

Access & Excellence

10

YEARS

**DIVISION OF
DIVERSITY AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

On the
UT Campus

Ensuring
Academic Excellence

In the Austin
Community

Promoting
Research

Mission

THE DIVISION OF DIVERSITY
& COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
ADVANCES SOCIALLY JUST LEARNING
AND WORKING ENVIRONMENTS THAT FOSTER
A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE
through diverse people, ideas and perspectives.
WE ENGAGE IN DYNAMIC
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS
DESIGNED TO TRANSFORM OUR LIVES.

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One for the History Books

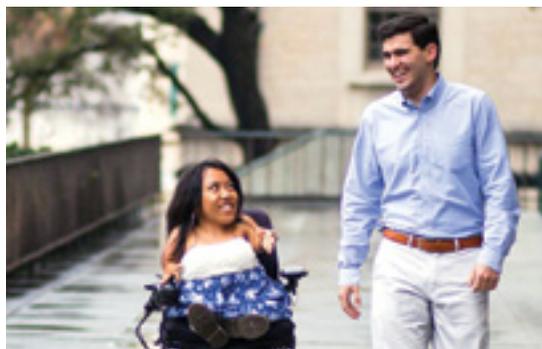


Photo courtesy of the Alejandrina Guzman and Micky Wolf Campaign

The year 2017 marks an important milestone in UT Austin Student Government. Alejandrina Guzman, a government and Mexican American studies senior, is the first Latina student body president on the Forty Acres. She is also the first differently abled student to assume this role in the Big 12. A tutor for the Neighborhood Longhorns Program, Guzman has been helping students at Kealing Middle School succeed in school and enter the college pipeline. We are proud to have her in the DDCE family and look forward to seeing the positive change she will bring to this campus, particularly in the area of accessibility. In the spirit of the “Alejandrina and Micky” campaign, “Let’s Rally!”

Members of the Advisory Council

The DDCE Advisory Council is tasked with providing strategic guidance and recommendations to Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement Dr. Gregory J. Vincent.

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Access & Excellence

The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin publishes Access & Excellence for its community of scholars, alumni and friends.

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Saying Goodbye



A surprising thing happened over the last decade. I became a Texan. Whether it was because of the culture, the food, the hospitality or the people, Austin became home. As Texas has become part of my family, we, too, became part of it.

In the weeks before I made the decision to return to my alma mater to serve as president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, this realization made leaving all the more difficult and with that came plenty of nostalgia for my second home, the DDCE.

As we are in the midst of our 10-year celebration, one particular memory I have returned to frequently is that of the division's origin. Back in 2006, I had been at the university for a short time and was called into the office of the university's new president, William C. Powers. In that meeting he presented his vision for the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement—a robust vice presidential portfolio that was to become the most comprehensive unit of its kind. He wanted to think big, like all things in Texas.

Following the meeting I was at a lunch and it was there that I began sketching the initial design of the DDCE on the back of a napkin. Ten years later, that sketch has grown from a vision to our reality. The DDCE is the preeminent division across all of higher education that is dedicated to the issues of diversity and community engagement.

Celebrating our decade on campus, this issue of Access & Excellence encompasses the many programs, partnerships and initiatives that fulfill the university's core purpose: to transform lives for the benefit of society. From a feature highlighting 10 programs that are preparing students for their future careers to profiles on researchers who are bridging disparities in healthcare and education.

This division has reached heights I never could have imagined. As I prepare to depart later this summer, I hope that I'll get to say goodbye to each and every one of you. Whether it be on campus or at one of our many upcoming community events, please come visit with me and share some of your memories of the DDCE, for those are what I will miss the most.

Dr. Gregory J. Vincent

Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement
W.K. Kellogg Professor in Community College Leadership
Professor of Law

Dr. Vincent raises his horns with an excited group of Little Longhorns at UT Elementary School circa 2007.

10 YEARS

DDCE's Biggest Milestones

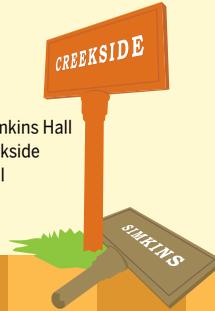
2007

JANUARY 2007: DDCE established. Led by Dr. Gregory J. Vincent and staffed with six employees.

AUGUST 2010: President Barack Obama visits UT Austin. DDCE GRA Rian Carkhum introduces the president.



