RECRUITMENT, DIVERSITY AND SUCCESS

Recruiting, Diversity, and Student Success

Higher education is experiencing an unprecedented shift in student demographics, forcing admissions officers to take a systematic approach to current recruitment practices, activities, and investments. In the article "Knocking at the College Door," the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education reports that the U.S. is experiencing its first overall decline in the total number of domestic high-school graduates in more than a decade. The report also indicates that the pool of future college students is notably more ethnically and socioeconomically diverse, and often less prepared to succeed in college. As a result, institutions must rethink their approach to recruiting to identify and engage new target audiences, both domestically and internationally. And they must be prepared to support these students in new and different ways.

With Workday Student, institutions use a full array of data to uncover new recruitment opportunities and engage with untapped markets, allowing admissions officers to analyze campaign effectiveness, yield, and net cost per prospect using real-time analytics accessible from personalized dashboards. Workday Student enables collaboration among admissions, financial aid, and finance administrators to create the right mix of revenue and tuition discounting, leveraging important student-aid dollars to shape the best possible entering class.

But it's not enough to just fill the entering class; the students must persist and succeed. Understanding the unique needs of entering students and designing programs to meet those needs requires the ability to analyze data from historical admissions, student aid, and academic records to unlock trends in student success and persistence. With Workday, all student, HR, and financial data resides in a single location, allowing institutions to use real-time and historic data traditionally siloed in disparate systems and data repositories. This results in insightful and actionable analytics that give administrators all the information they need to design success strategies and programs and more effectively communicate with their diverse student populations.

For example, a female, out-of-state, first-generation STEM major may have a different student success plan than her roommate. She may be paired with an advisor that understands her personal challenges, and assigned to a learning cohort made up of students with similar backgrounds. Imagine how institutions could positively impact the student experience with prescriptive engagement, advising, and learning plans all based on individual data and historic student success trend analysis. With this capability, Workday Student gives institutions the tools to be proactive rather than reactive.

It is exciting to think about how technology can empower institutions to address their most pressing challenges. Dozens of diverse institutions use Workday Student to tackle critical issues on campuses, such as recruiting, diversity, and student success, enabling institutions to identify and seize opportunity in a world where the only thing certain is change.

Sincerely,

**Liz Dietz**
Vice President, Workday Student

For more information on Workday Student Recruiting visit www.workday.com/student

Introduction

Colleges and universities nationwide work to recruit students, attract a diverse student body, and promote the success of students in completing courses, programs and degrees. Those goals are far from easy to achieve. Institutions adjust strategies all the time, only sometimes with success. These challenges face public and private colleges, two-year and four-year institutions, and colleges with a wide range of missions and student populations.

The articles in this compilation explore some of those strategies, and the intersection of underlying issues related to recruitment, diversity and student success. As colleges continue to experiment, *Inside Higher Ed* will continue to track their work in these important areas. We welcome your comments on this compilation and suggestions for future coverage.

--The Editors
Editor@insidehighered.com
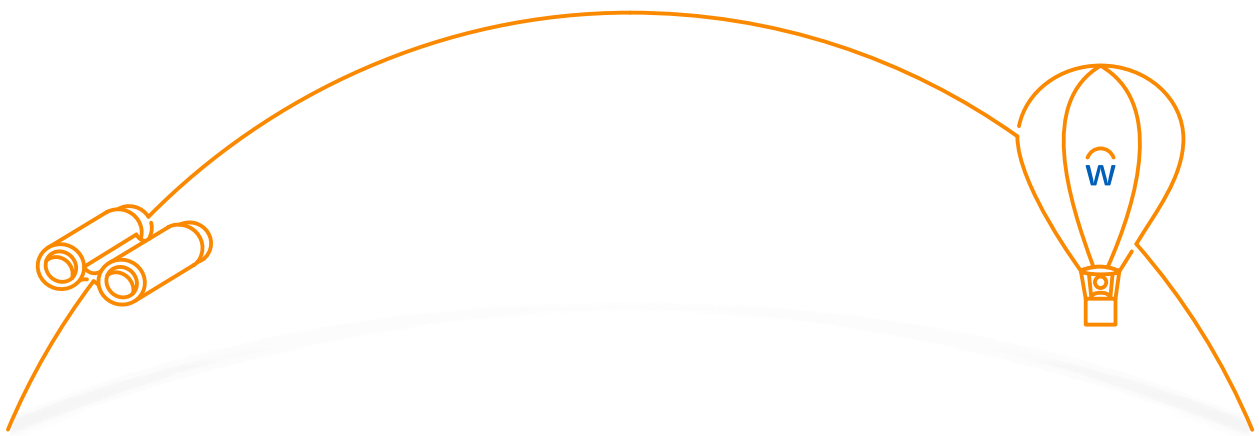
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News

A selection of articles by *Inside Higher Ed* reporters

Poverty and Merit

By Paul Fain

The most selective colleges are failing to enroll more low-income students, so the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation is calling for a "poverty preference" in college admissions.

The nation's name-brand colleges have made virtually no progress in admitting more low-income students over the last decade, according to the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, which in a January 2016 report called for a "poverty preference" in college admissions.

In 2013 Pell Grant recipients accounted for 17 percent of first-time, full-time students at the 193 institutions with the most competitive admissions, according to the foundation, which crunched federal data for a newly released report. That was up one percentage point from 16 percent in 2000.

In contrast, colleges described as having "competitive" admissions increased their Pell Grant recipient percentage to 42 percent from 35 percent over that same period.

"College admissions for kids in poverty is profoundly unfair," Harold O. Levy, the foundation's executive director, said in an interview with journalists.

The report says many public colleges have instituted a low-income preference in their application process. That move may become more important if the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down race-conscious admissions, Levy said. Either way, he said other selective institutions should follow suit. "It's leveling the playing field."

Many academically qualified students from low-income backgrounds fail to apply to selective colleges, a problem often dubbed "undermatching." The report found that high-achieving, high-income students are twice as likely to apply to at least one selective college as are their low-income peers.

Needier students often get poor admissions counseling from high school guidance offices, Levy said, where student-to-counselor ratios can be 500 to 1, or higher. Many students from low-income families also are scared away by the sky-high sticker prices of elite colleges, and often fail to understand how financial aid works.

The college admissions system

is rigged against low-income applicants in many ways, said Levy, from the test prep wealthy students get to legacy admissions and so-called merit aid, which is frequently an attempt to attract middle- and upper-class students to attend one college instead of another.

Even so, most top colleges claim they are committed to economic diversity on their campuses. "That's so much blather," said Levy. The numbers back him up.

Students from households in the bottom income quartile make up just 3 percent of enrollment at the nation's most competitive colleges, the report said. But 72 percent of enrollment at these colleges is comprised of students from the wealthiest quartile.

The foundation's report said selective colleges need not lower their admissions requirements to enroll more low-income students.

"Hidden within these numbers are thousands of students from economically disadvantaged households who, despite attending less-resourced schools and growing up with less intellectual stimulation and advantages, do extremely well in school, love learning, are extraordinarily bright and capable, and would do very well at selective institutions if offered admissions," the report said. "They are just being ignored."

The foundation cited research that found that highly selective institutions could increase the representation of low-income students by 30 percent without compromising their SAT or ACT test score standards.

"The kids can do it," Levy said. "They're just not getting a shot."

Separate and Unequal

Poor students are overrepresented at community colleges, which tend to have tight budgets. And that equity gap is growing, causing experts like the Century Foundation's Richard Kahlenberg to warn of increasingly separate and unequal institutions in higher education. Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation, co-wrote the new report with Jennifer Giancola, director of research for the Cooke foundation.

Figure 2: Percent of First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen Receiving Pell Grants Has Risen in All Institutions Except the Most Selective
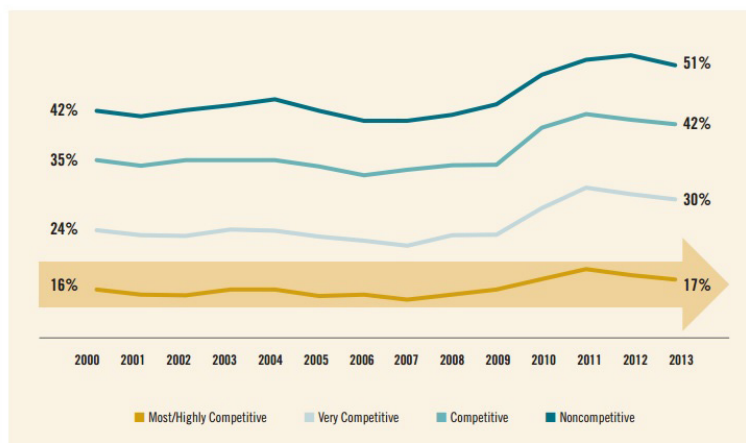
Source: Analysis of data from the Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 1999-00 to 2012-13. Receipt of federal grant aid is used as a proxy for receipt of federal Pell grant.

The problem hasn't gone unnoticed. Pressure has mounted on selective colleges to admit more low-income students -- and to help

ensure that they graduate.

The Cooke foundation is a longtime advocate on this issue. Since 2002 the foundation has funded the education of 891 undergraduates from low-income backgrounds who attended a competitive institution.

In recent years, the Obama administration, several advocacy groups and the news media have joined the cause and hammered selective colleges for catering to wealthy students. For example, a recent report from the Institute for Higher Education Policy identified selective colleges that enroll relatively small percentages of students who received Pell Grants.

The New York Times in 2014 published a report giving Vassar College top marks for enrolling students from low-income backgrounds. Vassar's Pell Grant recipient percentage among first-year students climbed to 23 percent from 12 percent in 2007.

The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation later awarded a $1 million, no-strings-attached prize to Vassar for those efforts. The prize is to be an annual award for colleges that excel at enrolling and graduating low-income students.

Undermatching matters, the report said, in part because high-achieving students who are from low-income backgrounds are more likely to graduate if they attend

a selective college. Their graduation gap with wealthier students increases at institutions with less competitive admissions criteria, according to research cited by the report. One reason for this is that wealthier colleges can afford to provide needed academic and other support to low-income students.

