of liberal studies. "We're rolling it out, getting people matriculated [and] figuring out what the first year looks like," says Cislo.

The second objective is building out re-entry support services including building community partners for re-entry services. Working through the coronavirus is the third objective, as Cislo and her colleagues try to figure out how to continue the program in the midst of the pandemic. 

To learn more about *The Center for Prison Education and its work in Connecticut's prisons*, please visit the center's website: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/cpe/>.

IN HER OWN WORDS: Let's Acknowledge Our Suffering, continued from page 6

focused and be less lonely. He said yes, of course, and he made me a workspace. Now I'm writing with him nearby, and I feel less alone. It's incredible how something so small made such a big difference. I didn't know how to ask for it before I acknowledged that I needed it.

I also do regular check-ins with Ariane. Sometimes we just share what is hard for us. Sometimes we share a work goal—just one, our main goal of the day—and then encourage each other to finish it, cheering via text message. That kind of emotional support isn't something I realized I needed until I acknowledged how much I was suffering.

Are you suffering? Reach out to others and let them know, whether at work or in your private life. Ask for what you need. Even the small things can make a big difference. Say "Hi, I'm really suffering. Are you suffering, too?" And know that you aren't alone. 

Women on the Move, continued from page 7

- **Dr. Tracy Langkilde** becomes the Verne M. Willaman Dean of the Eberly College of Science at Pennsylvania State University.
- **Dr. Elizabeth Mauch** becomes the president of Bethany College KS.
- **Dr. Maria Madison** becomes director of the Institute on Assets and Social Policy at Brandeis University MA in addition to her previous duties as associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Antionette Marbray, JD**, moves from associate VP at San Diego State University CA to VP and chief compliance officer at Stevenson University MD.
- **Dr. Nergis Mavalvala** becomes dean of the School of Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- **Dr. Vickie Mazer** moves from director of graduate services at Frostburg University MD to McDaniel College MD.
- **Dr. Dena McCaffrey** moves from dean of career and technical education to president of Jefferson College MO.
- **Dr. Kim Needy** moves from dean of the Graduate School and International Education to dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.
- **Dr. Angela Poole** becomes VP for administration and finance at Talladega College AL.
- **Kenyatta Randall** moves from human resource administrator for College of Nursing at the University of South Florida to director of talent acquisition and recruitment at Grambling State University LA.
- **Dr. Ashlee K. Roberts** moves from associate director of student involvement at the University of Missouri-St. Louis to executive director of student affairs planning and operations at Stockton University NJ.
- **Dr. Christianne Roumie** becomes director of the master of public health degree program at the School of Medicine at Vanderbilt University TN.
- **Dr. Erin Shaughnessy** becomes director of the Pediatric Hospital Medicine division at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.
- **Holly Storkel** becomes vice provost of assessment and program development at the University of Kansas in addition to her previous duties as associate dean for academic innovation and student success in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.
- **Dr. Deborah Uman** moves from professor and chair of the department of English at St. John Fischer College NY to dean of the Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities at Weber State University UT.
- **Dr. Jacqueline Urla** becomes dean of the Graduate School at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- **Rehnuma Lizzie Wahab** moves from VP for enrollment management at the University of Maine to VP of enrollment and student success at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.
- **Dr. Fathima Wakeel** moves from director of graduate studies for the College of Health at Lehigh University PA.
- **Dr. Anne Williamson** moves from the Victor and Caroline Schutte/Missouri Professor of Urban Affairs and

director of the L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs at the University of Missouri–Kansas City to director of the School of Public Affairs at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

- **Corrine Witherspoon** moves from the assistant director of inclusive excellence and strategic retention at the College of Engineering and Applied Science at University of Cincinnati OH to director of the William A. McClain Center for Diversity in the Office of Student Development at Wittenburg University OH.

- **Dr. Shenna M. Woods** becomes director of the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship at Harris-Stowe State University MO.

