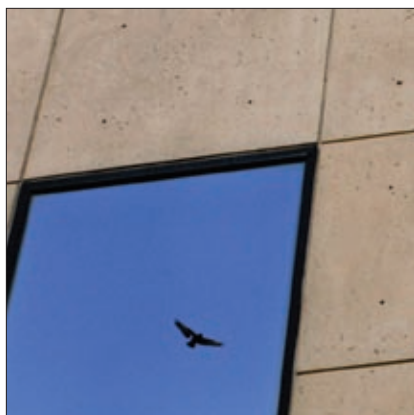


# Diversity & Democracy

CIVIC LEARNING FOR SHARED FUTURES

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Indiana University

## FEATURED TOPIC

At the crossroads of local and global pluralism, of democracy and demography, lie the intersecting paths of **immigration and higher education**.

This issue of *Diversity & Democracy* examines the educational needs of the expanding immigrant population and the educational benefits of exploring immigration in the classroom.

## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- 04 | Teaching Students to Consider Immigration with Empathy
- 07 | Extending Our Investments: Higher Education Access for Undocumented Students
- 10 | Don't Leave Your Life at the Door: Ntxhais Hmoob of St. Kate's
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## The Borders of Opportunity: Immigration and Higher Education

■ **NANCY "RUSTY" BARCELÓ**, vice president and vice provost for equity and diversity, University of Minnesota

As escalating demographic change and deepening economic recession collide, higher education has been caught in a "perfect storm." Institutions are tightening their belts and scrambling to keep their doors open to students from all walks of life. At the same time, the gates may be closing along the borders of our country and along the metaphorical borders between cultural groups as people in straitened circumstances revert to survival mode and "we" becomes "us versus them." Yet even and especially in these challenging times, it is our collective responsibility to be agents of change on behalf of social and economic justice.

We cannot recharge our economy, serve our students, and keep our institutions vital without making equity and diversity central to everything we do. And we certainly cannot rebuild the economy without significant investments in education at all levels and across all cultural communities. We will rebuild the economy and sustain it over the long term only by closing the achievement and opportunity gaps that affect so many young people of color. We will close those gaps only by widening access to higher education for students from all our communities—whether established residents or first-generation immigrants—across all barriers of race, class, ethnicity, gender, disability, national origin, and immigration status.

### The Economic and Social Justice Imperatives

Immigrants in our schools, with all their untapped talent and potential, are already at risk. Without serious intervention, they may be among the first to feel the economic and social fallout of a dismal economy. Even before the current recession, the doors to education and economic advancement were closed to many immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented, including those whose parents brought them to the United States at an early age and those who labor in unskilled, low-paying jobs with no way out or up. Many sectors of the U.S. economy—agriculture, housing construction, food processing, and hospitality—were built on the backs of these people, most of whom never savored the bounty that was supposed to trickle down from their employers' coffers.

Immigration has transformed not just the American economy, but America culture as well. In the Twin Cities, I see Spanish-language signs and restaurants serving real Mexican food, and I hear the music of the language spoken by my family. I see diverse communities of people coming together for work, recreation, worship, and learning in vibrant neighborhood businesses, parks, playgrounds, churches, and schools. I see local organizations working together to keep these communities economically and culturally vital. And yet, I also see struggle. I see rampant inequalities in education and employment. I see wasted potential as people stuck in low-wage service jobs abandon their dreams of education. I see public schools with

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**Note:** *The opinions expressed by individual authors in Diversity & Democracy are their own and are not necessarily those of the Diversity & Democracy editors or AAC&U.*

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In the United States, the topic of immigration simultaneously spurs feelings of both pride and anxiety. While the national mythology conjures not-so-distant memories of newcomers to Plymouth and Ellis Island, it can cloak those same stories in collective amnesia when the question of contemporary immigration (or past immigration's effects) arises. As the flux of global migration influences demography and culture, colleges and universities are called to reconcile tensions, expand access and success, and assist undergraduates in exploring big questions about America's past and future.

This issue of *Diversity & Democracy* joins in the ongoing work of examining how immigration is transforming American higher education, and how higher education can transform the lives of new and established Americans. With a focus on questions of access and success at the crossroads between local and global, this issue's authors describe challenges facing American democracy as our demography shifts. Examining higher education's role in creating opportunity and educating for democratic participation, they suggest ways to begin building educational institutions that are as inclusive as the mythology of the "land of opportunity" suggests we might be.

shrinking budgets and colleges and universities strapped for funds trying to find ways to serve the changing populations. As the economy worsens, the challenges will only grow greater.

University of Minnesota president Robert Bruininks has said that "a return to a vibrant and growth-oriented economy...lies directly through the classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and halls of our great educational institutions" (2009). Immigrants, documented or not, have helped build the economy, and they must be part of its revitalization. If we want them and their children to continue being productive members of our communities, we must make sure they can get a college education. That means supporting their efforts to improve their lives. It means working with K-12 schools and social service agencies and ensuring access to financial aid and scholarships. It means meeting students where they are and working with them and their families. It means respecting their cultural identities and ways of knowing and being. And it means

developing inclusive and culturally sensitive curricula and pedagogies that truly engage them in learning.

### Supporting the Whole Student

If we want our students to succeed, we can't just consider academic preparation and intellectual abilities. We have to consider and support the whole student—and that includes cultural heritage, identity, family background, and related issues of social and economic justice.

My experience speaks to this need. I grew up in California, which once was Mexico. My ancestors didn't immigrate; their communities were appropriated by an expansionist United States. They were no longer Mexicans, but Mexican Americans, outsiders on their own land. Growing up surrounded by Mexican culture, I took for granted the Mexican identity that would be crucial to my life journey. When I crossed a cultural border and entered graduate school at the University of Iowa, where I was the only Chicana graduate student, I left behind the community that had sustained me. The isolation felt like

a kind of exile. One day, as I stared into the abyss that was my new life, the temperature dropped to minus five. I called my parents to tell them I'd be returning home at the end of the semester. I thought they'd tell me to pack my bags. But my mother simply said: "Rusty, where there's one Mexican, there's probably another."

A week later, she sent me a care package containing some of my favorite Mexican foods and cultural icons—including Virgen de Guadalupe and a serape, precious cargo from my culture. I wrapped myself in the serape and inhaled the scent of those foods. I was home. The following day, poring over the 1960 Census in the library, I was astonished to learn that my mother was right. I wasn't alone: Iowa had 29,000 Spanish-speaking people. There was a community out there, and I set out to find it. In time, I would realize the full force of my mother's message: I would succeed only if I believed in myself—and that meant never forgetting who I was or where I came from. I came to understand how my Mexican identity had shaped and empowered me in the most fundamental ways.

In a culture where assimilation is often still the goal, we must create spaces where anyone can feel safe, where students can be truly who they are and fulfill their potential. A welcoming and supportive campus climate will be key to this success. Our students—including new immigrants whose parents brought them to this country at a young age—need to be able to see themselves and their lives reflected in classrooms and research centers, in residence halls, in the curriculum, behind the podium, and in advising offices. It's up to us, working together, to create the kind of environment that will keep students on track, help them be successful, and send them into the workforce to live good lives and contribute to diverse communities.

### Reaffirming Institutional Commitment

To create institutions that embrace all of our students, including the new immigrants on our campuses, we must ask ourselves tough questions: As an institution, and as individuals, do we really believe that diversity is an educational asset? Are we truly committed to change? Are we willing to invest precious resources and affirm different ways of knowing and being? If the answer to any of these questions is no, we're in trouble. If the answers to these questions are affirmative—

**In a culture where assimilation is often still the goal, we must create spaces where anyone can feel safe, where students can be truly who they are and fulfill their potential.**

and I believe they *must* be—we need to design new models for ensuring that all students have a shot at success in our colleges and universities.

And we must ask these questions in the context of broader issues of social justice: How inclusive a nation are we? Do we really seek "liberty and justice for all"? Where do we draw the lines—and build the fences? On the topic of immigration, this country remains divided. Yet these times require us to deepen our understanding of differences, knowing that our multiple voices address the complexities of the human experience. Educator Henry Giroux said that "democratic societies are noisy. They're about traditions that need to be critically reevaluated by each generation" (1992). I believe that diversity is about democracy; diversity is about equality, change, and social justice. And yes, diversity—and creating change—is about making noise. We'll need to make lots of noise, to continue challenging the status quo, to dismantle systems of exclusion and bias, and to put in their

place sustainable systems of access and success to prepare a new generation of change makers for their times.

These times and these change makers will include new generations of immigrants, people who followed treacherous paths with little more to guide them than a desire for a better life. We can and must smooth the paths they're on now, removing the barriers not only to help individual students and their families, but also to move toward a national consciousness that embraces the richness of culture, history, and contributions new (and

earlier) immigrants make to our society. I can only hope that one day the fences will fall, and that the borderlands—whether they are geographic, cultural, or institutional—will no longer be places of resistance, but places of positive exchange and strength. For that to happen, we all need to come together to develop new strategies for addressing the educational needs of changing populations. As higher education professionals, we can play an important role in our transformation from a nation of exclusion to one of inclusion, from a nation of opportunity for some to a nation of opportunity for all, from a nation of privilege based on assumed birthright to a nation of real equality, where we all live and work on a level playing field, not a slippery slope. ☐

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## [IMMIGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION]

# Teaching Students to Consider Immigration with Empathy

■ MIGUEL VASQUEZ, President's Distinguished Teaching Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Northern Arizona University

In the past few years, fierce debates about the rights of unauthorized immigrants have raged across the nation. The outcome of these debates will have tremendous demographic, economic, social, cultural, and political ramifications that will shape the country's future and the future of higher education. My adopted state, Arizona, has become "ground zero" in these disputes as they relate to Mexican immigration. As Michael Crow, president

of Arizona State University, has observed in discussing the abysmal graduation rates of Latino high school students, Arizona and the nation at large will "face a social revolution and economic train wreck" if policymakers, educators, and citizens do not address immigration soon and in a constructive way (2004).