The stakes could get higher because the use of poverty preferences in admissions is a "viable alternative strategy to promote racial diversity on campus," particularly if the Supreme Court limits race-conscious affirmative action, the report said.

"If we can't do it by traditional affirmative action," Levy said, "this is another route. And potentially a better route."

In addition, the U.S. Congress is making noise about pushing wealthy colleges to spend more of their endowment money on financial aid. Even if the talk never becomes legislation, that pressure could influence colleges to do more for low-income students.

The foundation plans to send its report to presidents and deans of admissions at every highly selective college. Levy has spoken to governors in several states about the problem, and said he will expand on that outreach.

Levy said that he has seen some movement on the issue, and that there is a willingness at some colleges to reexamine admissions policies. "These doors are not permanently closed," he said. ∎

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/01/12/high-achieving-low-income-students-remain-rare-most-selective-colleges

Princeton Will Resume Transfer Admissions

By Scott Jaschik

Experts see move as one sign of increased interest by highly competitive colleges in transfers.

Since 1990, Princeton University has not admitted transfer students -- even as a growing number of colleges have embraced transfer admissions as a way to attract a more diverse student body than is possible relying on full-time freshman enrollment.

In February 2016, the university announced plans to change. The university, as part of a new strategic plan, said that it will have a transfer plan in place by 2018. The strategic plan will also result in an additional 125 students being admitted each year (through a variety of means besides transfer).

When four classes are admitted, the existing number of undergraduates, 5,200, will go up by 500. In expanding, the university said that it would make "a concerted effort to identify and attract more students from low-income families and ensure these students receive the support they need once they are on campus." (This is the second time in a decade that Princeton has increased the size of its undergrad-

uate student body and linked those increases to efforts to diversify.)

In the strategic plan, Princeton linked the resumption of transfer admissions to diversity goals. "Experience at other universities shows that transfer programs can provide a vehicle to attract students with diverse backgrounds and experiences, such as qualified military veterans and students from low-income backgrounds, including some who might begin their careers at community colleges," the plan says.

That may not be the only motivation. Princeton alumni have for years complained that the university's ban on transfer admissions has hurt athletic programs, as other Ivy institutions have admitted outstanding athletes as transfers.

Whatever the motivation, the tendency of the most competitive colleges on transfer admissions has been to have the transfer option, but to admit incredibly few students that way -- with the admission rate even lower that that of freshman admissions at these institutions.

Yale University, for example, says that it receives more than 1,000 transfer applications for only 20 to 30 slots. Stanford University admits a similar number of transfer students, and says that the admit rate tends to be between 1 and 4 percent. (There are other competitive colleges, notably women's colleges such as Mount Holyoke College, that have for years made more of a push in transfer admissions from community colleges.)

Experts on transfer stress that the transfer policies that have the greatest impact are those of public higher education systems, which educate more students than do private colleges and which -- in many states -- assume that large numbers of eventual bachelor's degree recipients will start at community colleges.

Even so, experts said Princeton's move was significant.

Janet L. Marling, executive director of the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students, at the University of North Georgia, said that the timing of Princeton's an-

nouncement "could not be more perfect" because her institute's advisory board will be discussing the topic of transfer students at elite private institutions. She said she is seeing more private colleges, even institutions that are highly competitive in admissions, start to talk about admitting more transfer students.

Princeton's shift, she said, "adds to the growing narrative that transfer students matter, that they add value to a campus community, and that are capable of succeeding at elite institutions," Marling said.

Davis Jenkins, a senior research associate at the Community College Research Center of Teachers College of Columbia University, studies community college transfers. He said via email that the traditional admissions model at elite private colleges makes it "extremely difficult" for low-income students to be admitted.

Talent that might not be identified among high school seniors could well be identified among community college students, he said, and diversify colleges. "I think Princeton's

announcement could be significant in that it could send a message to other elite privates that transfer is a good thing to do (and implicitly

Blair Hall, on the Princeton campus

that transfer students can hack it at Princeton)," he said.

Sarah Zauner helps colleges that use the EAB's consulting services on transfer and community college student success issues. She said in the last year she has received an increasing number of requests from competitive private colleges that

"want to look at transfer strategy." (EAB was formerly known as the Education Advisory Board.)

Zauner applauds the interest. Many students -- especially first-generation, low-income and minority students -- have a variety of reasons to start college close to home, many times at a community college. Many of these students can succeed at elite institutions, she said, but only if someone recruits and admits them. "These students provide a great way to expand diversity" of all kinds in a college's student body, she said.

For these programs to work, she said, colleges need to move to admit more transfer students, and this is especially the case at elite institutions, public and private. "For people to see Princeton embracing this is important," she said.

Zauner quipped that she has "some bias" on the importance of the community college transfer route. Her first college courses were at Lane Community College, in Oregon. She graduated from the University of Virginia. ∎

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/02/03/princeton-university-will-resume-transfer-admissions-first-time-1990

Workday Community Voices: Managing Change at the University of Chicago

September 22, 2015, by Workday Staff Writers on Human Resources

Higher-education institutions are dealing with big changes. The makeup of their workforces has shifted, the role of their HR teams has evolved, and many are looking to replace dated processes and systems with modern approaches and technologies. Mike Knitter, interim associate vice president at the University of Chicago, shares his tips and thoughts on change in today's Workday Community Voices.

> "When moving to Workday, we built campaigns of change around themes that reflect the values and cultural norms of the university."
>
> —Mike Knitter, University of Chicago

How has the role of HR in higher education evolved over the last 10 years?
HR used to focus primarily on administrative tasks, such as hiring and managing benefits programs. The role then evolved into having functional experts in all areas of HR–talent acquisition, training and development, and labor relations. Now, HR is expected to be a partner to the organization and its strategies. We're expected to understand the challenges, revenue streams, complexities, and external factors impacting higher education, and advise on decisions.

What is the role of technology in adopting these new ways and infrastructure?
By selecting Workday we skipped multiple generations of technology, moving from paper-based processes to a cloud-based administrative system. The impact has been incredible, especially in terms of visibility and transparency into our workforce. Previously, we had 20 messengers collecting personnel action forms from employees. Now employees can enter their data online, and HR and managers can access it in real time.

Having real-time data has enabled us to build actionable plans and measure effectiveness, such as tracking progress month over month against our diversity initiatives. Another major advancement is in talent acquisition, and being more strategic in sourcing of candidates. For example, we can now tap into social media platforms to connect with younger workers.

How have you helped employees shift from using paper-based processes to a cloud-based application?
One of the most helpful things I have done to help employees prepare for and engage with change is to brand it. When moving to Workday, we built campaigns of change around themes that reflect the values and cultural norms of the university.

We launched the project with "On Our Way to Workday," because the idea of a journey resonates with employees. Everything we did–from communications to training to our website–reflected this theme. Six weeks prior to going live, we shifted to "Discover Workday," and our final tagline after we deploy our Phase II initiatives will be "Have a Nice Workday," which reflects our positive outlook heading into the future.

How can HR leaders be successful change agents?
In higher education, decisions are often made by committee, with many stakeholders who like to receive and give a lot of feedback during times of change. HR leaders need to be agile, think innovatively, and be highly collaborative during the process.

The workday@uchicago booth at the University of Chicago's Benefits and Health Fair, October 2014.

U of California Accused of Favoring Non-Californians

By Scott Jaschik

State auditor says system campuses cut admissions standards in ways that shifted slots to out-of-staters. University fires back with analysis that says budget cuts forced its hand.

Facing severe budget cuts from the state around 2010, University of California campuses started increasing their admission of out-of-state students, who pay much higher tuition rates than do California residents. UC officials never made a secret of the strategy, and some even spoke of hoping parents of high school students would start lobbying for larger state appropriations. That didn't happen.

What did happen was a sudden spike in enrolling out-of-state undergraduates, even as demand increased for spots at the University of California -- and especially at the campuses at Berkeley, Los Angeles and, to a slightly lesser degree, San Diego. There has been plenty of grumbling by applicants, parents and politicians. Governor Jerry Brown, a Democrat, complained that "normal" students can't get into Berkeley anymore.

The state auditor in March 2016

The University of California at Berkeley

released a report that went well beyond complaints of rejected applicants. It accused the university system of admitting out-of-state applicants who didn't meet standards set by the state's Master Plan for Higher Education. And thousands of these non-Californians took the spots of more academically qualified Californians, the audit charged. This narrative counters the image that many admissions officials at popular flagships promote, which is that it is the out-of-staters who

must meet higher standards.

The University of California responded with a report of its own -- disputing some of the auditor's findings and saying that those who couldn't find slots need to blame politicians for slashing higher education budgets, not the university.

An agreement between the university and Brown in October is expected to add thousands of slots for Californians in the system -- in return for more state funds. So there has already been some change from the period covered in the audit. But the underlying issues remain, and the report attracted considerable attention in the state and elsewhere. The audit report is the latest sign of backlash against many state policies that have relied on out-of-state tuition to replace state appropriations.

Here are some of the key findings in the auditor's report, which is focused on shifts from 2010-11 to

2014-15:

• Total out-of-state enrollment increased by 82 percent, while in-state enrollment decreased by 1 percent.

• The university made enrolling in its system "less appealing" for Californians by admitting them to a system campus, but not the one they wanted, while "never" denying nonresidents who were admitted the campus of their choice.

• Ignoring master-plan requirements that out-of-state applicants should only be accepted if they met or exceeded the median qualifications for residents, the university admitted nearly 16,000 nonresidents with lower academic qualifications than the median for residents it admitted.

• At the same time, from academic years 2005-6 through 2014-15, the university's campuses denied admission to nearly 4,300 residents whose academic scores met or exceeded all of the median scores for nonresidents whom the university admitted to the campus of their choice.

• Relatively few out-of-state applicants added racial or ethnic diversity to the state's colleges, with only 11 percent of out-of-state students admitted in 2014-15 coming from underrepresented minority groups. (In states less diverse than California, educators make the case that such students add diversity.)

The report from the university questions not only some of the numbers, but the assumption that out-of-state students take Californians' slots.