JULY 2010: Simkins Hall renamed Creekside Residence Hall



2010

JANUARY 2011: GSC and MEC move to the new Student Activity Center

2011



MAY 2011: 25th Anniversary of Sweatt Symposium. The Precursors and early civil rights advocates honored with the first Heman Sweatt Legacy Awards.

JUNE 2011: White House chef joins international chefs at UT Elementary School to celebrate Healthy Families Initiative.



2012



AUGUST 2015: Jefferson Davis statue moved to the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History



JANUARY 2015: UT Austin earns five-year Carnegie Community Engagement Classification

2015

MARCH 2014: MEC celebrates 25th anniversary



JUNE 2016: U.S. Supreme Court upholds UT Austin holistic admissions plan for the second time in *Fisher v. Texas*

2016



AUGUST 2016: Tower Memorial dedication



NOVEMBER 2016: UT Austin receives Diversity Champion Award



OCTOBER 2007: Cesar Chavez statue celebration

SEPTEMBER 2007: Expansion and official division launch. DDCE now includes 10 units and 200 employees.

MAY 2008: First Lavender Graduation



2008

APRIL 2009: Barbara Jordan statue unveiling and dedication

SEPTEMBER 2008: First Community Leadership Awards held at the MACC

JUNE 2009: UIL celebrates centennial



2009

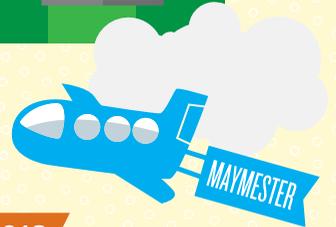


JUNE 2012: Regional Foundation Library celebrates 50th anniversary

OCTOBER 2012: UTES New Building Dedication

MAY 2013: Inaugural LCAE Maymester abroad program

50



2013

FEBRUARY 2014: Dr. Vincent goes to D.C. for launch of My Brother's Keeper Initiative

NOVEMBER 2013: UT Austin receives its first Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award

AUGUST 2013: DDCE becomes partner in Restore Rundberg Initiative



2014



JANUARY 2017: Black Student Athlete Conference kicks off DDCE ten-year anniversary

APRIL 2017: Capital Campaign for UT Elementary classroom construction begins

2017



10

YEARS

of

Community Engagement



Every January, the Austin community gathers around the MLK statue on the East Mall to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Here's a snapshot from the 2010 celebration, which began with a rally on the East Mall and ended with a celebration at the Texas State Capitol. The time-honored march and rally has drawn up to 15,000 people.



Bridging the Health Divide

Q&A

with Miyong Kim



by Jessica Sinn

When Dr. Miyong Kim moved from Korea to the United States with her newborn baby, she experienced some difficulties navigating the health care system. Overwhelmed by the complicated web of specialists, insurance deductibles and physician referrals, she found herself wondering how other people adjust to the acculturation process. Thus began her decades-long career in public health, a fulfilling journey that took her from Johns Hopkins University to UT Austin, where she serves as a professor of nursing and associate vice president for community health engagement in the DDCE.

? Why should bridging health disparities be a national imperative?

We, as a country, have the most health expenditures among developed nations, but we do not have the best health indicators. In fact, compared to other developed countries, we're doing very poor. There's a huge gap between those who have access to care and those who don't. And unfortunately, we have a huge population that is lacking access.

? How are social determinants of health root causes of health disparities?

The Institute of Medicine has defined these determinants as "conditions in the environment in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning and quality-of-life outcomes and risks." Improvements in social and physical environments to promote good health for all must therefore include not only access to quality health care, but also strategies for education, childcare, housing, business, law, media, community planning, transportation and agriculture. Wealth, for example, is a strong predictor of health in the United States because it provides critical social benefits that are strongly associated with health outcomes.

? Could you tell us about your new Community-Based Participatory Research course?

Through CBPR, we seek to understand local communities and cultures to gain a better sense of how they are accessing health care services. This research will then inform later intervention utilizing community member feedback and partnerships. We've recently launched a new graduate-level class on CBPR that connects students from all disciplines with community organizations. Together, they develop collaborative service projects to meet the needs of underserved residents.

? Do you have any new developments in the works?

Recently we received some funding from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation to do workforce analysis of community health workers (CHW), an important workforce for underserved communities. As lay health workers, they are often peers from patients' communities. People respond better to others in their own community who understand their struggles and their intimidation of the health care system. These workers would serve as navigators, guiding residents through the system and strategizing ways to meet their needs. It's a way of integrating social work, medical care and behavioral coaching.