Class exercises in "framing" become a means to help students see immigration and other contemporary issues confronting their world, including diversity, globalization, climate change, and sustainability, in the systemic context of their own lives.

This is, of course, easier said than done. Immigration is a highly controversial issue, and as such, it is one that we educators cannot ignore. In Peoples of the Southwest, an anthropology course I teach at Northern Arizona University (informally known as "Cowboys, Indians, Mexicans, and Mormons"), immigration is *problema número uno* for many students. In order to discuss the region's distinguishing cultures and backgrounds, the class must grapple with contemporary controversies, including those surrounding immigra-

tion. Students want to know about immigration and border issues as we consider Mexican and Mexican American culture from diverse perspectives. As educators, we have a unique opportunity to help students develop the civic skills that will enable them to operate in and contribute to the modern globalized world. These skills may be the most powerful tools we can teach students to use. With this in mind, my goal in facilitating learning is simple. I want to help students see the world in new ways—through both indigenous and innovative lenses that expand their horizons beyond the often ethno-, class-, or gender-centric viewpoints they may encounter among family and friends, in their previous schooling, and in the media. I want to help them use new understandings to make practical and positive differences in the world. I ask students to see cultures, including their own, as experiments in sustainability. I encourage them to ask, "If we continue as we are (in this case, without immigration reform), what will things look like forty years from now—and what do we want them to look like?"

### The Complexities of Mexican Emigration

Although recent national priorities have pushed immigration reform into the

background of media coverage, the realities of immigration persist. In Arizona, Mexican immigration is particularly controversial, and I want to help my students grapple with its complexity.

Mexican emigration is not a new phenomenon; it has been happening for centuries. But in the past fifteen years, the rate of immigration to the United States from rural Mexico has accelerated dramatically, even doubling by some accounts (Pew Hispanic Center 2005). The United States has not loosened control of the southern border, which is more militarized than ever. But military might cannot guard against the economic effects of initiatives like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Originally touted by free trade proponents as a move that would boost Mexico's economy and end immigration, this 1994 agreement has had the opposite effect, leading to the devastation of the rural Mexican economy. With food prices doubling, Mexican farmers and small businesses have been displaced, unable to compete with subsidized American agribusiness and corporate clout.

Refugees from this economic process have few options but to leave their home communities in record numbers. Many rural towns and villages are now empty of all but the very young and very old. Adults of working age have moved to urban areas across Mexico, where rampant unemployment exists, even in the *maquilladora* sector, where many manufacturers have moved to China. Little growth occurs outside of the burgeoning *narco-tráfico* (narcotics trafficking) sector. Thus many Mexicans find themselves compelled to cross the border illegally for jobs that Americans don't want. Millions of immigrants seeking a better life cross the desert into the American Southwest. These migrants have taken the initiative to leave home, family, community, language—all that is familiar—for *el norte*. Having risked everything to come to the United States, they often encounter

substandard wages and constant fear of the federal immigration raids that humiliate them, separate their families, and turn needed workers into criminals. Although their cheap labor helps lower American production costs and subsidizes American lifestyles, they are nonetheless demonized in the media and public discourse.

Politicians and theoreticians on the left, right, and center have focused their arguments on NAFTA's impact on North American business and labor, but many have ignored its impacts on Mexican businesses and workers. Theoretical attempts to make sense of rampant immigration identify a variety of “push” and “pull” factors that encourage undocumented people to cross the southern border: wage differentials between Mexico and the United States, a desire for cheap labor and inexpensive services on the part of U.S. employers and consumers, corrupt and callous Mexican officials dependent on the remittances Mexican immigrants send home to their families as a major source of national revenue. But few mainstream politicians and pundits express interest in NAFTA's impact on immigrants themselves or its implications for humane immigration policy. Buried in heated rhetoric, immigrants' stories are often invisible, and public debates reflect little understanding of the underlying reasons for immigration or its impacts on their lives.

### Framing the Issue Systemically

On the topic of immigration, and in regard to larger issues of social justice, a cultural divide emerges—a moral division between fundamentally different world views that has Americans on both sides of the issue talking past each other. As educators, it is our role to help our students bridge this divide and consider immigration with intelligence and empathy. Our students—America's future citizens, politicians, and pundits—must learn to explore the economic *and*



Arizona State University

moral effects of immigration policy as they engage in the public debates.

The work of cognitive scientist George Lakoff suggests a way to approach discussion of this topic. Lakoff proposes that the basis for the cultural divide lies in the different mental frames with which humans see reality, which reflect the brain's neural functioning. Thus links between thoughts are links between neurons, and metaphors and narratives are “physically constitute[d] in the brain” (2008). Depending on one's “frame of mind,” immigration can seem like a “no-brainer.” For example, one might view unauthorized immigration in terms of what Lakoff calls *direct causation*. This approach might suggest that because undocumented people have “broken the law,” they are criminals with no rights and should be deported. Alternatively, one might view immigration in terms of *systemic causation*, examining the issue within a broader framework. An observation made by former Arizona governor and current head of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano reflects this systemic perspective: “[W]hether we like it or not, in our three major industries in Arizona—tourism, agriculture, and construction—we are absolutely dependent on undocumented Mexican workers” (2004). In this frame, immigration is

part of a complex codependent system, where native-born Americans depend on immigrants just as immigrants depend on American economic opportunities and their home communities depend on remittances immigrants send.

A systemic causation frame acknowledges that the economic and social disruption American policies cause in Mexico and other countries is not irrelevant to American concerns or an inevitable (and thus acceptable) consequence of the “free market.” It takes into account the complex consequences of policies like NAFTA, including the economic exodus of displaced workers and their families (Lakoff 2008, Appadurai 1996). Instead of framing these people's lives as externalities, and them as “others” who don't really matter (unless they decide to emigrate and “take American jobs”), it recognizes the complicated realities that we must equip our students to address.

### Class Exercises

Facilitating new perspectives that enable students to see beyond the anti-immigrant rhetoric of what Lakoff refers to as “othering” requires educators to move beyond abstract theory. If, as Lakoff contends, human understanding is facilitated by a process of mental “framing”—of placing new knowledge

and experiences within a larger, already-familiar context—educators can help students develop systemic cognitive frames. Narratives, including stories, anecdotes, jokes, and myths, help contextualize abstract and theoretical concepts, *framing* them within students' life experiences. Social theory is notoriously dry, obtuse, and difficult to digest; but everyone experiences the world, and most of us try to make sense of it. Narrative helps students frame issues in ways that make sense to their lives.

In *Peoples of the Southwest*, I use students' life experiences and narrative techniques to help students think systemically. We open the class sessions on immigration with a writing exercise that asks students to reflect on their experiences and draft a paragraph in response to the statement, "Immigrants are taking American jobs." I ask students not to put their names on what they have written. Students then pass the papers around until no one knows whose paper they have, and students with interesting responses read them aloud. Anonymity eliminates the intimidation students might feel in being identified

with a particular belief, and the exercise provides a starting point for discussing a spectrum of viewpoints while separating issues from individuals. From there, we move to a thought experiment, applying "free market" logic to the following employment scenario:

I explain that I am a watermelon grower in Yuma, Arizona, with two hundred acres of watermelon ready to harvest in August. It's 115 degrees Fahrenheit and there is a weeklong window before the crop becomes worthless. I propose a better-than-minimum-wage pay of ten dollars an hour and ask students if they would be willing to work under these terms. When there are no takers, I raise the pay to twelve dollars an hour, then fifteen dollars an hour. It is not until the hypothetical pay approaches twenty dollars an hour that enough student "workers" raise their hands to compose a work crew adequate to complete the job. I then ask the students what they would expect to pay for one watermelon for a family Labor Day picnic. Students often respond with newfound understanding of their role in the labor economy. After identifying their participation in the system, most students are more willing to think empathetically about the conditions for immigrant workers.

Once my students have brought empathy to the discussion, the class is able to explore other previously unexamined assumptions about undocumented immigrants. As a class, we discuss the complicated set of presumptions and stereotypes that portray unauthorized immigrants as bankrupting our health-care and education systems, increasing crime, eluding taxes, refusing to enter the United States by legal means, refusing to assimilate or learn English, or bringing diseases across the border. Most importantly, we critique the assumption that undocumented immigrants have no legal or human rights.

## Democracy's Future

In my experience, many students seem to fundamentally comprehend that inequity exists in the contemporary world, and that it is wrong. But they often have not been given the tools or the time to examine questions of equity and justice in any depth. Class exercises in "framing" become a means to help students see immigration and other contemporary issues confronting their world, including diversity, globalization, climate change, and sustainability, in the systemic context of their own lives. Having made these connections, students can develop cultural sensitivity and the capacity to recognize and transcend ethnocentrism. These capacities appear in the essays they write in later sessions, as well as in the ways many become engaged in organizations, projects, and events beyond the classroom.

Historically, we as a country have only imperfectly embodied the American ideals of democracy and social justice. But our "unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" have their roots in concepts of empathy and responsibility—capacities we must teach our students. President Obama has argued that a "deficit of empathy"—a "lack of caring"—plagues the United States and ultimately endangers our democracy. Educators have a pivotal role to play in helping students eliminate this deficit with down payments on democracy's future and on America's survival. 📍

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## Texts that Encourage Students to Think Systemically about Immigration

Narratives can help students consider the systemic effects of Mexican immigration through an empathetic lens. Suggested assignments include:

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—Miguel Vasquez

## [IMMIGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION]

## Extending Our Investments: Higher Education Access for Undocumented Students

■ **WILLIAM PEREZ**, assistant professor of education at Claremont Graduate University

I first met Jacqueline, an outstanding student, three years ago. Brought to the United States by her parents at age two, she has no memories of Mexico, where she was born. Jacqueline is undocumented. Her mother is a permanent resident, while her father's application for residency was recently denied. Her father has a sixth-grade education; her mother earned her GED after several years in the United States. Since coming to the United States,

soccer team. Her father forbade her from getting a job because he wanted her to focus on academics. She graduated in the top 15 percent of her class.