- **Dr. Thelathia “Nikki” Young** becomes provost for equity and inclusive excellence at Bucknell University PA. 

PROFILE: Setting a New Precedent, *continued from page 8*

differences across ethnicities, and access to services and what can be done to improve access. She collects data and hopes to do some writing on the subject.

“I’m very interested in service learning and civic engagement,” says Espy. “We talk a lot about informed citizenry and...I really want to encourage our students, faculty, and staff to engage more intentionally in the community. I see civic engagement as a critical experience of students in higher ed.” 

PROFILE: Transformative Scholarship, *continued from page 9*

the first woman of color to hold this position at ASU.

Mahdavi says she has a great team that helps make such expansive leadership possible. This includes the school directors and the people in the dean’s office.

Her vision for the social sciences is centered around three I’s: impact, inclusion, and interconnection. Inclusion is the heart of what Mahdavi calls JEDI work: justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. “JEDI as a framework... foregrounds action,” she says.

In terms of interconnection, Mahdavi sees ASU and the social sciences as being the bridge between the community and academia, between disciplines, and between the private and public sectors.

“We have schools that are organized around the grand problems...of our time,” says Mahdavi. “We have people coming together to try to solve all those really complicated problems and innovate. We have teams doing coral reef mapping. We have folks looking at environmental justice. We have folks looking at public health in the context of race and inequity.”

“Looking at some of these really complex problems that are going to be the heart of what our whole world has to

grapple with moving forward,” she continues. “We are well-positioned to gather the data and research and also to educate this next generation to make an impact.” 

PROFILE: Nonprofit CEO Works to Erase Inequity through Supplemental Education, *continued from page 10*

Life Cycles

For Moss, life is “cyclical.” “You can have everything but not everything at the same time,” she says.

Ten years ago, Moss admitted she was “go, go, go.” Now she’s interested in more things that “do not have the weight of the world on them” such as writing, crafting, and gardening, as well as spending time with her daughter and her partner.

“You don’t always have control over your professional life,” she says. “If your own sense of self is wrapped up in your professional life, you are at risk when it blows up.”

“We are all replaceable to the organization but not to the people who love us.” Moss does make time for joy and for fun, saying she’s not dependent upon people, who would not be in her life, if not for professional affiliations. 

PROFILE: The Opportunity for Service, *continued from page 11*

Madam President

According to the American Council on Education’s 2017 American College President Study, women represent only 30% of college and university presidents in 2016. As a woman who has been “first” in many instances, Taylor admits, “It can be hard breaking into old boys’ networks when you’re not a boy.”

Still, she downplays her position as the first woman president at Rust College. Having been in the spotlight in the past as a public official, she says, “People have an image of what leadership looks like and then I walk in and I don’t quite fit it... I usually just focus on the task at hand.” Even so, Taylor acknowledges that as president she serves as a role model for others, including young girls and women. She admits, “I appreciate the opportunity to be an inspiration to others.” 

Stay Focused and Reduce Stress while Working from Home, *continued from page 12*

- **The Marinara Timer.** The Marinara Timer is a customizable productivity timer with a variety of settings, including the original Pomodoro Technique timer that inspired this method of work. The Pomodoro Technique timer sets blocks of 25 minutes of work, followed by a short five-minute break. After four 25-minute blocks, the timer allows for a 15-minute break. 

Halley Sutton is the editor of Recruiting & Retaining Adult Learners. This article first appeared in the October issue of Recruiting & Retaining Adult Learners. To learn more about the publication, go to <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/21556458>.

www.wihe.com

Not Quite Half-Full

By Kelly J. Baker

I used to be a “glass half-full” kind of person. I used to be optimistic.

Optimism has never been my natural state of being. I’m not convinced that what comes next is better than what came before. Instead, I cultivated a habit of optimism, not one of certainty but of caution. I want people and the world to be better than they are. Just because things were bad didn’t mean that *they had to stay that way*. Tomorrow could be better than today. I didn’t assume there was a bright side but occasionally I found glimpses of it. Visible enough that I knew it was possible.