"Some in California have called for UC to limit the number of nonresident students it enrolls, thinking this would make room for more Californians or provide additional opportunity for more California students. This isn't true," the report says. "The immediate impact of reducing the number of nonresidents at the university would be less funding for all UC students. Like other governmental agencies, UC's state funding hasn't fully rebounded from the significant budget cuts of the recent recession and it is unlikely that the state will be positioned to replace the more than $800 million that nonresidents bring to the university each year. Absent additional state funding, the reduced revenues would lead to decreases in the quality of academic programs and services for all UC students or increases in tuition."

Some experts on California admissions said there are elements of truth in both the arguments of the auditor and the university.

Jon Reider of San Francisco University High School, which sends many highly prepared students to UC and elsewhere (and sees many rejected), said one major problem with public discussion is that there is a difference between Berkeley, UCLA and UCSD and the rest of the university system. Both the university and its critics use systemwide data when it suits their purposes, he said, but there is not "one system" in the way people talk.

He said that there is no question that at top UCs, admission has become much more difficult and many talented Californians are being turned away.

"All California counselors have noticed this. It is a fact of our lives," he said. "Parents and students groan, and we groan in sympathy, but our response is to be practical. We mention more frequently public flagships out of state -- Oregon, Colorado, et al. -- but the cost is greater there, too. There is remarkably little taxpayer rebellion, because the state Legislature has severely reduced funding from Sacramento, so the UC system has to go out of state for more tuition revenue."

Suzanne Dougherty is a California-based private counselor for college applicants and the author of *The Complete Guide to University of California Admissions.*

She said many parents are angry at the University of California but that few realize just how hard it is to get in, especially to engineering or other specialized programs. Too many people, she said, look at the admissions process as a single process, and not "a larger door leading to smaller doors" that one needs to get through.

Dougherty said she believes the university "didn't have a choice" but to admit more out-of-state applicants, as a means of preserving quality when state dollars disappeared.

Asked if her clients agree, she said, "Parents don't believe that." ∎

The New Out-of-State Pricing Pitch

By Rick Seltzer

U of Maine used tuition-matching campaign to force its way into conversation with other Northeastern flagships. Move boosted freshman commitments, but none of the targeted campuses are admitting to losing applicants.

A brazen University of Maine effort using tuition matching to thrust itself into the conversation with six larger and more widely known Northeastern public universities paid off with a 54 percent increase in out-of-state freshman commitments for the fall of 2016.

But nearby flagship universities that Maine tagged with bull's-eyes say they haven't felt an admissions loss. And Maine hasn't reported a major change in the academic chops of students committing to its campus in the town of Orono. Ultimately, the tuition-matching campaign put Maine on the map for more out-of-state high schoolers -- it just doesn't appear to have siphoned students straight from other states' more selective flagships.

That's not to say the program is without its areas of strength or potential downsides. Like many campaigns to boost out-of-state enrollment at public universities, it's set to bring in a new source of cash -- more higher-paying students -- to a state with a declining population

and a university system in a financial crunch. Maine's strategy seeks to do so while standing out for trying to snag students at an in-state price point, rather than far higher out-of-state rates.

Geographically, Maine's program was clearly most successful in drawing students from Massachusetts. Yet while it helped drive a spike in first-year applications, that spike prompted Maine to put in place its first universitywide wait list in recent history.

The results are different from what casual observers might have guessed when Maine debuted the program, called Flagship Match, at the end of November. The outspoken campaign caught attention for flashy billboards promising lower-than-normal rates to out-of-state students from nearby states. Flagship Match specifically pitched students in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Vermont on the prospect of attending Maine for the same cost of the quoted in-state tu-

ition and fees at their home states' flagship universities.

In other words, Maine offered merit awards for out-of-state students in amounts pegged to rates at other states' flagships. For example, Maine, with its out-of-state tuition and fees listed at $28,880 per year for 2015-16, would offer Flagship Match awards worth $14,709 for Massachusetts seniors who had a high school grade point average of at least 3.0 and SAT scores of at least 1050. That would bring the cost of attending Maine in line with the University of Massachusetts at Amherst's quoted in-state tuition and fees of $14,171. Prorated awards were also offered for students not meeting criteria for the headline award.

An important point is that even after the flagship discount, out-of-state students will be paying more to attend Maine than those from inside the state because all of the flagship targets charge more than Maine. Maine's in-state tuition and fees totaled $10,610 in 2015-16.

Maine lists the Flagship Match program as renewable for up to four years and said it will adjust award amounts to reflect tuition rates released for 2016-17.

The efforts boosted out-of-state commitments as of May 1, Maine reported. A total of 1,123 out-of-state students sent in deposits by the date, up 54 percent from 731 in a year.

Deposits from Massachusetts spiked 81 percent, to 518. Maine increased its commitments from its five other target states as well, but to a much lesser extent. Commitments from Connecticut rose 33 percent to 122, and commitments from New Hampshire jumped 40 percent to 102. Commitments increased 37 percent, to 71, from New Jersey; 22 percent, to 39, from Vermont; and 35 percent, to 31, from Pennsylvania.

Leaders at Maine hadn't completed their analysis of why the increase was higher in Massachusetts than elsewhere. Maine didn't purposefully blitz Massachusetts with more marketing than the other states, said Provost Jeffrey Hecker. But Massachusetts previously sent the most students to the University of Maine, so the fall 2016 deposits were growing on an existing platform.

"I think some of it is proximity," Hecker said. "A lot of people in Massachusetts associate the state of Maine with a vacation. And part of it is it's a bigger population."

At a higher level, the gains prove

University of Maine billboard in Connecticut

the tuition-matching strategy and its accompanying marketing worked, Hecker said. Maine paired the Flagship Match program with ramped-up out-of-state recruitment, including outreach to guidance counselors and billboards in Northeastern states. The university formed the strategy after finding through research that more than 97 percent of students who applied to Maine but decided not to attend enrolled out of the state. A quarter of those students were going to other land-grant universities, mostly in New England.

The increase in out-of-state enrollment didn't lead to large-scale changes in Maine's other undergraduate indicators. SAT scores dipped slightly, with the incoming class's median score down about 10 points in a year, to 1070. Diversity at the university, which has traditionally drawn a relatively low level of minority students, ticked up. Maine's incoming class has 53 percent more African-Americans than its 2015-16 freshman class, 66. It

has 49 percent more Hispanic students, 115. Those numbers are for the entire class, not just out-of-state students, but the bump up was driven by out-of-state increases, Hecker said.

However, discount rates were largely unchanged. Even after taking Flagship Match into account, the discount rate for out-of-state students is on track to be about 38 percent, a decrease of less than a percentage point. The discount rate for in-state students jumped by about the same amount.

"We certainly have not been spending more per out-of-state student," Hecker said. "We've been pretty targeted. I think we've got a certain kind of student who's coming here, and the financial aid we're able to offer and their backgrounds make this affordable."

Maine admitted 17 percent more students -- 11,590 as of May 1, 2016 up from 9,930 the previous year. Most of the increase was from out-of-state students. Non-Maine residents admitted shot up 24 percent to 7,910, from 6,362.

The Flagship Match program called out another New England university known for its out-of-state recruitment: the University of Vermont, in Burlington. But Maine leadership said their university is not modeling recruiting efforts after Vermont, which has less state support and draws between 70 and 75 percent of its students from beyond its borders. Even with the increase in out-of-state students, Maine's

committed freshmen are 54 percent in-state students.

There are other differences between the two flagship universities, said Stacey Kostell, Vermont's vice president for enrollment management. Vermont surveyed admitted students in 2015 who opted to go to Maine instead of its campus, she said. It found very few, meaning Maine didn't register as a top competitor like some other universities -- the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University of Connecticut, the University of New Hampshire and even the University of Colorado. Vermont has built its recruitment strategy around a larger area, including the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic and other high-growth regions.

Kostell pointed out many students will still have a price incentive to stay in-state, even though the Flagship Match program walks a line between courting out-of-state students on price and still charging those students higher rates than Maine residents pay. Vermont can undercut Maine's promised discount by offering in-state students aid, dropping costs below quoted prices, she said.

"Some students may pay full tuition, but there's many who may receive some form of aid," she said.

Kostell wasn't the only admissions officer at a flagship targeted by Maine to report no noticeable hit to recruiting efforts. Many said they were aware of Maine's matching program and keeping tabs on it. But they added that they couldn't attribute any lost students to it.

Nathan Fuerst, assistant vice president for enrollment and director of admissions at the University of Connecticut, in Storrs, reported receiving 36,000 applications, with a record number coming from in-state high schools, nearly 13,000. Connecticut had yet to release deposit figures, but Fuerst said it's nearing its largest-ever intake of in-state high school seniors.

"We're capturing a larger share of a shrinking pie," Fuerst said. "I don't think they're stealing students from us."

Students surveyed have never indicated they're deciding between the Connecticut flagship and Maine, Fuerst said. Maine may be picking off a few students from many different colleges, he said. Or it's possible Maine is seeing its out-of-state bump from other, smaller public institutions.

"There are four other smaller liberal arts public universities," Fuerst said. "My instinct would be that's perhaps where they are getting their increase."

Nor did the Maine numbers take a bite out of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst's applications. Applications to that state's flagship rose by more than 900, to a new record level of 40,913. The university did not yet have data on deposits, said a spokesman, Ed Blaguszewski.

"We're confident we will have a strong year and continue to recruit outstanding students here at UMass Amherst," he said.

Farther north in Massachusetts, and closer to Maine, the University of Massachusetts at Lowell was not admitting to any losses from the tuition matching program, either. The university received 1,518 in-state deposits and 248 out-of-state deposits.

"UMass Lowell has seen increases in both applications and deposits from Massachusetts residents for fall 2016," said spokeswoman Christine Gillette in an email. "In-state deposits are up 8 percent and we are on track to enroll our largest-ever freshman class, which will also have the highest average high school GPA and SAT scores in university history."

Regardless of where the new out-of-state students are being drawn from, Maine's administration is happy to see them coming. Maine's universities face challenges in a state with the oldest median age in the country and a falling high school population, said University of Maine President Susan Hunter. The university saw a chance to stem the bleeding after tracking its out-of-state students and finding that, over the last five years, 22 percent of graduates stayed in the state.

"Frankly, we need to import people of a younger age demographic to become the educated workforce in the future," Hunter said.