In the eleventh grade, Jacqueline learned that her undocumented status would limit her higher education goals. Because her dream is to work as a NASA engineer, she had always wanted to attend a nearby university with a nationally recognized aerospace engineering program. But since she

Presently, court-mandated access to education ends when undocumented students graduate from high school. Upon graduation, higher education becomes an elusive dream for these young adults despite extensive prior public investment in them.

Jacqueline, her sister, and her parents have lived in a tiny guesthouse on her aunt's residence while Jacqueline and her sister attended American schools.

As early as elementary school, Jacqueline excelled in academics and received numerous awards, particularly in math, her favorite subject. In elementary school, she developed an interest in designing and flying airplanes. She was identified as "gifted" in sixth grade and subsequently enrolled in GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) and honors classes. In middle school, she participated in various academic competitions. In high school, she was involved in student council, the math club, and the

is ineligible for financial aid, her teachers advised her to enroll in a more affordable community college. Making the best of her circumstances, Jacqueline became involved in her school's honors program and was admitted to the National Community College Honor Society. During her first year in college, she earned a 4.0 GPA, assumed leadership in a student group that advocates for undocumented students, and volunteered at a local elementary school. But despite her many achievements, Jacqueline cannot legally work in the United States, and she worries about not being able to use her degree after she graduates.

Jacqueline's story broadly illustrates undocumented students' accomplishments as well as their frustrations and anguish. These students may dedicate themselves to pursuing college degrees only to find their dreams shattered. Jacqueline is one of sixty-five thousand undocumented students who graduate from high school every year who are not eligible to work legally and do not qualify for financial aid to attend college (Passel 2006).

### Historical Context

During the last two decades, the United States has undergone a dramatic demographic transformation due to immigration. In 1990, the foreign-born population was less than 20 million; by 2007, it had nearly doubled to 38 million. This change has affected school districts across the nation, where immigrant children represent 20 percent of students and are expected to be 30 percent by 2015 (Fix and Passel 2003).

Among this growing population are 12 million individuals who reside in the United States without legal authorization. Failed immigration policies as well as economic factors have played a central role in undocumented population growth (Passel 2006). California is home to the most undocumented residents, with an estimated 2.8 million, followed by Texas with nearly 1.4 million and Florida with 850,000 (Hoefler, Rytina, and Campbell 2006). These numbers include approximately 3.1 million youths under age twenty-four, about one-fourth of the total undocumented population (Hoefler, Rytina, and Baker 2009). Many of these young people were brought to the United States by their parents when they were very young.

Before 1982, school districts across the country tried to bar undocumented children from attending public schools. But in 1982, the Supreme Court case *Plyer v. Doe*



Image courtesy of Claremont Graduate University

gave undocumented students access to education. The court determined that denying education to undocumented children would impose a lifetime of hardship on them. The court further stated that educating all children regardless of their immigration status is essential for creating individuals who can function in society and contribute to the United States' development.

Presently, court-mandated access to education ends when undocumented students graduate from high school. Upon graduation, higher education becomes an elusive dream for these young adults despite extensive prior public investment in them. An analysis of college attendance finds that among unauthorized youths under age twenty-four who have graduated from high school, 49 percent are in college or have attended college. The comparable figure for residents born in the United States is 71 percent (Passel and Cohn 2009).

Despite the efforts of immigrant advocates and reform proponents, the federal government has not been able to pass legislation to address undocumented students' difficult circumstances. In 2001, Congress introduced a bill to benefit undocumented students who moved to the United States before age sixteen, have

lived here continuously for at least five years, and have a U.S. high school diploma. This bill is now known as the Development, Relief, and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. If passed, the DREAM Act would enable high school graduates to apply for conditional status, which would authorize up to six years of legal residence. During the six-year period, a graduate would be required to attend and complete college or serve in the U.S. military for at least two years. Upon meeting these requirements and completing the six-year period, she or he would be granted permanent residency (Yates 2004; National Immigration Law Center 2005). As of 2009, however, the DREAM Act has not been passed, and undocumented students remain in limbo.

Also beginning in 2001, legislatures in Texas, followed by California, Utah, New York, Washington, Illinois, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, and New Mexico passed legislation making undocumented students eligible for in-state tuition rates. Three states (Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma) went a step further and made undocumented students eligible for state financial aid grants. But undocumented immigrants in these states are still not able to work legally, even if they earn college degrees.

The process set in motion through the 1982 federal ruling continues to fuel debates on state policies around postsecondary admission, tuition, and financial aid for undocumented students. Meanwhile, a generation of undocumented students has come of age, and these students are seeking the next level of educational opportunity.

### Research Study

I began studying undocumented students in 2006 to better understand the issues surrounding their participation in higher education and to generate

data to inform policy discussions. I collected survey and interview data from undocumented students across the United States. Although I expected these students to report the usual accomplishments and activities that most students list on their college applications, I did not expect the high levels of community service and volunteering that undocumented students reported. These findings were particularly remarkable because immigrant youth are so marginalized in our society. They have almost no legal rights, can be deported at any time, are not eligible for government services, cannot legally work, and most frustrating of all, are not eligible for educational grants or loans. Still, they feel compelled to contribute to their communities.

I discovered that as a group, college-eligible undocumented students demonstrated academic achievement, leadership, and civic engagement patterns that often exceeded those of their U.S.-citizen counterparts. Over 90 percent reported volunteer and community-service participation, and 95 percent had participated in extracurricular activities. In those activities, 78 percent held a leadership position such as president of a club or captain of a sports team. In addition, despite having various responsibilities at home such as caring for younger siblings, these students worked an average of thirteen hours per week during high school and thirty hours per week during college. Yet they still earned high marks in academically demanding courses, and 37 percent had been identified as gifted. These students remain without legal status despite prior public investment in their educations; high levels of achievement, community service, and leadership experience; and a deep sense of commitment to American society. They are thus ineligible for most types of assistance to attend college, even




though over 90 percent of students we surveyed aspire to obtain a master's degree or higher. If these qualifications do not warrant official recognition of their "Americanness," then what does?

I examine this issue in a new book titled *We ARE Americans: Undocumented Students Pursuing the American Dream* (2009). This book compiles case studies of sixteen currently undocumented students and four others who were undocumented for many years before legalizing their status. Among these students are valedictorians, honors students, and other exceptional leaders. In their own words, they reflect on their hardships, accomplishments, dreams, ambitions, and desire to be accepted as Americans. In most cases, their parents brought them to this country as infants. For many, the United States is the only home they know. They have grown up here, their dominant language is English, and they strongly identify as Americans, yet they are unable to pursue higher education despite remarkable academic qualifications. These students exhibit the same tenacious optimism, drive, and perseverance that fueled their parents' desire to pursue better futures in the United States.

The U.S. Supreme Court has mandated that undocumented children be accepted as students, but current immigration policy prevents their being accepted as citizens. The case studies in *We ARE Americans* suggest that the lack of access to citizenship and higher education for high-achieving undocumented immigrant students represents an ongoing loss of intellectual and civic talent to American society. Their stories highlight deep flaws of failed immigration and education policies and the subsequent impact on families and communities.

Based on my research, I argue that undocumented students' civic and

academic dedication warrants official government recognition. The federal government can support and encourage civic commitments by rewarding model behavior with legislation that provides a path to legalization. Over the last decade, citizenship policy has emerged as an increasingly important topic of concern for policy makers, scholars, the media, and immigrant communities. Questions of citizenship have become a major source of political controversy in debates about topics ranging from welfare rights to multiculturalism. The increase of scholarly literature on citizenship and immigrant integration emanating from the academy in recent years suggests that a widespread reevaluation of citizenship questions has already begun.

In the past several decades, the United States and other nations have gradually extended a growing menu of rights and benefits traditionally associated with formal citizenship to different groups, in particular to long-term foreign residents. Given the educational, social, and economic investment American society has made in undocumented students, and the contributions these students have made to American society's civic well-being, I argue that ultimately it is in the best interest of the United States to provide full citizenship privileges to students. As the Supreme Court hinted twenty-seven years ago in *Plyer v. Doe*, the country should get a return on its investment in students rather than limiting their social and economic contributions. 

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A version of this article appeared previously in the *Claremont Letter*, a publication of Claremont Graduate University's School of Educational Studies. The article is republished here by permission of the author.

#### Ways to Support Undocumented Students

Despite nonpartisan collaborations across the social and political spectrum, efforts to support college-going undocumented students are still needed. Everyone can play a role in supporting undocumented students through the following activities:

- Support grassroots and nonprofit organizations that work on behalf of immigrants by donating time or money. Many of these groups have Facebook and MySpace pages that will help you get involved.
- Educate your friends, relatives, and coworkers about efforts in your state or region.
- Reach out to elected state and federal officials. Call and e-mail your representatives and let them know your views on the DREAM Act, currently being considered in Congress.

—William Perez

[IMMIGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION]

## Don't Leave Your Life at the Door: Ntxhais Hmoob of St. Kate's

■ **SIA VANG**, program coordinator, and **SHARON DOHERTY**, associate professor of women's studies and director, both at the Abigail Quigley McCarthy Center for Women, St. Catherine University (St. Paul, Minnesota)

Ntxhais Hmoob (Hmong Daughters) of St. Kate's brings together Hmong students at St. Catherine University's College for Women. The group has grown from eight students when it formed in April 2007 to sixty-two at the first monthly gathering of 2009-10. Building on members' strengths

and on culturally grounded values, Ntxhais Hmoob fosters a community-based approach to women's leadership development. In addition to supporting each other's academic success, group members have become a force for community building within and beyond the university.