The goals of our project are to include the workforce assessment (highlighting workforce and reimbursement opportunities at a state level), to develop the CHW Education Institute, and to assess the effectiveness and financial efficiency of CHW engagement in health prevention and promotion, as well as chronic disease management and care navigation at the community level. —Æ



New to the Neighborhood

Front Porch Gathering addresses effects of gentrification in historic East Austin neighborhoods

by Jessica Sinn

Move out and move on. That's the message Bettye Washington receives on a routine basis at her small shotgun house in East Austin. But no matter how many offers she gets from buyers, she is staying put.

“I was insulted when I saw this message,” Washington said while holding a letter embossed with the words “Move Out, Move On.” “So I called the company and told them, ‘I’m going to give you a hint. You need to change the logo on your flyer. This doesn’t sit well with these old folk in my neighborhood. And to give you any indication how old we are, I’m the youngest one in our neighborhood—and I’m 84.’”

While speaking to a packed auditorium at a recent Front Porch Gathering, an initiative of the DDCE’s Community Engagement Center (CEC), Washington pointed out that residents work too hard to maintain the homes that have housed generations of family members for decades—long before Austin became a music and film festival mecca.

“When they come, they tear these houses down—affordable family homes—and put at least three dwellings on one lot,” she added. “I suppose that maximizes their profits, but they don’t seem to worry about what’s next door.”

Washington was among several long-standing East Austin residents in attendance at the Front Porch Gathering at Huston-Tillotson University on Feb. 28. The event highlighted a number of issues affecting residents as their neighborhoods morph into mixed-use condominiums and shopping centers.

To learn more about the effects of gentrification, two College of Liberal Arts researchers, Dr. Eric Tang and Dr. Bisola Falola, conducted door-to-door surveys with those who have remained in the area for 15 years or more.

Among their many findings, Tang and Falola discovered that within the span of 10 years, the surveyed area experienced steep declines in minority populations (60 percent Black and 33 percent Hispanic) and a 442

percent increase in Whites. Yet despite the rapid growth in infrastructure, the overall population dropped exponentially.

“Gentrification leads to higher property taxes and higher land values but less people,” Tang pointed out. “Gentrification doesn’t bring in more people; in fact, it displaces more people than it brings. And unfortunately those who are displaced are families with children.”

The question remains: Why do some stay while others “move out and move on”?

“The main reason is that the home has been in the family for generations,” Tang said. “They also stay because they like Austin—and once they move out they can never return.”

After the attendees broke into workshop groups, the event concluded with a collective brainstorming session and closing thoughts. The goal is to mobilize participants to work together on sustainable solutions that will benefit the East Austin community.

The Front Porch Gatherings redefined the CEC’s community dialogues by providing opportunities for participants to work together and put their ideas into action. The gatherings are open to all residents who are interested in making Austin a more equitable place. This year, the monthly events will continue to address an array of issues, from mental health to suburbanization of poverty to gentrification and cultural displacement.

“The Front Porch Gatherings represent UT’s open door to the Austin community, providing time and space for community collaboration,” says CEC Director Virginia Cumberbatch. “Our goal is to activate more than just dialogue and connect UT research and resources with engaged community members, civic leaders and organizations.” —Æ

Opposite: Longtime East Austin resident Bettye Washington (left) and Community Engagement Center Director Virginia Cumberbatch smile for the camera at the Front Porch Gathering event held in Feb. 2017.

A group of participants discuss potential solutions to gentrification-related problems in a breakout group.



A Cycle of Hope

Social Work alum reflects on his journey from prison to Ph.D.

by Jessica Sinn

There are moments in life when something shifts and everything changes. A seemingly imperceptible tipping point can send someone down an entirely new path. Reggie Smith (B.A., Social Work, '16) recognized that moment when he and his two Austin City Hall Fellow teammates encountered a couple of young girls in an underserved East Austin neighborhood.

“We were going door-to-door handing out flyers about an internet accessibility program and these two girls looked at my team members—both women of color—and asked, ‘You go to UT?’” Smith says. “I recognized that was a unique and powerful moment. They saw the possibility of going to a top school, something they might not have imagined before.”

There’s no telling whether the girls will go on to UT Austin, or perhaps another university, but Smith saw the spark of hope in their eyes and knew a seed had been planted. Looking back at his former life trajectory—an ongoing cycle of drug abuse and incarceration—Smith feels indebted to the people who kept raising the bar and pushing him to reach his potential.