Even so, Maine heard some negative feedback from families concerned about in-state students being bumped by out-of-staters. Provost Hecker acknowledged applications jumped more than ex-

pected, from 12,500 to 14,600. The university took some criticism when it instituted its wait list in March after accepting more than 11,000 students for a class expected at the time to total 2,150.

"We've heard from some guidance counselors and families saying, 'My son or daughter and my student is very strong,' " Hecker said. "The reality is, we offered people a wait list. Less than half the people who were offered it chose to go on. We're reviewing that."

Students on the wait list were being contacted starting May 6, according to Hecker. Maine's flagship expects to admit a small number of students to specific majors with ca-

pacity. All wait-listed students meeting admission criteria automatically gained acceptance at five other University of Maine System campuses.

The flagship's administration also pointed to an increase in deposits from in-state students. Maine received 1,324 deposits from in-state students, up 3 percent. That brought the incoming class to 2,447.

The co-chair of the Maine State Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs is backing the Flagship Match efforts. Republican State Senator Brian Langley said Maine graduates 12,000 high school students every year, which isn't enough to keep its universities afloat. The Flagship

Match program has captured attention while aiding Maine's finances, he said.

"I think to some degree, the University of Maine is starting to get in the heads of students a little bit," Langley said. "To go out of state and advertise that the University of Maine flagship will accept you at your in-state university tuition, which splits the difference between our out-of-state tuition and our in-state tuition, it's a win-win."

The university's administration plans to continue the Flagship Match program in the future. It will look at possible modifications over the summer that could include raising standards. ∎

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Race on Stage

By Josh Logue

A new play appearing at multiple colleges tackles campus race issues at the heart of recent protests.

COLLEGE PARK, Md. -- "I'm still processing," said one student after a Sunday matinee in March 2016 of a new play about race staged at the University of Maryland's campus here.

"I'm not going to lie," said another. "I did get pretty emotional."

Maryland is one of the first, but far from the only, college to produce a version of *Baltimore*, a play commissioned as part of the Big Ten Theatre Consortium's New Play Initiative, which aims to provide roles and opportunities for women in theater. Michigan State University staged the play in 2015, and it wrapped up a run at Boston University in February 2016. It's set to appear at the University of Iowa, the University of Nebraska, Ohio State University and more.

Although the play is called *Baltimore* -- a reference by its writer, Kirsten Greenidge, to a poem about race in that city that inspired the play -- it is set at a small liberal arts college in New England. It follows Shelby, an African-American sports medicine major, flustered student newspaper reporter and reluctant resident assistant who be-

lieves strongly, at least at first, that the country is "postracial" and that her parents and the activists in the news are trying to "pretend the last 50 years didn't happen."

After a racist caricature appears on a whiteboard outside the room of a black student, Shelby goes into hiding to avoid confronting the issue, which whirls further and further out of control as students of different races and backgrounds respond to the drawing and clash with one another over their various reactions.

"This play, it has its own sort of magic power and meaning, because right after [Greenidge] finished the first draft, the riots happened in Baltimore," said Leslie Felbain, who directed the play at Maryland and is an associate professor there in the Department of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies.

"We're working on this piece about Baltimore and racism and those riots just happened," she said.

As Greenidge was writing, students staged protests on a number of different campuses around the country, demanding their universities do more to accommodate and protect minorities. Notably, in Octo-

ber 2015, a fecal swastika also appeared in a dorm at the University of Missouri, which led, in part, to more protests and the eventual ouster of the university's president and chancellor, as well as other turmoil.

While the narrative of *Baltimore* somewhat mirrors the Missouri swastika incident and other racially tinged moments of campus vandalism, the play draws only broadly on those incidents, focusing primarily on the issues raised along the way.

"I really like that this play didn't make everything seem black and white," said Avery Collins, a theater student at Maryland who played the role of a black student who wants nothing less than to be drawn into an uncomfortable and often heated debate about race. "It gives so many perspectives without giving an answer."

"Why do you think about this stuff?" his character, Bryant, asks another black character, who tries to prod other students into confronting race head-on. "White people, they don't talk about race. They don't want to feel awful all the time."

Also represented is a white student who insists he's blind to race,

a Filipino student who pushes Shelby to confront her past and the (also white) perpetrator who says her drawing was meant as a joke.

"I personally connected with both the Latina character and the Filipino character," Rachel Kim, a junior at Maryland, said after the play. "I am Asian," she said. "I'm Korean-American … [and] a lot of times people talk about black and white, but they don't talk about the other ethnicities and other races that are included."

"They haven't had the same history as African-Americans in America, but there is a history that has affected us that isn't really brought to light," Kim said. The play touches on some of that history and, she said, it also gives a voice to people who feel confused or conflicted by these issues.

"It hit that confusion and the muckiness around all of it. It's not just something that affects just those people [directly involved in the incident]. It's something that affects most everybody, and everyone's going to have a reaction to it."

Working with actors of different ethnicities on roles that directly confront history and race was not al-

University of Maryland students in play about race on campus (Photo credit: Stan Barouh)

ways easy for Felbain, who is white. "I knew what conversations I could have with the students and what conversations were not my purview to have with them," she said. "If there was a conversation that was specific to the character that related to what it meant to be a person of color in this country, I would ask [others] to have those conversations with the people individually."

"She is very eager to learn and be educated," Collins said of working with Felbain, and he hopes other faculty and administrators come away from the play with the same attitude.

Many "aren't willing to learn or be educated," he said. Hopefully the play will show officials "how what

they might be doing can be seen as offensive to students," and open them to the possibility of changing, Collins said.

The University of Maryland also offered free tickets to resident assistants, hoping they would in turn begin a dialogue with their residents. One RA who attended the play, Javier Scott, said a similar incident actually transpired in his dorm.

"There was a racial remark or symbol that was drawn on a surface within a residence hall, and it had affected the whole community," he said, though he wouldn't go into further detail.

The play's message resonated with him, however. "The way that the play ended is very indicative of the way the conversation is," Scott said.

"There is no end, and I don't think there will be an end, and I don't think there should be an end. This is something we need to continuously talk about and continuously understand."

The play, he said, is about "an ongoing conversation that's always expanding with so many different perspectives, and the only thing you can really do sometimes is sit down and talk about it." ∎

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/03/03/new-big-ten-initiative-play-baltimore-confronts-race-campus

A College Rejects Posse

By Josh Logue

Grinnell severs ties with a well-respected organization that sends groups of low-income and minority students to elite colleges. Many on campus are unhappy about the move.

Grinnell College announced in April 2016 that it would end its relationship with the Posse Foundation. Each year for 14 years, Posse sent to Grinnell two groups of 10 students who might not otherwise have attended or thought they would have been able to afford education at a small, competitive liberal arts college. Posse students pay no tuition and are paired with a campus mentor who provides support and guidance. In a model that has worked for many, the students come in a cohort, or posse, so that they have an automatic support group of students like themselves on an otherwise foreign campus.

"Posse has helped us to pursue our goals for diversity and student success and grow as a diverse institution," said Raynard Kington, Grinnell's president, in a memo announcing the decision. "We are interested in a more comprehensive approach to achieving our goals for diversity and overall student success. Posse's model dedicates extensive resources toward small cohorts of students."

In the memo, Kington said that with Posse's aid, about a quarter of each freshman class are "students from underrepresented backgrounds."

"The question is not 'Is Posse a great program?' " said Michael Latham, dean and vice president for academic affairs at Grinnell, in an email to *Inside Higher Ed*. "It certainly is, and it has a remarkable record. The question is, 'Which approaches are most suited to meeting our students' needs and the goals of the college?' ... We are, in short, planning for a more comprehensive strategy. In that context, we concluded that although Posse brought us great students, we needed to shift our approach."

"Saving money was not part of the motivation for the change," he said. Rather, Latham noted this new approach would cost "substantially more," but did not expand further. "We respect and understand [Posse scholars'] disappointment and frustration with the college's decision," he added. "We also hope that, given our shared goals to promote diver-

sity and student leadership, they will join us in helping to design and implement a new program."

Many, on campus and off, are unhappy with the decision.

"We think it's a mistake," said Debbie Bial, president and founder of the Posse Foundation. "We think the partnership has been great, period. I can't explain to you how disappointed we are because we now lose this opportunity."

Only a "handful" of colleges have severed their relationships with Posse in the past, Bial said. "It's so unusual for something like this to happen, we don't sometimes understand the reasons ourselves, frankly." Particularly, she said, in light of

how successful Grinnell's Posse students have been and how integrated they became in the fabric of campus. Roughly 80 Posse scholars attend the college, and many of them seek out leadership positions on campus.

Academically, Bial said, Posse students at Grinnell perform comparably to the student body as a whole, and their graduation rates have been over 90 percent for the last five or six years.

"It's not just about the cancellation of something that's been working," she said. "It such an important way of building diversity in a campus community and engaging the community, especially when it's working. We want to see it continue."

A letter addressed to the president, signed by hundreds of alumni, reads in part, "The memo suggests that our campus is so diverse that we have outgrown Posse. Many alumni, Posse and otherwise, would disagree. The memo also implies that a Posse presence on campus is incompatible with our comprehensive approach to diversity and success. We don't understand how this could be the case. Shouldn't Posse be a part of our comprehensive approach?"

"We are worried," it says, "that this decision is the wrong one for Grinnell because our partnership with the Posse Foundation is constitutive of the college's commitment to diversity."

A video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4WEbC8u7qk) posted by a onetime Posse mentor, Doug Cutchins, who no longer works at Grinnell, said that when he heard the news, "I was angry. I was frustrated. I was hurt." But he goes on to encourage current students, alumni and faculty not to break their ties with the college over the decision.

"I've never seen a petition drive work at Grinnell. I think this is a final decision, I think this a done deal, and I think that it is wasted energy to try to reverse that decision."

Rather, Cutchins encourages people, and faculty especially, to push for answers and information about the decision.

Earlier in 2016, the university decided not to accept a new posse from New Orleans, said Mark Levandoski, another posse mentor and professor of neuroscience at Grinnell. "What we were told by the president [then] is that the college and Posse Foundation agreed that they really weren't going to discuss the decision further, that there were confidential matters involved and they just weren't going to talk about it," he said. "I can say that none of us felt very confident through those months that it looked good for a continuing relationship."