Ntxhais Hmoob's community-based approach challenges longstanding traditions of individualism in academe. While Ntxhais Hmoob of St. Kate's helps students succeed within a system that rewards individual achievement, it also looks beyond personal advancement to sustainable, justice-oriented change. Ntxhais Hmoob provides a strategy for engaging students in leadership for the common good.

As Jayne Brownell and Lynn Swaner point out in their literature review of high-impact educational practices (2009), reports on learning communities often lack specificity. What, really, do we mean by a community-based approach within higher education? At the St. Catherine Center for Women, our model for women's leadership development has four key components: attention to group history, engagement with students' lives beyond the university, collaboration, and community engagement. While the four components are related, each contributes to a different aspect of community for members of Ntxhais Hmoob.

### Shared Group History

Knowing about the Hmong experience in Laos and in the United States is crucial to understanding students' identities and contexts. Since the early 1970s, Hmong people have emigrated from Southeast Asia to escape persecution in

response to their involvement as U.S. allies in the Vietnam War. During the war, the CIA secretly recruited Hmong men and boys, thousands of whom lost their lives in the conflict. Many more died while fleeing their homelands through the mountains of Laos after U.S. forces left the region (Yang 2008). Most of those who lived went to refugee camps in Thailand, then to the United States or other allied countries. Although the resettlement scattered Hmong people throughout the world, many families reassembled in their new countries.

In the United States, the largest Hmong populations are in California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Carolinas. Today nearly fifty thousand Hmong people live in the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Daughters of these Hmong immigrant families—first- and second-generation Hmong Americans—are the members of Ntxhais Hmoob of St. Kate's. Most of the group's members are enrolled in the baccalaureate day program and live with their families. Their parents' and grandparents' sacrifices during and after the war have an enduring influence on their lives and decisions.

### Life Beyond the University

"Don't leave your life at the door" is a powerful guiding message for Ntxhais Hmoob. When the Center for Women's staff meets with students, we are keenly aware that they bring their lived experiences with them. We acknowledge this by getting to know who they are, what their interests are, and how the center can help them. We also share our lived experiences (Sia was a first-generation Hmong student at St. Kate's). Rather than simply answering students' questions, we want to make genuine connections and let students know that we want them to succeed.

This personal approach to students' lives guides how the group operates as well. Each student brings unique

### Resources on the Hmong Community

Faculty and student services professionals who work with Hmong students might benefit from consulting the following resources:

- Fadiman, Anne. 1997. *The spirit catches you and you fall down*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Hmong Archives: Preserving the Hmong Heritage. [www.hmongarchives.org](http://www.hmongarchives.org).
- Hmong Studies Internet Resource Café. [www.hmongstudies.org](http://www.hmongstudies.org).
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perspectives, skills, and talents to the table. At the same time, Hmong students share many experiences, including the sense of living in two worlds that have different and sometimes conflicting expectations. Many students have important responsibilities within their families, and balancing those commitments with the demands of college can be overwhelming. Those who are first-generation college students must also devote time and energy to learning the systems of higher education and explaining those systems to family members. With such challenges, it is easy for students to become discouraged and leave school. Supportive networks that recognize students' outside contexts are essential to student success.

Even as it recognizes the conflicts and challenges Hmong St. Kate's students face, Ntxhais Hmoob also builds on their sources of strength. While students face patriarchal traditions within Hmong culture (as in U.S. society), Hmong culture also provides women with sources of strength that the group recognizes and honors. Hmong people have a long communal history, and even in new environments, communal values have persisted. Grounded in this shared culture, Ntxhais Hmoob provides important leadership in challenging individualism and building community. Applying Hmong communal values to an American university is a complex endeavor with great potential, and one expression of this is Ntxhais Hmoob's approach to collaborative leadership.

### Collaborative Leadership

In the Center for Women, we try to create an atmosphere that resists hierarchical domination and values collaborative leadership among students, faculty, and staff. The story of Ntxhais Hmoob's creation speaks to these values. In March 2007, Deep Shikha, chair of the economics department, approached Sia to discuss the challenges



*Ntxhais Hmoob of St. Kate's members successfully raised enough money to send eighteen students to the 2009 Hmong National Development conference in Appleton, Wisconsin. Photo by Sia Vang.*

Hmong students in her classes were experiencing. That discussion led Sia to contact Chuayi Yang, assistant director of Multicultural and International Programs and Services, and to coordinate the group's first gathering in April of that year. After meeting a few times, group members voted to name the group Ntxhais Hmoob of St. Kate's, suggesting in two languages that members are daughters of the Hmong community as well as daughters of the university.

While initiated and supported by the center, the group is student driven. Energy at group meetings has ranged from lighthearted to painfully raw as students discuss their educational goals and experiences, identify areas of concern, and share tools and strategies for success in all avenues of life. Ntxhais Hmoob's leadership structure reflects a fluid, collaborative approach. The group has decided not to have a president and other officers, so different members step forward to lead particular projects and meetings. Members also engage in peer mentoring to support each other's leadership development.

### Community Engagement

Ntxhais Hmoob aims to build a strong

network of Hmong students while reaching out to other student populations and contributing to the wider community. Members have hosted study sessions throughout the campus, held informal and formal gatherings to connect with Hmong and non-Hmong students, volunteered at community events, and organized service projects. Ntxhais Hmoob has also made connections to local and national Hmong women leaders by becoming members of the Twin Cities' Professional Hmong Women Association (PHWA). Such activities have helped students to gain a deeper understanding of their place in the world, with a consistent grounding in community values. Cultural expectations that have been sources of conflict with students' university lives are now also sources of leadership, as Ntxhais Hmoob members thrive together and direct their talents toward community well-being. ☑

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## [IMMIGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION]

# Teaching Immigration through Personal Connections

■ **MARGARET M. CHIN**, associate professor of sociology at Hunter College and Graduate Center, City University of New York

Students in New York City are never far removed from immigration. When I teach the first-year honors seminar *The Peopling of New York* at Hunter College (offered each semester by a rotating group of faculty), I find it perfectly logical for my students to learn about immigration by interviewing family and friends who happen to be immigrants. I ask students to interview an immigrant acquaintance and to write a short paper discussing their interview. The assignment requires students to explore their subjects' migration and adaptation processes and to reflect on what they

A primary goal of the course is to help students appreciate the complexities of contemporary immigration. Students are often surprised that immigrants come from every racial, educational, and class background. They come to recognize that today's immigrant population is diverse and often portrayed inaccurately. They learn to discuss immigration policy more thoughtfully and ultimately become more reflective participants in society.

### Exploring Sociological Techniques

Sociological research uses many methods to gather information about the past. In

*As my students—often the children of white, black, Latino, and Asian immigrants from places as widespread as Tajikistan, Jamaica, Ecuador, and Korea—share their interviews with each other, they find many deviations from the narrative of uncomplicated success.*

learned from the interview experience.

The exercise is beneficial on a number of levels. From an educational standpoint, it teaches students sociological techniques in gathering oral histories and interviewing, and it supplements textbook discussions of immigration history. Particularly for students who are children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, it reinforces how each of their heritages is unique but also common to the U.S. immigrant experience. And for students whose families did not immigrate recently, it personalizes the contemporary immigrant experience and encourages exploration of their family histories to find similar stories.

academic classes, students usually read and interpret historical documents, census records, and written laws to develop an understanding of the United States' collective immigration history. But these assignments can often seem impersonal. To supplement these tasks, I require students to interview parents, grandparents, or other relatives or friends about their immigration experiences. This oral history-based interview helps students engage on a more personal level with the information they cull from the course texts.

Our study of historical and contemporary immigration patterns informs the open-ended interview script. In class, we work together to craft a set of questions

common to all interviews. Within certain guidelines, each student is allowed to customize the script. We review the wording so it is friendly and nonthreatening (for example, to avoid suggesting judgment of interviewees who might have been undocumented at the time of immigration or might have left a professional job for a lower-status position). I encourage students to write down and ask as many follow-up questions as possible while being flexible enough to reorder questions on the spot if interviewees "go off on a tangent."

Students are often amazed at their own ability to conduct interviews. Talkative students stop to listen, and shy students find their voices as they quiz their interviewees. In turn, interviewees respond positively to the students' interest in their lives. They frequently remark that these conversations are the first time they have shared their feelings about the immigration experience with anyone. Thus the interviews can be a rewarding exercise for everyone involved.

### Complementing Classroom Materials

Learning about historical and contemporary immigration can seem like memorizing a list of rules and regulations and a catalog of ethnic groups, some of whom have found more success than others in the United States. Students often overlook the sometimes subtle differences between periods and groups and tend to view those who do not succeed as exceptions to the rule. But as my students—often the children of white, black, Latino, and Asian immigrants from places as widespread as Tajikistan, Jamaica, Ecuador, and Korea—share their interviews with each other, they find many deviations from the narrative of uncomplicated success. Individual interviewees' experiences add a personal dimension to our learning and enliven class discussions.

As students present their interviews, the class compares and contrasts interviewees' experiences with the immigration and settlement experiences of earlier

majority-European and later majority-Asian and majority-Latino immigrant groups. More often than not, the decision to immigrate, the immigration process, and immigrants' dreams for the future are far more nuanced than what our textbooks suggest. Because of variations in socioeconomic background and other factors, each interviewee describes different worries about what and whom they left behind and what they would encounter in the United States. A variety of factors—English language capabilities, legal challenges to entry, work documentation, and family circumstances—affect the adaptation process, resulting in different opportunities being available to different groups. The interviews help students develop a deeper understanding of these nuances than textbook learning alone.