Cautious Optimism

This cautious optimism was not just a habit but a survival mechanism. My childhood taught me to expect the worst. So, I would be pleasantly surprised when life turned out better than I thought it would. If you assume the worst and get something better, you learn that you don’t always know what will happen.

Cautious optimism followed me into adulthood. It allowed me to research and write about people and oppressive systems doing their worst. I was able to write about white supremacy and sexism because I thought that if we could name and identify these structural problems, then maybe—just maybe—we could work to dismantle them. I was cautiously optimistic that our efforts made a difference. We only had to act against the sexist, racist status quo and not be complacent. A humane, just future was possible; it had to be.

Now, I wonder if I was wrong.

Dwindling Hope

I used to be a hopeful, a hope-filled, person.

Hope here is not wishful thinking. Instead, it’s how Rebecca Solnit understands hope as potential for change. Hope requires imagining that our world can be different than what we have now and acting to bring about that future. It’s about possibility and action. Hope shows that what we do matters. The future, Solnit tells us in *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (2016), is uncertain. And there’s power and potential in the uncertainty of the future. Because it isn’t guaranteed, we can change it. The present doesn’t have to be our future. We can transform what lies ahead of us. If only we imagine something different from what we have now—if we only have hope—the world could be better than it is now. So our actions matter, even if we never know what the future holds.

At the end of 2019, I had hope for 2020. 2019 was a not-so-great year, so I thought that a new year had potential. My glass was not quite half-full. My optimism, a bit banged up and bruised, was still there. My cautious optimism made me think anything would be an improvement

over 2019. 2020 didn’t have to be a disaster. By the time my January 2020 column on hope published, my optimism was dwindling fast. 2020 was already shaping up to be an even worse year than the one before.

And it was a year of disasters: an unabating, deadly global pandemic; raging fires; the most recorded tropical storms in history; the continued deaths of Black people at the hands of the police; children still separated from their parents at the border; dangerously inept political leaders whose actions, and inaction, get people killed; over 10 million Americans unemployed; a looming eviction crisis; and the personal catastrophes that don’t stop just because we’re in a pandemic.

But these are only some of the disasters. I can’t bring myself to catalog them all. I can’t hold them all together and get out of bed in the morning. The unendingness of disaster weighs me down.

Emptying and Refilling the Glass

My glass gets emptier and emptier by the day. Caution remains, a constant companion. But my optimism has been misplaced. It is harder and harder to find. I wonder when I’ll stop looking for it. I wonder if it’s something that’s truly lost, impossible to recover even if I want to.

Some days, I think I can make it through. I’m almost positive I will. I’m able to find joy. I’m able to breathe. I’m able to be almost but not quite optimistic. I hope that we don’t have to be stuck with what we have. I follow the news about vaccines and allow myself a moment

to think that the pandemic might not last forever. I catch brief glimpses of a brighter side and grasp them tightly to get through yet another day.

Other days, the enormity of the pandemic and our terrible present makes it hard to breathe. I become convinced that 2020 broke me fundamentally, and that the pieces are so scattered that I’ll never find them all. How can I patch myself up if I can’t even find the pieces? The glass is empty, and I want to throw it against a wall. I want to break it as I have been broken. I want to never fill the cup again. I want to be done with optimism and hope and embrace pessimism fully. Assuming the worst because the worst is all that will come next.

And yet, I can’t bring myself to be fatalistically pessimistic. Optimism is a hard habit to kick. Hope is too. The glass refills even when I don’t expect it to. I know, deep in my bones, that the future is uncertain and that gives us a chance to act. Something else is possible. We have a shot to make 2021 different from 2020. Our terrible present doesn’t have to be our terrible future, if we have hope, if we continue to act. I’m cautiously optimistic about the new year. Truly, there’s more caution than optimism.

My glass is nowhere near half-full. But it’s not empty either. 

Optimism is a hard habit to kick. Hope is too.