"If we can be told that we've learned a lot from Posse and that it's been a good program, one has to ask the question why would you cancel the program," he said. "It remains unclear to me how simply discontinuing this program and saying that we'll do these things, when there's no evidence that they're doing these things, how those two things fit together." ∎

For Black Men

By Jake New

UConn creates new living and learning space for African-American male students. Some see overdue attention to this group's needs. Others see segregation.

The University of Connecticut announced in January 2016 that it is creating a living-learning community for African-American male students, drawing praise from researchers concerned with the low graduation rates of -- and racism against -- black men on college campuses, and criticism from those who view the plan as racial and gender segregation.

Freshmen and sophomores will begin living in the Scholastic House of Leaders who are African-American Researchers and Scholars -- or ScHOLA2RS House -- this fall. While male students of any race may apply to the program, it is designed to "support the scholastic efforts of male students who identify as African-American," the university's description of the program says.

UConn's announcement of the new house comes at a time of heightened debate about race on campus, in the wake of protests at colleges nationwide in the fall. While many colleges over the years have had living spaces that were described primarily for those interested in African-American, Latino or Asian culture, and that have housed primarily or entirely groups of people who are black, Latino or Asian, those colleges have generally stressed that the key factor was the shared interest in a culture, not identity as a member of a group.

The UConn announcement, however, follows student protests that have demanded ethnic-based housing, citing hostile environments they face on campus. And UConn is not alone. In January 2016, the University of Iowa announced a similar living-learning community, and Princeton University has created several "affinity rooms" in its Fields Center for Equality and Cultural Understanding, in which students of various races and ethnicities can gather.

"It's a learning community based on bringing African-American males into a setting where not only will they be with like-minded students, but a setting that is focused on graduate school and professional school," Erik Hines, the UConn program's faculty director and an assis-

Sketch of UConn building, under construction, that will house new program

tant professor at the university's department of education psychology, said. "All students at the University of Connecticut are bright, exceptional and smart. These students come in here with that same potential with the ability to be successful, but there are also these transition issues."

Researchers have found that black students face a number of barriers to finding college success on predominantly white campuses. They

struggle with underrepresentation, social isolation, academic hurdles and racial stereotyping from both their peers and their professors.

African-American students report feeling less mentally prepared than white students do but are less likely to seek help for mental health concerns, according to a study by the Jed Foundation, an organization that works with colleges to prevent campus suicides, and the Steve Fund, a new group dedicated to studying and improving the mental health of students of color.

At Connecticut, the six-year graduation rate for African-American male students is about 54 percent, while the rate of white male students is 80 percent.

"It's important that people understand that black women also experience stereotypes and racism on campus, but there are certain experiences that are uniquely gendered," said Shaun Harper, who, as founder and executive director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, studies the effects stereotyping can have on black students.

For a recent article published in *Harvard Education Review,* Harper interviewed nearly 150 black male students at 30 predominantly white public and private institutions. All but two of the students reported dealing with racist stereotypes on campus. The students frequently reported being asked by white students about their presumed dancing, rapping and athletic abilities. Many of the students, including prominent members of student governments, said they were sometimes mistaken for drug dealers by white students.

> **It's important that people understand that black women also experience stereotypes and racism on campus, but there are certain experiences that are uniquely gendered.**

"One of the things that I consistently hear from people is they thought they were the only ones who were having these experiences," Harper said. "Being the only one or one of the only few in every class you take is a common experience for black male students at predominantly white institutions. Having a deliberately crafted space like this is important. They can receive validation. It can make them feel like they're not crazy or overreacting. They can learn strategies from each other about how to navigate the university."

The creation of such spaces was a prominent theme in the protests against campus racism that swept across college campuses last semester, though the University of Connecticut began planning its new living-learning community prior to the height of fall 2015 demonstrations across the country.

The university received a $300,000 grant in June from the Booth Ferris Foundation to create the program.

Hines said the social component of ScHOLA2RS House is important, but there will be just as much focus on academic planning.

The roughly 40 students in the program will receive intensive counseling, as well as mentoring from upperclassmen. "We're also going to connect them with more African-American male faculty," Hines said. "And we'll help them with balancing their course loads."

So far, 12 students have contacted the university about living in the ScHOLA2RS House.

Reaction on campus and elsewhere has been mixed. On social media, some students lamented the fact that the program is focused only on men.

Others argued that the initiative is discriminatory and a form of racial segregation.

"If there was a Caucasian learning community, it would be a national headline," a user on the popular website Reddit wrote. "But an all-black learning community is totally acceptable. That is racist. That is discrimination."

Roger Clegg, president and general counsel of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a group that opposes affirmative action, said if any student can participate in ScHOLA2RS House, the program is not illegal, though he is still not a fan of the

concept's focus on helping only black male students.

"Forget about this nonsense and just treat students without regard to skin color," Clegg said. "If there are students of color who are at risk or who could use some access to special programs, that's fine, but schools shouldn't be using race as a proxy for who's at risk and who's going to have a hard time as a student. There are lots of African-American students who come from advantaged backgrounds. And lots of non-African-American students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds."

Stephanie Reitz, a spokeswoman for the University of Connecticut, blamed much of the criticism on misconceptions about the program. For years, female Connecticut students have already lived and learned in the Women in Math, Science and Engineering House.

Other colleges, such as California State University, offer race-specific learning communities, she noted.

ScHOLA2RS House will not be a segregated residence hall, Reitz said, but will be situated within a larger -- still under construction -- living-learning center that will include several programs and 700 other students.

"We're not reinventing the wheel with this," she said. "If other students are interested in a similar residential experience, we are always open to looking at more communities to add to those already on campus.

"In fact, we've made a commitment to expand our learning communities," Reitz added, "so we encourage students to bring their ideas to us, and to help us develop the kinds of housing experiences they would find valuable." ∎

What the Protests Mean

By Scott Jaschik

As anger over race relations leads to rallies, sit-ins and several prominent resignations of administrators, experts consider the messages, the tactics and the backlash.

The protest movement that started at the University of Missouri at Columbia in the fall of 2015 has outlasted the president of the University of Missouri System, who resigned in November 2015. While Missouri had some unique factors, in particular a boycott started by the black members of the football team, campuses nationwide are seeing protests by students over racial tensions without the benefit of support from football teams. Some of the protests are expressions of solidarity with the black students at Missouri, but many go beyond that to talk about racial conditions on their own campuses, which many describe as poor.

The movement is showing up at large campuses and small, elite and not-so-elite institutions, campuses with strong histories of student activism and not. On some campuses the focus is on issues experienced by black students, while on others the discussion is about many minority groups. More protests are planned.

As the weekend ended, students who had been staging a sit-in in the library at Amherst College, with a long list of demands, agreed to leave, despite not getting their demands met. At the University of Kansas, minority students are de-manding the resignation of student government leaders who they say haven't done enough for all students, and an alumnus has started a hunger strike on campus -- all on a campus that recently held a lengthy open forum on race relations with the university president, who issued a statement of support for minority students.

The protests are also provoking considerable backlash -- with online threats appearing at many campuses. While the threats have led to several arrests, without indications that those posting the threats actually intended to carry them out, these actions have caused fear at many campuses.

At Claremont McKenna College, where a dean resigned after protests over comments she made that many found offensive, scores of students are circulating a letter

saying that the pro-test movement there -- while motivated by valid concerns -- has gone too far. "It is time for the demonstrations and the hostile rhetoric to stop," the letter says. The letter also ques-tions tactics, such as hunger strikes, over a dean's statement. "A hunger strike implies that you are willing to die for the cause you strike for …. You ask what the alternative is. It sits in front of you, a petition, a civil and democrat-ic tool. Instead you accuse the dean of not caring about your health and not listening to you when you chose to starve yourself."

Some online are questioning the veracity of the grievances raised by the protests, with one conser-vative website publishing a widely distributed article suggesting that a swastika made of feces -- one of the incidents cited by black students at Missouri -- could be a "giant hoax." The university has since released a police report that in fact officers found just what students had cited.

The protests are becoming a po-litical issue. President Obama, in an interview with ABC News, said that there was "clearly a problem" at the University of Missouri and that he applauded students who engaged in "thoughtful, peaceful" protest. "I want an activist student body," he said. At the same time, President Obama called on activists to spend

Protests (clockwise from top left) at U of Missouri, Claremont McKenna, U of Iowa, Amherst and Ithaca

time listening to those with whom they disagree, and to reject such tactics as trying to block speakers with whom they disagree. "That's a recipe for dogmatism," he said.

Also, leading candidates for the Democratic and Republican nom-inations to succeed Obama have weighed in on the protest move-ment, the Democrats sympatheti-cally and the Republicans critically.

The terrorist attacks in Paris prompted a new wave of charges and countercharges about the pro-tests on American campuses, with some saying that the attacks show how fortunate American students are and many protesting students saying that the tragedy in France has nothing to do with what they have been talking about. On Satur-day, the University of Missouri is-sued a statement to denounce what it called "false social media reports" that people supporting the protest movement were upset that Paris was "diverting media attention."

A more serious backlash has tak-

en place with pundits, many of whom have questioned whether actions by some pro-test organizers and supporters run count-er to freedom of ex-pression.

Amid all of these developments, what exactly is going on? Experts in race re-lations, student life and campus activism reach no consensus about the protest movement and its meaning. But from discussions with them and the words of protest organizers, some themes emerge:

• Many black and other minority students don't feel welcome and included on predominantly white campuses, and the incidents they are speaking out about are hard-ly new, but have been going on for some time. Students are speaking out as much about everyday stereo-typing they receive (assumptions that they must be athletes, must not be smart, might be dangerous, etc.) as about racial incidents (although there are plenty of them, too). And students aren't just speaking out about stereotyping by fellow stu-dents, but by faculty members as well.

• Recent off-campus protest movements -- in particular Black Lives Matter and to some extent the Occupy movement -- have changed the nature of black student organiz-ing on campuses. This isn't just in the use of social media to organize

and publicize protests, but a willingness to make demands not with the expectation of getting all (or even most) of them met, but as a way to shift public agendas and to get issues on the agenda.