### Learning about Themselves

Students reflect in class on what they discovered through the interview process. While all students learn about the many decisions that lead to a monumental move to the United States, students who interview close relatives often learn for the first time about aspects of their family's experience. Immigrants can be forward-looking as they try to adjust to their new country, and as a result, they may not discuss their immigration experiences with anyone, even the children who may have accompanied them on their journeys. This is not because they want to forget the past, but because it is not a typical topic of discussion for families focused on surviving each day.

Immigrant students are often shocked at details stemming from their interviews. Speaking to family members allows them to learn about themselves and connect with their personal heritage. Most students leave the interviews feeling proud of what their parents or grandparents did to give them better futures, including relinquishing higher-status jobs or more stable lives in exchange for broader opportunities.



*Pace University*

Students often express surprise at learning that their parents were in an arranged marriage, that their families had been wealthy or extremely poor before immigrating, or even how the confluence of immigration laws helped bring their families together or keep them apart. Familiarity with family history often brings students closer to their families and gives them a greater understanding of their current situations. Moreover, most students in the class admit that after conducting the interviews, they are more open to learning about their heritage, especially in relation to ethnic and racial history in the United States.

New York City is full of immigrants, and even students who are not themselves immigrants encounter people who are every day. My students often wonder what stories these people might tell. After taking *The Peopling of New York*, students are drawn to learning more about the city's immigrants, and they often continue their learning through discussions with family members and even with strangers. As an educator, I find it refreshing to hear about this continual success of the course and its methods. 📍

### Interview Questions

We design interviews to help students learn about immigrants' lives in their homelands and in the United States, as well as about the move itself. Students ask more personal questions of interviewees whom they know well. General questions include:

- How did you come to the United States? Why did you choose to immigrate?
- Did you consider moving somewhere else instead? Why?
- Did you come to the United States to meet family members? If so, whom?
- Which family members are in the United States with you now? Which ones came with you at the time of immigration?
- Which family members are still in your homeland? How did you decide who would make the trip?
- What kind of work did you do in the homeland, and what work do you do in the United States?
- In what kind of neighborhood did you live before immigration, and where do you live now?
- What was your life like before you immigrated, and how is it different now? Describe a typical day before you moved and a typical day now.

—Margaret M. Chin

[PERSPECTIVES]

## Seeing Immigration through a Subjective Lens

■ **KANUSHREE JAIN**, student, Macauley Honors College at Hunter College, City University of New York

Sitting in a crowded classroom, furiously taking notes, I struggled to process the complexities of American immigration. But when an assignment required me to interview my family members about their immigration experiences, I began to understand the emotional side of this dynamic, large-scale process. I began to feel personally

flushing, so I was surprised to discover that when I was a young child, oceans had divided us for a year.

Knowing this piece of my history helped me understand immigration as a “reaction to the environmental stimuli.” I began to see my family’s experience in relation to that of other groups, including Jews escaping

*I began to feel personally connected to those who came to the United States before me and those who still seek out the “land of the free.”*

connected to those who came to the United States before me and those who still seek out the “land of the free.”

With interview questions in hand, naïvely confident that I already knew my family’s history, I asked my mother about her immigration experience. We breezed through the first few questions, my ego growing as I deemed the interview a simple formality to fulfill the assignment’s requirements. It was not until I asked, “Why did you move to New York City, and how did you finance the trip?” that her response shattered my apathy and aroused my interest.

I listened intently as my mother revealed that business losses in India drove our family to immigrate. To pay off debts, my father traveled to New York (where he knew a friend) in hopes of earning money. I remember my family as always living together in a small studio apartment in

religious persecution and Italians fleeing a depressed economy. I saw how immigrants have engaged in “a process of progressive network building” by following family and friends abroad in hopes of creating a successful future (Foner 2000, 19).

My mother recalled how she had boarded a jet with little more than the American dream and her two little girls. As the plane left the runway, she assured herself that she would soon return to her country with financial success and a better lifestyle. I had never imagined that my parents had no intentions of settling in America, but instead planned to return to India as soon as it was financially feasible.

Upon arriving in New York, my mother encountered multiple barriers as she searched for employment. Because English was her second language and she lacked work experience, she worked as a waitress in an

Indian restaurant. In the restaurant, my mother found herself forced to do more manual labor than her male coworkers and subjected to demeaning treatment. Her experience was not unlike that of earlier immigrants who took jobs that established residents found undesirable.

My mother’s situation reminded me of a PBS documentary film on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire that my professor, Nancy Foner, had shown my class. The film illuminated the terrible working conditions in the garment workshops of the early 1900s, where accidents and fires were common. The Triangle Factory workers, like my mother, were subjected to long hours with discriminatory pay. They were “not covered by government-mandated provisions,” making them vulnerable to exploitation (Foner 2000, 98).

In conditions like these, it is natural for immigrants to feel nostalgic for their homelands. For my mother, this means routinely making phone calls and sending gifts to her family in India. The term “transnational” has been used to describe immigrants like my mother, who “maintain familial, economic, cultural, and political ties across international borders, in effect making the home and host society a single arena for social action” (Foner 2000, 170).

But I think the idea of “transnationalism” applies to people like me as well—those whose ties to “home” are less direct. When I visit India, I am treated like a foreigner; yet New Yorkers view me as “Indian.” My experience interviewing my mother helped me understand how I am positioned within and between two worlds, and how larger patterns of immigration have created a transnational America. 🌐

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## [PERSPECTIVES]

## International Migration and Brain Circulation

■ **KENNETH OKOTH**, director of the Council on International Educational Exchange Study Center at the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), founder of the Children of Kibera Foundation, and member of the board of trustees of St. Lawrence University

I was born in 1978 to a single mother who had just migrated from rural Kenya to the city of Nairobi. Growing up in a family of six children in the fetid slums near downtown was not easy. Finding a reason to believe in oneself and see oneself as a valued member of society was almost impossible. But thanks to two generous scholarships from American universities, I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees and have been able to choose my path in life.

My American education, in contrast to my humble beginnings, had an empowering effect. The knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes I gained in college and graduate school shape my life and work every day. This summer, I took the next step in my migratory journey, returning to East Africa after twelve years in the United States.

Now, as an international educator, I connect American students to Africa while also advocating on behalf of vulnerable children in Kenya.

A vibrant civil society in which free citizens can participate in shaping their economic and political destinies is fundamental for democracy. Sadly, in most of post-colonial Africa, the path to stable democracy has been elusive. In my view, a key reason for the strife in African countries is the enormous disparity between the elites and the rural and urban poor, against which a fragile middle class cannot serve as a stabilizing force. I believe that educational opportunities that provide a path to liberal learning for marginalized citi-

zens are indispensable to curing many troubles rooted in class disparities.

When American universities like those I attended look to countries like Kenya to identify talented potential leaders from peasant, nomadic, urban poor, and refugee backgrounds, they can play a priceless role in international development. By circulating intellectual and social capital abroad as well as within the United States,

*I believe that educational opportunities that provide a path to liberal learning for marginalized citizens are indispensable to curing many troubles rooted in class disparities.*

they make vital contributions to the growth of civil society, democracy, and stability around the world.

My undergraduate alma mater, St. Lawrence University, illustrates how even smaller colleges can make a vital contribution. Since the 1980s, St. Lawrence has offered two full scholarships for Kenyan students. Several alumni of this scholarship program have been from Kenya's most marginalized rural communities and nomadic societies. Without St. Lawrence's intervention, their dreams of upward social mobility were not guaranteed.

Today, two St. Lawrence graduates from the arid northern districts of Kenya serve as elected members of parliament, representing the views of their communities at the highest levels of policy making. Other beneficiaries

of St. Lawrence scholarships have become leaders in medicine, scientific research, academia, the performing arts, business, and philanthropy. The brain gain they bring to Kenya has empowered them to create jobs, save lives, nurture ideas, and change their communities after migrating back to their home countries.

Without my American education and work experience, I would never have traveled from a tin-roofed mud slum hovel to my current role as an administrator and faculty member at universities in the United States and Tanzania. Without spending twelve years in the United States, it is doubtful that I would have started an international charitable foundation that provides scholarships and

extends educational enrichment programs to vulnerable children from the slums where I was raised.

My foundation and its supporters enable the children we serve to attend quality schools that will allow them to forge their own paths out of poverty and become successful members of Kenyan society. Perhaps some will receive scholarships to attend college in America, continuing the cycle of international brain circulation, and bringing back to their communities the knowledge, skills, ideas, values, attitudes, and leadership that I and other returning migrants have been able to bring back to Kenyan business, politics, academia, arts, and philanthropy. ☐

*To learn about the Children of Kibera foundation, visit [childrenofkibera.org](http://childrenofkibera.org).*

[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

## Community Colleges as Critical Gateways for Immigrant Education

■ **TERESITA WISELL**, director of the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education and associate dean of the Gateway Center at Westchester Community College, Valhalla, New York; and **LINDA CHAMPANIER**, director of Institutional Advancement for the Westchester Community College Foundation

The United States is home to more than 38 million people who were born in other countries, more than three times the foreign-born population in 1970 (Terrazas and Batalova 2008). Now

schools, and our workforce, where they remain an essential source for the nation's labor pool. Providing effective education for immigrants is thus crucial not only for their personal

Community colleges serve as “gateways” to higher education for many immigrants and their children. They provide access to the education, skills training, and English language proficiency that is crucial for immigrants to successfully integrate into and contribute to their communities and the country.

representing one of every eight people in the overall population, immigrants have transformed and will continue to transform our neighborhoods, our

success, but for the economic and cultural health of the United States.

As baby boomers look forward to retirement over the next two decades, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that 60 percent of the fastest-growing jobs will require either an associate's or bachelor's degree (2007). Community colleges have recently gained the spotlight as the surest and most accessible path to higher education, and consequentially to successful careers. They are the educational choice for 44 percent of college students, who either go on to further education or move directly into the workforce (American Association of Community Colleges 2009).