• Campus presidents matter a lot to many minority students. While the conventional critique of college and university presidents is that they are distant from most students, minority student leaders increasingly expect their campus leaders to be doing more than listening to them at protests, but to be taking public stands and following through with policies that they care about.

• Issues related to free expression, which have come up at some (but not all) of the protests and attracted considerable attention, reflect increasing distrust by many minority students of the press and government institutions.

• A huge question mark of concern to many in higher education is whether the protests will have an impact on the enrollment decisions of today's minority high school students.

Feeling Hostility on a Daily Basis

The various protests -- from Missouri on -- have had a range of prompts and grievances. But experts on minority students point to a common feature that is evident as black students across the country have taken to social media to describe why they are frustrated. They report experiencing constant questions and comments that relate to their race.

"When you're the only black student in class & [are] asked, 'are you sure you're in the right class?' " was the way one poster to the #blackoncampus hashtag put it. Or as a Purdue University student stated on a similar hashtag for Purdue students, "When you're told you should consider changing your major because you aren't going to go far." (Students at Purdue rallied as well, as seen in photo below.)

Many other posts relate to what students experience from their roommates and classmates -- questions suggesting that they should speak for all people of their race/ethnicity, questions about growing up in the ghetto (asked of black people who grew up in middle-class neighborhoods but are assumed to be poor), questions about whether they are athletes, as if that's the only way they could have been admitted. And minority students say that they are constantly

belittled, sometimes in threatening ways, on Yik Yak, a popular anonymous social media app.

Experts on race relations note that while critics of the protest movement may focus on demands that strike some as excessive, this common frustration is pretty much just a desire to be treated decently. (These complaints are about what some call microaggressions, a term used by many protest supporters and a term mocked by many protest critics.)

Shaun R. Harper, founder and executive director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania, does many studies of campus climate.

He said that on campus after campus, he and his colleagues conduct interviews with black and other minority students and find what he calls "onlyness," the feeling of being one or one of a few members of a group, and of being misunderstood and frequently insulted and/or ignored. He said that the interviews he conducts, frequently not at places experiencing the attention and protests of recent weeks, end with students and interviewers in tears, talking about isolation, stereotypes and a lack of inclusiveness. "It's every single time," Harper said.

Harper said he hopes there is "a takeaway" from the recent protests that "people need to finally understand that these issues are very real, and that people experience them much more frequently than they should, and that people are tired of

being blown off about these issues."

Beverly Daniel Tatum, president emerita of Spelman College, and author of *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (Basic Books), said she is sad but not surprised that so many black students on so many campuses report experiencing regular comments that stereotype them. Tatum said that periods of increased diversity in American society create anxiety for many white people, especially in difficult economic times. And that is taking place, she said, at a period in which numerous studies have found that the segregation of neighborhoods and high schools is increasing, not decreasing.

"These comments are all very familiar, and people think it should be different, but the social context is not," Tatum said. "The students showing up on those campuses are coming out of segregated neighborhoods and segregated schools," where they have not necessarily had the chance to have meaningful friendships with people of other races and gotten to know them as individuals. They are more likely to have their views formed "from watching television," and falling into stereotype, she said.

Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, is the co-author of *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today's College Student* (Jossey-Bass), an in-depth look at college students based on research of 5,000 students at 270 colleges between 2006 and 2011.

In *Tightrope,* Levine argued that race relations were improving on campus. The survey research he did, compared to previous surveys, found more students than in the past reporting meaningful friendships with other-race students, more support for interracial dating, and more people thinking that diversity and inclusiveness were important qualities for colleges.

Now, Levine fears, the trend is in the opposite direction. "I think colleges and universities have squandered an excellent opportunity to work on relations among students of different races," he said. The years since 2011 should have seen colleges making a high priority of thinking about how to make colleges more inclusive, but he said he hasn't seen as much of it, and that may explain some of the tensions becoming more evident.

Black Lives Matter and Societal Tensions

Levine also sees campus tensions and protests reflecting changes in American society in the past few years. The constant reports about unarmed young black men being killed by white police officers, he said, change the views of many young people.

Sean M. Decatur has, as president of Kenyon College, tried to promote inclusivity on his campus. When many campuses were grappling with racist, sexist and homophobic comments posted on Yik Yak, he promoted an approach in which students took to social media with positive messages about a sense of community and respect for diversity.

He spoke in an interview after a day when he spent time with Kenyon students talking about how they might respond to the protests at Missouri and elsewhere. He said students are thoughtful, but many people in American society are perhaps less so.

"In many ways, the past few years have been a pretty divisive time in American culture more broadly, whether you look at it through the lens of issues brought by Ferguson and the Black Lives Matter movement, or larger political polarization that's happening in the country, or the segmentation of conversations due to social media, where people shout at each other."

Eddie Comeaux, associate professor of higher education at the University of California at Riverside, who studies minority college students, among other subjects, said that he believes many minority students are "finding their voices" and also their tactics in the Black Lives Matter movement. The movement showed that students need not have a formal organizational structure or engage in weeks of planning to pull off a protest that will attract atten-

tion. And the urgency of the Black Lives Matter message -- sparked by the deaths of young black men -- is inspiring to many students.

Social media makes communication easy, he said, and the protests are building on other protests. Social media also makes it clear to black students who feel alienated on campuses that they are not the only ones with those feelings or a desire for change.

The Buck Stops Where?

The Missouri protests started with the goal of removing a university system president, Tim Wolfe, who was criticized for not responding to a series of incidents that black students said hindered their educations. The chancellor of the flagship campus at Columbia also resigned his position. At Ithaca College, protests are demanding the ouster of Tom Rochon as president (see photo above). Students and some faculty members accuse him of not doing enough when black students and an alumna experienced racist treatment on campus.

The demands on presidents ex-

tend in some cases beyond specific incidents to broad social and historical issues. For example, the students who were sitting in at Amherst's library have as their first demand that "President [Biddy] Martin must issue a statement of apology to students, alumni and former students, faculty, administration and staff who have been victims of several injustices including but not limited to our institutional legacy of white supremacy, colonialism, anti-black racism, anti-Latinx racism, anti-Native American racism, anti-Native/indigenous racism, anti-Asian racism, anti-Middle Eastern racism, heterosexism, cis-sexism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, ableism, mental health stigma and classism."

Angus Johnston, a scholar of student movements who teaches at Hostos Community College and runs the Student Activism blog, said that the pushes for presidential action are in part a reaction to trends in higher education, not just the actions of individual presidents.

"Over the course of the last 30 years or so, we have seen a steady erosion of students' power in the university," he said. So students are frustrated that they feel college leaders don't listen, but many don't have much experience in knowing what presidents can and can't do, or how to ask. "Students are demand-

ing that administrators do things to appease them. If you don't have any experience of having actual power in the university, you have to learn as you go" in negotiations, he said.

"People who are disempowered make symbolic demands," he added.

Presidents have been responding in a variety of ways. Many have been showing up at protests, even when they are criticized while mobile phones record the interactions. Wolfe of Missouri held a series of meetings with those protesting at Missouri before he was ousted, constantly saying that he appreciated the issues that they were raising.

Several presidents, including Rochon, have responded to protests by creating new chief diversity officer positions. Here is Ithaca's announcement of the new position. The University of Missouri System announced the creation of a chief diversity, inclusion and equity officer.

Some student protests at institutions without these positions are demanding their creation. And many chief diversity officers say that they play a key role.

But Levine of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation warned that, in the current environment, presidents can be at risk if they delegate diversity issues and don't stay personally, directly involved, as students are demanding. Making sure that there is someone whose job this is, full time, makes sense, he said. But that doesn't deal with the presidential role.

"At this point, it would be a wonderful thing for presidents to step out and say, 'I think this is a really important issue, and I'm going to take charge of the issue,'" he said.

Harper, of Penn, said that presidents may be engaged in "listening" right now, but that they must move beyond that to taking concrete steps appropriate to their campuses, or they risk losing credibility. And they need to show, he said, "that they are feeling" what students are talking about, not just nodding in a meeting.

Tatum, the president emerita of Spelman, said it may be hard for some presidents to deliver on all the expectations students have for them.

She said, for example, that presidents "don't control everything people on campus say or do," and may not be able to prevent individuals from doing things that cause offense. And she said that presidents have to remember that they must constantly demonstrate their commitments to new groups of students. The students one worked with, and built trust with, a few years ago, graduate and move on, she said, so a new group of students may not remember or care what you have accomplished in the past. And she said that sometimes students "imagine discussions in the back room" (against their interests) that just aren't taking place.

At the same time, she said, presidents do make a difference, and not only with their policies. "The campus leader has to set the tone," she said.

In a statement responding to the Amherst protests in November, Martin said she strongly supports the goals of the protesting students to bring more attention to issues of race and inequity -- and pledged to do more to make Amherst supportive of all students.

But she also said that she could not and should not act by herself on many of the demands. "I explained that the formulation of those demands assumed more authority and control than a president has or should have," she said. "The forms of distributed authority and shared governance that are integral to our educational institutions require consultation and thoughtful collaboration."

Free Speech and the Protest Movement

Several campuses experiencing protests have also seen intense debates over accusations that the protest participants and/or their demands squelch free expression. At Missouri, students and a professor blocked access to a student journalist to protest spaces that were on open areas of a public university's campus. And protest organizers sent out messages on social media questioning whether the press should be there -- even though the protest organized had invited press coverage. The protest movement, under intense criticism, reversed course and encouraged those protesting to be respectful of press rights, and the professor apologized. But many saw Missouri as part of a pattern.

At Yale University, students are demanding the dismissal of an associate master of a residential college (though not necessarily from an instructor role) because she sent out an email questioning whether concern over offensive Halloween costumes had gone too far.

At Amherst, one of the demands of the students who were occupying the library is that President Martin "issue a statement to the Amherst College community at large that states we do not tolerate the actions of student(s) who posted the 'All Lives Matter' posters, and the 'Free Speech' posters that stated that 'in memoriam of the true victim of the Missouri Protests: Free Speech.' Also let the student body know that it was racially insensitive to the students of color on our college campus and beyond who are victim to racial harassment and death threats; alert them that Student Affairs may require them to go through the disciplinary process if a formal complaint is filed, and that they will be required to attend extensive training for racial and cultural competency."

The "All Lives Matter" posters are an example of a response by some critics of Black Lives Matter. And the "Free Speech" poster (on next page) was in response to the actions at the University of Missouri (which have since been disavowed).

The text of the poster that Amherst students want declared unacceptable:

"In memoriam of the true victim of

the Missouri protests: Free Speech (1776-2015). Who is constrained by the invisible barriers of our generation's safe spaces. Censored for the open forum of non-conflicting opinions. Trod upon to build a community of comfort. And violently persecuted for a safer, less vitriolic world. Let us honor the life of the First Amendment, and the heroes it protected: Journalists, educators, philosophers and free thinkers everywhere."

Andrew Lindsay, a senior at Amherst and spokesman for the Amherst Uprising, as the movement there is called, said he was aware of but did not agree with the criticism that these demands squelched free expression. He stressed that the group was not saying that those found to have put up such posters should be expelled, only that they go through mediation "so that students can come to a mutual understanding." He said that these posters "really affect the ability of students to be comfortable here." If mediation did not work, he said, then it would be possible for the college to discipline these students.

The various Amherst incidents have brought on much commentary suggesting that the protest movements are hostile to free expression. Amherst students, by protesting a poster called "Free Speech," may have been walking right into that criticism. "Amherst Activists Demand Re-Education for Students Who Celebrated Free Speech," says a headline in *The Daily Caller.*

But the criticism isn't just coming
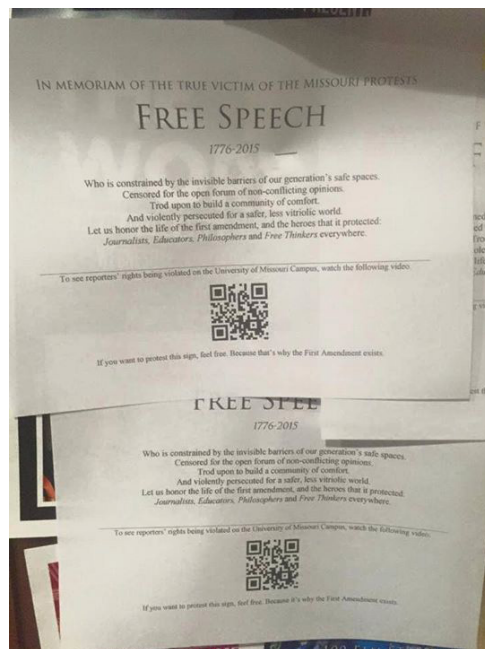
from the conservative press. *The Atlantic* is writing about "The New Intolerance of Student Activism." And *New York* magazine is asking: "Can We Start Taking Political Correctness Seriously Now?"

To observers who are sympathetic with the frustrations of minority students, and their right to protest, the current discussions point both to the need for discussions about language and about the free expression rights of everyone.

Decatur of Kenyon said that as he has watched the debate over free expression, he has become concerned about "the conflation of 'safe space' and 'comfortable space'" in the comments of many people. He says colleges have an obligation to provide the former, but not the latter. By "safe space" (a term much criticized in critical commentary about the recent protests), Decatur said he means "a place where you can express ideas and hear ideas in

such a way that you are not going to be attacked personally for who you are," whether that is based on gender, race, sexual orientation or any other factor about a student as an individual.

But just because people shouldn't be attacked for who they are, he said, doesn't mean anyone should get a pass on criticism of the content of their ideas. "Your ideas may be rigorously challenged" and you "may not be comfortable," Decatur said, and that should be fine with college leaders.

Johnston of Hostos said that some of the criticism of student activists over free expression issues seems to him to be one-sided. He said that many, many people have been suggesting that the protest movement pack up and go home, and that such requests are themselves anti-free expression.

Or take the demand that Yale fire an associate master for her controversial email. Johnston noted that she was acting as a student affairs administrator, not a faculty member. He said that she had a First Amendment right to send out her email. But so do students have a right to call for her removal. "I don't believe administrators have a First Amendment right to be freed from student appeals for their dismissal," he said.

As to the Amherst demands, he said some readings do indeed raise free expression concerns -- and this bothers him.

But he said that while it is easy to criticize any denial of free expression, the more difficult question

may be to ask why the distrust of journalists and of the benefits of free expression exists.

"It is not surprising to me that student activists of color are more suspicious of the press today than many student activists, white or students of color, have been in the past," he said.

Quite aside from the ethical issues involved, Johnston said that "it's generally not wise to alienate the press."

But he added that "the suspicion that lots of folks have about the intentions of the press and what they can expect is grounded in real-life experience."

Martin, the Amherst president, did not agree to the demands of the protest movement with regard to the signs they find offensive. But she said this about the issue of free speech: "The college also has a foundational and inviolable duty to promote free inquiry and expression, and our commitment to them must be unshakable if we are to remain a college worthy of the name. The commitments to freedom of inquiry and expression and to inclusivity are not mutually exclusive, in principle, but they can and do come into conflict with one another. Honoring both is the challenge we have to meet together, as a community. It is a challenge that all of higher education needs to meet," she said.

"Those who have immediately accused students in Frost [the library] of threatening freedom of speech or of making speech 'the victim' are making hasty judgments. While those accusations are also legitimate forms of free expression, their timing can seem, ironically, to be aimed at inhibiting the speech of those who have struggled and now succeeded in making their stories known on campus.

"The shredding and removal overnight of protesters' postings, which were reported to me this morning, is, on the other hand, unacceptable behavior according to the student Honor Code."

What About Next Year's Students?

One of the questions being anxiously asked by those involved in college admissions as these protests have spread is whether they will have an impact on students' decisions on whether and where to enroll.

Harper of Penn said that "this is a real opportunity for minority-serving institutions to help students understand that there are postsecondary options in which they won't be constantly microaggressed, in which expectations won't be low."

But as he said that, Harper said he was uncomfortable with that message for the future freshmen -- not because he doubts the value

of minority-serving institutions, but because of the opportunities that are right for some students at predominantly white institutions. "If we go too far in that message" about minority-serving institutions, "it lets predominantly white institutions off the hook and you can just say that you shouldn't bother going to the University of Missouri."

Eli Clarke, director of college counseling at Gonzaga College High School, a Jesuit high school in Washington, D.C., that educates many minority students, said that it may be early to say what impact the protests will have. Right now, he said, seniors are scrambling to finish applications and so it may be a few months, when they are weighing options, that they will focus on the issues raised by the protests.

He said that his minority students ask questions about the issues raised by the protests, but don't use the same language. They are less likely to ask, "Is there a critical mass of black students?" than they are to ask whether someone from the high school, a year or so ahead, applied and enrolled at the college.

And while they don't use terms like "campus climate," Clarke said he gets lots of versions of a question that may not be answered well if students read about the protests. The question students ask him: "Can I find a home there?" ∎

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/11/16/experts-consider-what-protests-over-racial-tensions-mean

The Ignored Graduates

By Ellen Wexler

In federal graduation rates, part-time students and transfers aren't counted. #CountAllStudents wants to tell those graduates' stories.

After two years at the University of Richmond, Susannah Haisley felt her education was getting too expensive. So she transferred to Clemson University, in her home state of South Carolina, with a generous scholarship package.

She graduated in May 2016. But in federal databases, her diploma will not count.

The federal graduation rate includes only first-time, full-time students. More than half of all bachelor's degree recipients attend more than one college, and millions of students who transferred or enrolled part time are excluded every year.

"I've done everything just like a normal student has," Haisley said. "I just don't understand why I wouldn't be counted."

Now, as graduation season approaches, an initiative led by several major higher education groups wants to put faces to the statistics. A new campaign, called #CountAllStudents, will compile stories of students like Haisley -- those who are set to graduate in 2016 but aren't counted in federal data.

Critics argue that the federal data misrepresent colleges' success rates and favor some colleges over others. Institutions with traditional students -- just out of high school, studying full time, planning to stay in one place -- are at an advantage.

Right now, the federal data are widely accepted: prospective students use federal graduation rates during the college search. Policy makers use the data to make judgments about colleges' performance, and institutions use the data to guide their own policies.

"If they aren't able to use the accurate metrics, they won't really have any idea if their rates for transfer students are better than their peer institutions," said Christine Keller, executive director of the Student Achievement Measure, which is coordinating #CountAllStudents.

A few years ago, the six major groups that represent college and university presidents created the Student Achievement Measure as an alternative to the federal graduation rate. For colleges that partici-

pate, the Student Achievement Measure tracks full-time, part-time and transfer students, and captures the outcomes of an additional 600,000 students compared to the federal graduation rate each year.

Now, the idea is to make a point through stories, rather than numbers. Instead of listing the statistics, #CountAllStudents includes names, photographs, career goals.

"It's not just a data conversation," said Keller, who is also a vice president at the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, which is one of the groups behind the Student Achievement Measure. "These are real transfer students and real part-time students. We want to connect the need for better metrics with the students who are not being counted."

There's Crystal Hagerman, a transfer student and business management major at Doane University, who plans to get a master's in leadership or project management. There's Demian Brunty, who started working toward a degree in 1997, put his education on hold and will

graduate from Indiana University Northwest. These students' diplomas don't mean anything less, the higher ed groups argue, and their stories deserve to be told.

But in the meantime, the data are getting less valuable by the day, because student demographics are changing, and more nontraditional students are pursuing degrees. When the federal graduation rate's methodology was created, back in the '90s, greater proportions of students followed a traditional path.

"At that point," Keller said, "the federal graduation rate was a more accurate representation of the students attending our campuses."

Right now, nearly 600 colleges participate in the Student Achievement Measure. Most of those are four-year publics, while an additional 81 are two-year publics and 56 are four-year private nonprofits.

Participation is voluntary -- but if all institutions used the tool, nearly two million students that the federal graduation rate excludes would be counted.

But individual stories are personal, and many nontraditional graduates have had to navigate more obstacles along the way, Keller said.