One in four of today's community college students are immigrants or children of immigrants (Connell 2008). With these ratios, the issue of immigrant education in community colleges demands urgent attention. Community

colleges serve as “gateways” to higher education for many immigrants and their children. They provide access to the education, skills training, and English language proficiency that is crucial for immigrants to successfully integrate into and contribute to their communities and the country.

### Meeting the Challenges

New Americans' educational needs represent a vast opportunity for community colleges, but many colleges are far from prepared to meet these needs. A recent report by the Brookings Institute, *Economic Mobility of Immigrants in the United States*, notes that while immigrants' overall educational attainment has remained constant since 1970, the net number of people who arrive in the United States with less than a college education has increased dramatically (Haskins 2007). The increased demand for immigrant education, including developmental education and English language training, has exceeded many community colleges' capacity.

Now more than ever, community colleges need to organize a concerted effort to share expertise and innovative strategies to provide the best possible education for immigrants. Advocacy for immigrants' access to excellent education is essential, and the community college sector must take the lead in supporting immigrant education.

Westchester Community College (WCC), located in Valhalla, New York (just thirty miles north of New York City) recently demonstrated its commitment to immigrant education by building the Gateway Center, a seventy-thousand-square-foot building dedicated to immigrant and international students. Scheduled to open in May 2010, the center will provide targeted programs to help motivated immigrant and international students gain the educations they need for meaningful careers while building intercultural understanding.

### Best Practices for Immigrant Education

The Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education is currently gathering “best practices” from community colleges across the country. If your college offers a program or service that successfully meets the needs of immigrant students, please consider submitting it for our Web site catalog. The submission form, along with links to selected best practices, is available at [www.sunywcc.edu/cccie/bestpractices.htm](http://www.sunywcc.edu/cccie/bestpractices.htm).

—Teresita Wisell and Linda Champanier



One of the Gateway Center's most valuable components is the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE). Founded in July 2008 with a grant from the J.M. Kaplan Fund and the support of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), CCCIE provides a national voice for immigrant education. The consortium encourages leaders in immigrant education to raise awareness by presenting, publishing, exchanging ideas, and sharing effective practices, and supports the community college sector's contributions to education and workforce development.

### Consortium Goals

In its first year, CCCIE established a Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP) consisting of representatives from community colleges and professional associations, as well as experts in the field of immigrant integration. The BRP currently includes members from sixteen leading community colleges across the country, and from professional organizations such as the AACC, the Migration Policy Institute, and the American Council on Education. The BRP works with the director to set CCCIE's agenda and to work toward the consortium's goals.

During the BRP's first year, its members came together to discuss their perspectives on the challenges facing community colleges and immigrant students. Based on these conversations, the BRP created an agenda for CCCIE's future activities. During its second year (2009–10), CCCIE's work will revolve around several pivotal issues:

#### 1. Visibility and public awareness:

The continued creation of initiatives and partnerships that promote community colleges' important role in educating immigrants

2. **Best practices:** The identification of successful practices among com-



*An artist's rendering depicts Westchester Community College's new Gateway Center for immigrant and international students. The center is currently under construction and is projected to open in Spring 2010.*


munity colleges and their partners, and of effective vehicles to assist community colleges in replicating these practices

3. **Recognition of immigrant students' skills and talents:** The creation of clear and consistent career pathways for immigrants that recognize the education, skills, and talents immigrants bring from outside the United States

#### 4. Public education and advocacy:

The leveraging of opportunities for community colleges to educate the public about how effective education and training for immigrants contributes to the economic and social well-being of our communities and nation

The national conversation about immigrant education has only just begun, but community colleges are well positioned to meet the needs of this growing student population. By helping our newest neighbors successfully integrate into U.S. society, community colleges will contribute to the overall health of the economy and fortify the country's

social fabric. Past evidence confirms that community colleges, which offer the most affordable routes to higher education, are bridges to achievement for the workforce of the future. By providing education that meets immigrants' needs, community colleges can have a tremendous impact for decades to come. 

*For more information about the CCCIE's work, visit [www.sunywcc.edu/cccie](http://www.sunywcc.edu/cccie).*

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[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

## Building Bridges to Higher Education: The American Dream Academy

■ **RAUL YZAGUIRRE**, executive director of the Center for Community Development and Civil Rights, Arizona State University

When I stepped down as president and CEO of the National Council of La Raza in December 2004, I joined Arizona State University (ASU) because President

mutually supportive partnerships between the university and the community. These partnerships are bridges between the university and the community, and

Through affiliation with the university, the program helps parent participants visualize and pursue the long-term goal of having their children acquire college degrees.

Michael Crow and I share a vision for the future. We and other ASU leaders believe that in addition to teaching and conducting research, a great university has the resources and responsibility to solve problems in our communities, both local and global. Further, we understand that the community has the capacity to help solve problems for itself and for others. Core to this vision is *social embeddedness*, which we define as interactive and

bridges to the kind of transformation that the American Dream Academy (ADA) was designed to engender.

The American Dream Academy represents a nonprofit model integrated into a large bureaucratic institution. The academy's support staff resides in an entrepreneurial unit at ASU, the Center for Community Development and Civil Rights. The academy plays the innovative role of connecting the parents of marginalized, at-risk youth to a major metropolitan research university that is involved in their communities and in close proximity to their homes. Through affiliation with the university, the program helps parent participants visualize and pursue the long-term goal of having their children acquire college degrees.

### Program Elements

The American Dream Academy is a nine-week, school-based program that serves families in the Phoenix, Arizona, region. Parents in the program attend a minimum of four of seven core classes, each lasting ninety minutes, in order to graduate. The program is available to all parents whose children are enrolled in participating Phoenix public and charter schools. The program connects parents, schools, ASU, and the community as partners in the edu-

cational and personal development of elementary, middle, and high school students.

All American Dream Academy program partners, including parents, participate in its planning, implementation, and evaluation. Children's attitudes toward education and its importance—or lack thereof—begin early in life. When parents instill the value of education in themselves, they also instill it in their children. We ask all parents who enroll in the academy to commit to the belief that achievement in our society is closely tied to educational success, and to enact that belief by putting into practice knowledge and skills they learn through the academy. The program's first class invites parents to identify areas of focus that are important to their children's successful educational experience, including regular contact with teachers and administrators, involvement as volunteers in schools, and monitoring of their children's performance in key subject areas.

The academy offers sessions in the morning and evening to accommodate parents' schedules, and we conduct classes in both English and Spanish. Parents learn how to navigate the school system, use effective communication to collaborate with teachers and administrators, create a positive home learning environment, and support a child's emotional and social development. They also learn to be effective advocates who act as partners in their children's educations. Activities like a "Principal's Forum" enable parents to communicate their needs and concerns to school administration, provide an opportunity to interact more effectively with administrators and teachers, and encourage feedback on how the school can better support students.

For many parents, ADA "graduation" ceremonies mark the first time they have graduated from any program. As a tangible reminder that a college education is within the grasp of students from all backgrounds, all children of American Dream Academy graduates receive a symbolic

### American Dream Academy: A Nine-Week Program

- Week 1: Orientation
- Week 2: Home–School–Community Collaboration
- Week 3: Self-esteem and Academic Achievement
- Week 4: Positive Discipline and Academic Achievement
- Week 5: Academic Standards and the Parent-Teacher Conference
- Week 6: Better Understanding of the School System
- Week 7: Becoming Familiar with Requirements for College
- Week 8: Principal's Forum
- Week 9: Graduation

“Certificate of Admission” to ASU signed by President Crow along with specially crafted “Future ASU Student” ID cards.

### Program Outcomes

Can parents who have not graduated from high school and do not speak English proficiently—like so many of our program participants—be effective in helping their children succeed in school? Our results to date suggest that they can. The American Dream Academy, in partnership with more than twenty school districts and 104 Phoenix-area schools since October 2006, has provided intensive education and advocacy training designed to empower parents to help their children become successful students and ultimately graduate from high school and college, even when they themselves have not done so. The program has “graduated” nearly 8,400 parents of students and indirectly affected more than twenty thousand low-income, minority youth throughout the greater Phoenix region. We hope that our long-term results will mirror those of California’s Parent Institute for Quality Education program, where 92 percent of graduates’ children enroll in college (White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans 2005).

To date, most parent participants are Hispanic, just over 85 percent are Spanish monolingual, and nearly all are immigrants to the United States. At some schools, the proportion of Hispanic children is greater than 90 percent. All schools served thus far have been designated as Title I schools, meaning that 40 percent or more of their students live below the poverty line. This student population is at risk of dropping out prior to completing high school, a trend that has been called the “invisible crisis” by the Urban Institute (Orfield et al. 2004) and a “silent epidemic” in a report for the Gates Foundation (Bridgeland, DiIulio, and Morison 2006). Despite having been documented and studied, this exit from the education pipeline continues. By reaching



Over two hundred parents graduated from the American Dream Academy at Creighton Elementary School in May 2009. Photo courtesy of the Center for Community Development and Civil Rights.

out to parents, the American Dream Academy aspires to stanch this flow.

The program’s success depends on extraordinary partnerships, but the front line of the academy is the men and women of the ADA Volunteer Corps. These volunteers come from all walks of life and professions, including ASU students and scholars. ASU’s Doran Scholars produce curricula to train parents and volunteers, and faculty collect, analyze, and publish data on the program. Taken together, our volunteers represent more than a dozen nationalities, and most are native speakers of Spanish. They all have a singular commitment to education and volunteer as facilitators who lead weekly workshop discussions, coordinators who manage onsite logistics, or Contact Center agents who reach parents by telephone each week.