After reading students' stories, she hopes colleges will be more motivated to sign up. "When you start tying the need for better metrics to real, live students who have graduated," she said, "I think that can only help." ∎

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/05/05/stories-students-not-counted-federal-graduation-rates

Phase 2 of Completion

By Paul Fain

Sinclair Community College boosted student completion rates by 75 percent, but to sharpen its focus, the college began cutting some of its more than 100 completion-related projects.

Few colleges have signed onto the national college completion agenda with as much vigor as Sinclair Community College. And while national graduation rates have seen only a slow inching up, Sinclair has managed a big jump.

The two-year college, in Dayton, Ohio, first began working to improve student success in a systematic way back in 2000. That was when Sinclair was picked by the League for Innovation in the Community College as one of its Vanguard Learning Colleges -- a recognition of institutions that made "learner-centric" completion a central goal.

Since then Sinclair has tried over 100 completion-related projects, ranging from participation in Completion by Design to making new student orientation mandatory and conducting interventions in local high schools.

"Every department on campus is focused on increasing student completion," said Kathleen Cleary, Sinclair's associate provost for student success, a position the college created in 2011.

However, the college has begun pruning its student success portfolio, to sharpen its focus and concentrate on what works. One recent trim has been its participation in Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit with more than 200 community college members.

The college's various completion initiatives fit into seven categories, Cleary said. They include teaching and learning, student engagement, K-12 partnerships, student orientation and advising, career exploration and workforce connections, streamlining the pathway to a degree and student support services. Last June Sinclair released a completion plan

that describes the various pieces and overarching strategy.

"They're doing everything," said Mark Milliron, a former official with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and president of WGU Texas. Milliron is a co-founder and chief learning officer at Civitas Learning, a student-success oriented company that offers predictive analytics to colleges, which Sinclair uses.
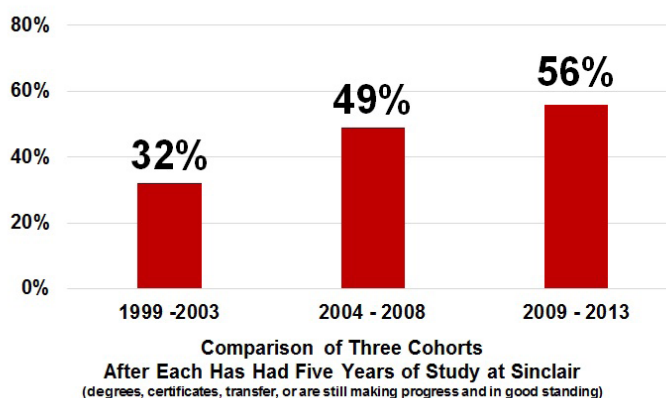
The time, effort and money -- much of it coming from foundations like Gates -- is paying off.

Sinclair, an urban college that enrolls about 24,000 students, created its own metric to track completion rates. It looked at three groups of students during five-year periods after they first enrolled.

Less than a third of students who enrolled in 1999 earned degrees or certificates, transferred or were still enrolled in good standing and making progress toward a credential by 2003. However, that number rose to 56 percent for the group of students Sinclair tracked between 2009 and 2013, a 75 percent increase (see chart, to the left).

Sinclair Student Success Rates are Climbing
75% Increase (24 pts.) over the Past 10 Years

	1999 -2003	2004 - 2008	2009 - 2013
	32%	49%	56%

Comparison of Three Cohorts
After Each Has Had Five Years of Study at Sinclair
(degrees, certificates, transfer, or are still making progress and in good standing)

Sinclair has had stable, committed leadership for a long time. Steven L. Johnson arrived at Sinclair as chief operating officer 15 years ago. He became president three years later, in 2002. That continuity is a big plus for making graduation rate improvements, said several experts on student completion.

The college also has had outside funding for some of its student success work.

"They were supported by foundations to come into Achieving the Dream," said Carol Lincoln, a senior vice president for the nonprofit completion group. "They've got a resource base that's quite different than other institutions."

Even so, Sinclair has made unusual progress.

Nationwide, the percentage of adults who hold college credentials only increased 2.1 percentage points between 2008 and 2013, to 40 percent, according to the Lumina Foundation. And the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center said only 39 percent of community college students who first enrolled in 2008 earned a college credential by 2014.

Amicable Split

After 15 years, Sinclair has reached a rare form of maturity in its approach to student success. As evidence of this shift, the college has begun contemplating how to pare back, by eliminating some completion-related programs so it can focus on others.

"We haven't always been good at stopping," Cleary said.

That's hardly unique in higher education, which is an additive industry. Ask a college president which programs he or she has cut in recent years and you're likely to hear a dodge or a long-winded version of "none."

As a result, some faculty members complain of "initiative fatigue," which can also be a big drain on institutional research departments.

"You have to have focus," said Josh Wyner, vice president and executive director of the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute. "You need a real commitment to analysis of what works."

A notable example of Sinclair making hard choices to cut back is its recent decision to suspend its formal relationship with Achieving the Dream.

The split was amicable. But it was still disappointing to Achieving the Dream, said Lincoln.

Achieving the Dream's 200 community college members pay dues to participate in data-driven completion work. The group seeks to help colleges make deep, lasting changes to help more students get to the finish line.

Sinclair signed up in 2004, as one of Achieving the Dream's second group of participants. Since then Achieving the Dream has recognized Sinclair as a "leader" college for its progress.

"They felt like they had been in long enough that they had learned what to do," Lincoln said of Sinclair. "What they're doing is really impressive."

One reason for the departure, Cleary said, was that the group requires colleges to report a large amount of data on an annual basis. Sinclair currently is required to send similar data reports to the feds, the Ohio Board of Regents, and local and national foundations.

"In an environment where we have to use resources as efficiently as possible, it did not make sense for us to continue to commit financial human resources to writing reports and providing data on an annual basis for Achieving the Dream," Cleary said via email. "Our current student success work has benefited greatly from our early work with Achieving the Dream and we will continue to share learning with the AtD network as opportunities arise."

Both the college and Achieving the Dream said they plan to maintain ties. For example, Cleary will speak at one of the group's events this year.

Some community colleges have taken a break and later returned to participating in Achieving the Dream, including New Mexico's Santa Fe Community College, and Big Bend Community College, which is located in Washington.

"There's a rhythm to these things," said Lincoln, who added that colleges should regularly reassess which projects they do. "That's the way you can decide what works and what doesn't work."

Sinclair has nixed other completion initiatives, sometimes because of lackluster results.

For example, Cleary said the col-

lege dropped its experimentation with learning communities -- where students work together in group-based learning.

"Maybe we just didn't resource them the right way," she said. "It wasn't working. We pulled the plug."

That sort of sober honesty appears to have helped with faculty buy-in to the college's completion push.

Mike Oaster is an assistant professor who teaches emergency medical services and leads Sinclair's Faculty Senate. He says the college has avoided initiative fatigue and been able to make serious changes in part because faculty members know the completion projects aren't about chasing fads.

Sinclair's approach is "not one where we thought the money was going to go away after a couple years," he said.

For example, the college has worked to reduce the number of credits students must complete in order to earn an associate degree. Now degrees require 60-65 credits, which is fewer than at many two-year colleges.

Cutting credit requirements is not an easy task, and can require the reduction of classes. That can be scary to instructors, Oaster said.

"You're sawing on a limb and you're still sitting on it," he said.

But Oaster said faculty members had confidence in Sinclair's administrators during that process, believing the goal wasn't about eliminating faculty jobs.

"It's working," he said of the credit reduction work. "We're getting more people through at a quicker clip."

It wasn't always so. Johnson, Sinclair's president, said Vanguard and other completion efforts were controversial back in the day.

The shift happened around 2005. Unflattering graduation numbers from participation in Achieving the Dream helped create some urgency, Johnson said. And, just as important, after a few years the national projects became integrated into the college's day-to-day work.

That was the "breakthrough," said Johnson, where the "not invented here" resistance to projects faded away. "These national partners became a part of us."

Show Me the Data

Sinclair's completion push isn't just altruistic. Its leadership and faculty realize that pressure from lawmakers to improve graduation rates isn't going away.

In Ohio, as in a growing number of states, colleges now are funded in part based on a formula that factors in completion. Likewise, the Obama administration wants to tie federal funding to performance measures as part of its pending ratings system.

In some ways, Sinclair's refocusing mirrors that of the Gates Foundation. After seven years of work on completion goals, the mega-foundation announced a set of four policy priorities based on lessons learned from its grant making. Gates also is working on performance metrics it will require colleges to use as part of completion-oriented grant proj-

ects.

As state governments, foundations and feds get more aggressive about trying to hold colleges accountable, Sinclair is leaning on Civitas and other data-intensive tools to figure out what works best.

For example, the college is a participant in the Predictive Analytics Reporting (PAR) Framework. The nonprofit group began as a project the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education managed, largely with funding from Gates. It recently spun off into an independent nonprofit.

The group provides student retention information, based on a huge amount of data points, for its more than 350 participating campuses, ranging from community colleges to research universities. For example, it helps colleges figure out what obstacles prevent students from graduating, and why. Members can compare data across institutions, too.

The goal of the work is to find causation in what is most effective in student interventions, said Russ Little, the PAR Framework's chief innovation officer, who previously worked at Sinclair. Being able to control for student characteristics is an important feature, he said.

Colleges can use it to figure out if there are "interventions that work for different groups better than others," Little said.

Sinclair has used PAR and other sources of data to try to better understand the impact of its student success work, Cleary said. For ex-

ample, early numbers were promising for My Academic Plan (MAP), a student advising effort that combines prescriptive advice for students about their path through an academic program with technology-supported record keeping.

The data showed that students who received one of the plans were 3.4 times more likely to stay in college than were those who didn't. They were also twice as likely to earn a credential.

"As a result of these and other early metrics, the college redesigned its academic advising system," said Cleary. "All new students are now assigned an academic adviser who creates an individualized MAP for them and follows their progress to the completion of their credential."

The completion work is ongoing at Sinclair. After all, almost half of its students are still dropping out before they graduate or transfer. But both faculty members and administrators said they are excited about having moved the needle so far.

"It's terrific," said Cleary. "We're proud to be from Sinclair." ∎