The 2009 incoming freshman class of Arizona State University includes the first children of American Dream Academy parents, approximately twenty “Dream Scholars” who are the program’s true measure of success. These students prove that empowering parents can create transformative change. For these students, education is the key

that opens the door to the American Dream, a unifying ethos that demands each of our best efforts in exchange for the opportunity to reach our highest potential. While this ideal remains elusive for many citizens, colleges and universities can play a role in extending opportunity to underserved communities. By providing hope and necessary tools, we can help parents use their individual and collective strengths to provide their children with the focus, guidance, and support necessary to achieve successful academic careers. ☐

To learn more about the American Dream Academy, visit [www.americandreamacademy.org](http://www.americandreamacademy.org).

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[RESEARCH REPORT]

# Challenges and Avenues to Success for Immigrant Students

To best meet the needs of immigrant students, educators should be aware of their specific circumstances and locations within U.S. higher education. Several recent reports provide a window into the lives of immigrant students and the steps educators might take to support their access, success, and learning.

## Opening the Door to the American Dream

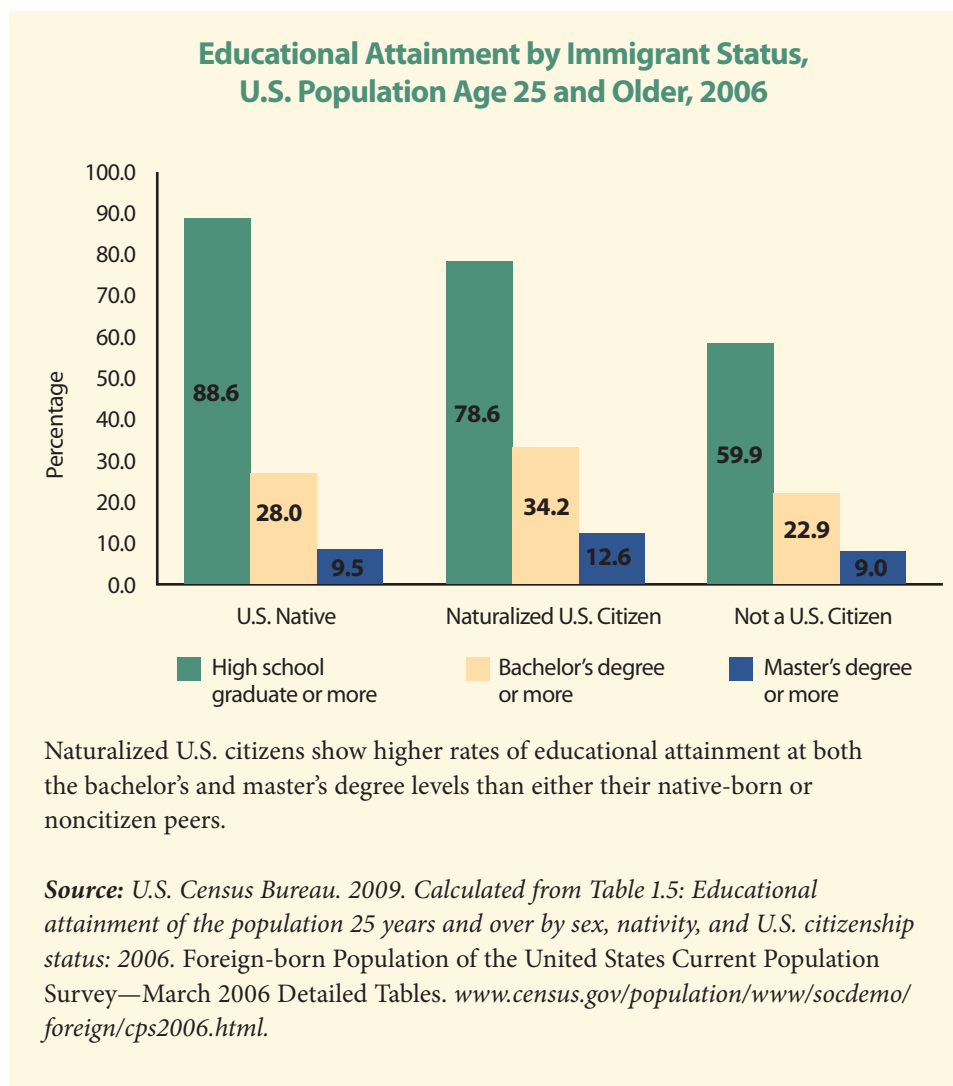
In this report on educational access for legal immigrants to the United States, the Institute for Higher Education Policy illustrates the complex challenges new Americans face on their pathways to postsecondary success. The report explores the specific needs and circumstances of the immigrant student population, which represented 12 percent of both undergraduate and graduate students as of 2003–04 (24–26).

The report highlights unique challenges faced by particular groups and summarizes differences in access and success by citizenship status, age of entry, and country of origin. For example, nearly two-thirds of immigrants over age twenty-four who have not obtained U.S. citizenship have no formal education beyond high school, while naturalized citizens have higher rates of bachelor’s degree attainment than the U.S. population at large (4). Immigrants who entered the United States between the ages of thirteen and nineteen have the least education of all age groups, as do immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean among origin groups (5). These and other immigrant students face a range of barriers related to information, outside responsibilities, financial need, prior academic preparation, and language (6–7).

Underscoring that “higher education for immigrants has...major implications for the nation as a whole” (8), with 15 percent of the current workforce born outside the United States (15) and children of immigrants projected to be one third of K–12 students by 2040 (17), the report suggests programs and policy changes that might improve immigrant access and success. To download the report, visit [www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/m-r/OpeningTheDoor.pdf](http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/m-r/OpeningTheDoor.pdf).

## The Immigrant University

John Aubrey Douglass, Heinke Roebken, and Gregg Thomson explore the differences in college experiences for first-, second-, third-, and fourth-generation immigrant students in this research paper, “The Immigrant University: Assessing the Dynamics of Race, Major, and Socioeconomic Characteristics at the University of California.” This November 2007 paper examines data drawn from the University of California–Berkeley,



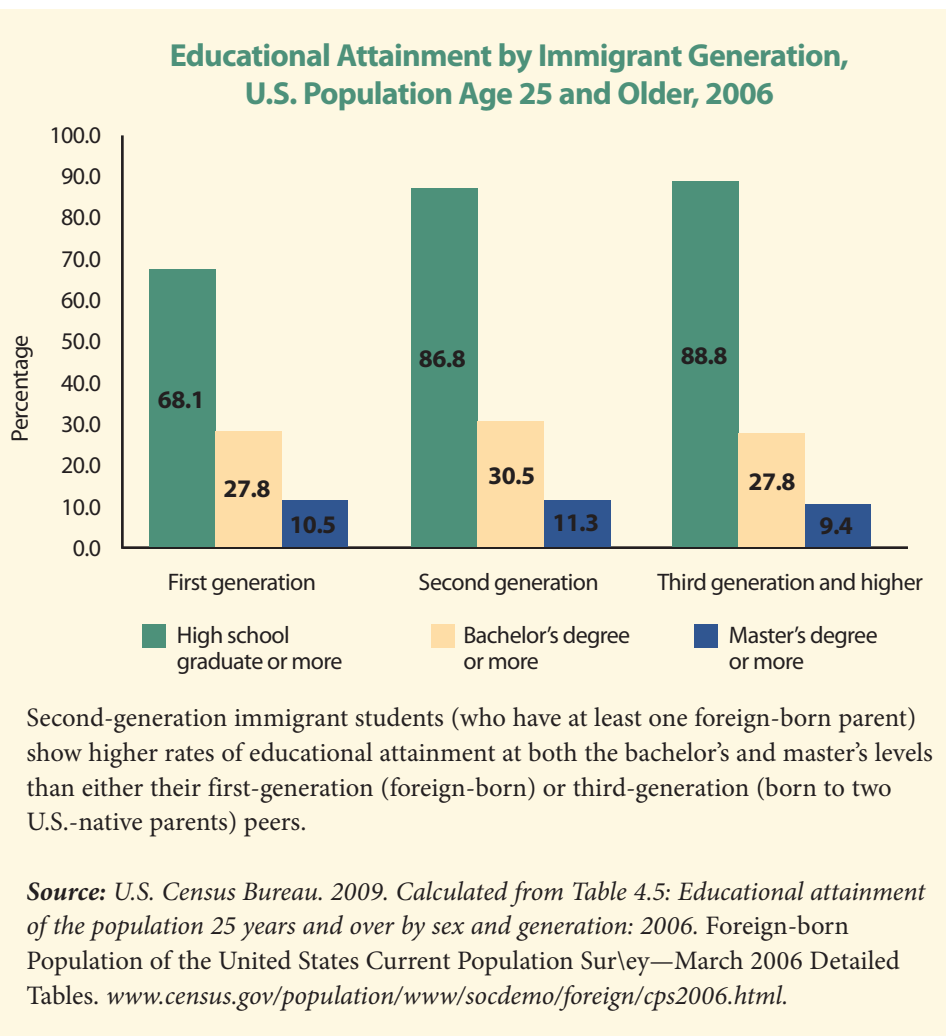
where 71 percent of students in 2006 reported having at least one grandparent who was an immigrant, 62 percent reported at least one parent who was an immigrant, and 28 percent reported that they themselves were immigrants to the United States (5-6).

The study suggests that students' educational paths vary by racial and ethnic background as well as by immigrant generational status. For example, while first- and second-generation students tend to choose career-oriented majors (such as engineering), students in later generations were relatively more inclined to pursue humanities degrees (11-12). These correlations generally correspond to patterns in the immigration status of different ethnic groups: Chinese students (who often majored in career-oriented degrees) were more likely to be first- or second-generation immigrants than their Euro-American peers, who had higher representation within humanities fields and were more likely to be third- or fourth-generation immigrants (11, 15).

The paper also includes information on socioeconomic and academic capital, hours spent on various activities, and sense of belonging, social satisfaction, and academic satisfaction. While of particular interest to immigrant-rich California institutions, the paper is pertinent to anyone interested in how immigrant identity might affect the educational experience. To download the paper, visit [cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROPS.ImmigrantUniv.CSHE.19.07.pdf](http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROPS.ImmigrantUniv.CSHE.19.07.pdf).

### Young Lives on Hold

In this recent report for the College Board, Roberto G. Gonzales explores the educational barriers facing unauthorized immigrants from “the 1.5 generation”: undocumented residents who were born outside of the United States, but who immigrated at a young age with their parents. The report describes these



immigrants' demographic diversity and examines their interest—and the interest of society at large—in their gaining access to higher education.

As the report details, the majority of undocumented immigrants (9.6 million of the 11.9 million total) are from Latin America, with Asian immigrants representing the second-largest group. Since 2000, Latino population growth has contributed more than 50 percent of the overall U.S. population growth, with 40 percent of this U.S. Latino population growth due to immigration (9). While immigrants hold a range of legal statuses, those who are undocumented face critical barriers to higher education. In 1982,

the Supreme Court guaranteed undocumented children access to K-12 public education via *Plyler vs. Doe*, but this guarantee does not extend to higher education (11). Given the significant share of the U.S. population undocumented immigrants represent, Gonzales argues, their educational advancement is critical to the economic well-being of the nation at large.

The full report details the extent of immigrant participation in the U.S. labor force, summarizes current state-based laws and policies, and shares the personal stories of individual students. To download the paper in full, visit [professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/young-lives-on-hold-college-board.pdf](http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/young-lives-on-hold-college-board.pdf).

## In Print

***Another Kind of Public Education: Race, Schools, the Media, and Democratic Possibilities*, Patricia Hill Collins (Beacon Press, 2009, \$27.95 cloth)**

With this look at the interplay between education and democratic action, Patricia Hill Collins traces the blurry line between “opting in” and “selling out” to identify critical modes of resistance to racism in the public sphere. Hill Collins calls her readers to consider education’s vital relationship to democracy, and underscores the need for education to assist students in gaining the skills necessary to act in support of their principles. The book is critical reading for anyone interested in education’s potential role as a change agent in a diverse democracy.

***Ethnicity in College: Advancing Theory and Improving Diversity Practices on Campus*, Anna M. Ortiz and Silvia J. Santos (Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2009, \$35.00 cloth)**

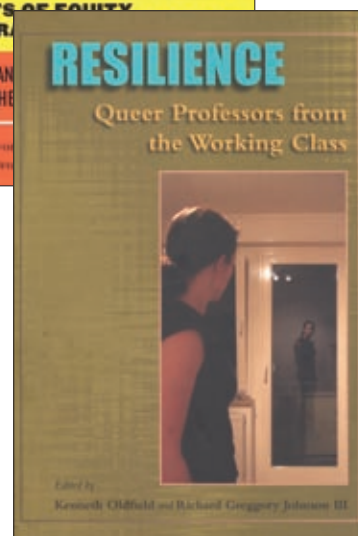
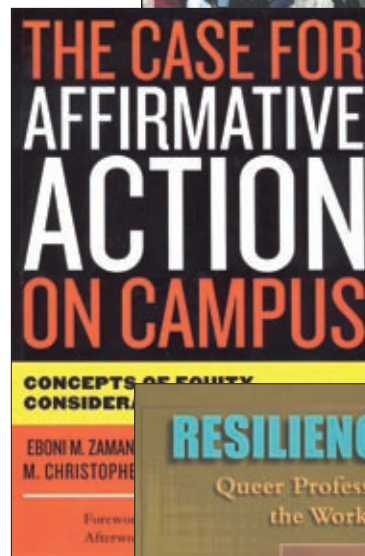
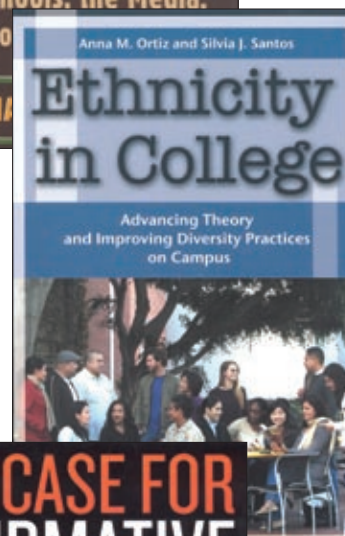
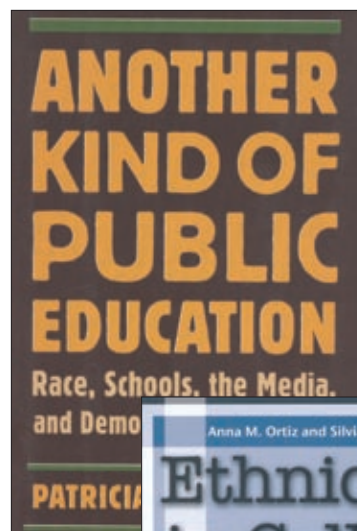
By studying the experiences of 120 Southern California college students, researchers Ortiz and Santos take an in-depth look at the role college plays in ethnic identity development. Their book provides a close look at the divergent developmental paths traversed by students of different ethnicities, and the effect college has on students’ understanding of their ethnicity. With smart analysis and helpful suggestions for maximizing the positive effects of campus diversity, the volume is a significant contribution to the literature on identity, diversity, and education.

***The Case for Affirmative Action on Campus: Concepts of Equity, Considerations for Practice*, Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher, Denise O’Neil Green, M. Christopher Brown II, and David O. Stovall (Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2009, \$29.95 cloth)**

This text provides a comprehensive overview of the state of affirmative action law and the climate for related policies on college campuses. It suggests a persistent need for affirmative action even decades after the civil rights movement, and lays out the arguments in favor of these controversial policies. By delving into deep divides and grappling with tough questions, the volume articulates a compelling case for affirmative action—and will help its readers make this case to the higher education world.

***Resilience: Queer Professors from the Working Class*, Kenneth Oldfield and Richard Gregory Johnson III, Editors (State University of New York Press, 2008, \$27.95 paperback)**

Anchored at the intersections between class and sexual identity, this anthology of autobiographical essays gives voice to the particular experiences of working-class LGBT women and men in higher education. Through deeply personal narratives, the contributors make palpable the challenges and triumphs common to their particular identities, creating a powerful statement about the need for equitable institutions and the persistence of those who succeed in their absence. This is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand how personal identity inflects academic careers.



## Resources

### Center for Global Geography Education Modules

The Association of American Geographers (AAG) has created a set of online modules to internationalize the teaching of geography through case studies and analytical activities. Known as the Center for Global Geography Education (CGGE), the modules aim to link undergraduates around the world in collaborative learning about topics such as global migration. The modules can be accessed in beta form at [globalgeography.aag.org](http://globalgeography.aag.org).

### Migration Policy Institute Immigration Data Hub

The Migration Policy Institute's Immigration Data Hub presents information about current and historical migration patterns in an accessible format. The searchable collection of maps, graphs, and legislative summaries explores migration patterns both by state and throughout the globe. A key resource for anyone seeking information about current immigration trends, the database is available at [www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/](http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/).

### Energy of a Nation

Energy of a Nation, an online resource bank maintained by the Advocates for Human Rights, provides access to a variety of immigration resources, including curricula suitable for learners from eighth grade through adult. With sections geared toward educators, students, immigrants, policy makers, and faith leaders, the site is relevant for a range of audiences. To access the resources, visit [www.energyofanation.org](http://www.energyofanation.org).

## Opportunities

### Expanding the Circle Conference

The California Institute of Integral Studies will host "Expanding the Circle," a conference on efforts to create more inclusive campus environments for LGBTQ students, on February 25-28, 2010, in San Francisco. To learn more about the conference and to register, visit [expandingthecircle.com](http://expandingthecircle.com).

### NAFSA 2010 National Conference and Expo

NAFSA: Association of International Educators will hold its annual conference in Kansas City, Missouri, on May 30-June 4, 2010. In addition, the call for proposals for the 2011 conference will open in April 2010. For information, visit [www.nafsa.org/annualconference/default.aspx](http://www.nafsa.org/annualconference/default.aspx).

### National Conference on Race and Ethnicity

The National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education will take place on June 1-5, 2010, in National Harbor, Maryland (just south of Washington, DC). For information about the conference, visit [www.ncore.ou.edu](http://www.ncore.ou.edu).

### Diversity, Learning, and Inclusive Excellence Conference

AAC&U will hold its biennial Diversity, Learning, and Inclusive Excellence conference on October 21-23, 2010, in Houston, Texas. For more information about the meeting, including a call for proposals (currently being accepted), visit [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org).

### Diversity & Democracy Advisory Board 2010-11

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## Upcoming AAC&U Meetings

MEETING	LOCATION	DATES
<b>Annual Meeting 2010</b>	<i>Washington, DC</i>	<b>JANUARY 20–23, 2010</b>
<b>General Education and Assessment</b>	<i>Seattle, Washington</i>	<b>FEBRUARY 18–20, 2010</b>
<b>Faculty Roles in High-Impact Practices</b>	<i>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</i>	<b>MARCH 25–27, 2010</b>
<b>Diversity, Learning, and Inclusive Excellence</b>	<i>Houston, Texas</i>	<b>OCTOBER 21–23, 2010</b>

## AAC&U Associates

Enrollment in the Associate program provides an opportunity for individuals on AAC&U member campuses to advance core purposes and best practices in undergraduate education and to strengthen their collaboration with AAC&U’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives. Associates pay \$60 per calendar year and receive the same benefits as AAC&U Campus Representatives, including subscriptions to our print publications, *Liberal Education*, *Peer Review*, and *Diversity & Democracy*, electronic copies of *On Campus with Women*, invitations to apply for grant-funded projects, and advance notice of calls for proposals for institutes and meetings. For more information, please visit [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org) or call Renee Gamache at 202-884-0809.

### About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises 1,200 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org).

### From AAC&U Board Statement on Liberal Learning

AAC&U believes that by its nature... liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.