His journey to UT Austin began with a continuing education pamphlet. While serving his fifth prison sentence, he emailed a professor at San Antonio Community College and asked about the possibility of becoming a licensed substance abuse counselor. Excited about the prospect of turning his life around, he enlisted the support of a social worker from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services after his release.

“I told her what I wanted to do and she said, ‘OK, we’re doing this together,’” Smith recalls. “She worked with me every step of the way until graduation, modeling to me what a social worker is like.”



With a plan in place, he worked hard and found his way into a halfway house, where the owner took note of his progress and dubbed him a “successful person in transition.” Impressed by Smith’s transformation, the owner recommended that he raise the bar even higher and pursue a social work degree from UT Austin.

“He saw a strength in me that I didn’t even know I had,” Smith says. “I’m so glad I took his advice to broaden my horizons. Every chance I get, I tell people the School of Social Work was like home to me. From the dean on down, they nurtured me and embraced me. They saw my transition and wanted me to transform, not reform.”

“I have two years of valuable work experience under my belt,” Smith says. “This fellowship has allowed me to meet all the key players in the city’s mental health community. I’ve learned the intricacies of the legislative process and how to facilitate meetings. I like to say that I’m getting the LBJ School education on the cheap.”

“They saw my transition and wanted me to transform, not reform.”

Smith openly shares his life story because he wants to show people that anything is possible. This is his way of repaying the many people in his corner who pushed him to work hard and keep raising the bar. In essence he wants to replace the ever-turning wheel of crime and incarceration with a cycle of hope.

“When I talk about my past, I’m serving my community—my brothers and sisters who have mental health challenges and substance abuse issues,” Smith says. “There’s not a lot of people at UT like me, an older Black man with a criminal record. I wish there were more.”

Now a Peer Policy Fellow for Communities for Recovery, a position funded by a Hogg Foundation for Mental Health grant, Smith aims to help more people succeed as they leave prison and re-enter society. These individuals will need a lot of assistance from support systems along the way—from housing to recovery programs to education. During his two-year fellowship, Smith has been working with city leaders and state legislatures to increase access and funding to these critical resources.

Though the long workweeks can be daunting, Smith says the rewards will pay off when he enters graduate school this spring.

After graduate school, the future is yet to be determined, but the core of his life’s work is set in stone.

“It’s important for me to serve as a model of success—especially to those who have been in and out of the prison system,” Smith adds. “I want to show them that if I can change, anybody can. People saw things in me that I didn’t see in myself. Now it’s incumbent on me to get my Ph.D. at a top university so folks can see people like me can be successful.”

Making an impact—large or small—is what it’s all about, Smith says. Looking back at his time on the Forty Acres, some of his fondest memories stem from his experiences as an Austin City Hall Fellow. Housed within the Longhorn Center for Community Engagement, the program empowers students to become agents of change through service-learning. Advised by community and city leaders, as well as former fellows, they hone their skills in public service while making a positive impact in underserved areas of Austin.

“I try to let people know that education is more than just tests, it’s about the total experience,” Smith says. “These programs at the DDCE take that experience to a whole new level. It’s not just coursework, but engaging and interacting with the community.” —Æ

Motherhood *INTERRUPTED*

School of Nursing researcher aims to provide new explanations for postpartum depression

by Evelyn Galante

Postpartum depression is not uncommon. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 11 to 20 percent of women who give birth each year have postpartum depression symptoms. Sarah Guy, a doctoral student at the UT Austin School of Nursing and a 2016 recipient of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health's Frances Fowler Wallace Memorial Award for Mental Health Dissertation Research, suggests that those statistics are underestimated because postpartum depression too often goes unrecognized or is not discussed.



Guy's dissertation, "Understanding Women's Perspectives of Mental Health Literacy Regarding Postpartum Depression," sets out to better understand women's personal experiences with postpartum depression. In particular, Guy seeks to identify the ways women recognize and relieve the symptoms that often cause much suffering for themselves and their families.

As in many areas of health care, the mental health aspects of the postpartum period are often neglected. Many women report feeling abandoned after the baby is born.

"We don't understand the etiology of postpartum depression," Guy explains in reference to postpartum depression and major depressive disorder in the general population. "There are theories related to

massive hormonal shifts that are different from any other time in a person's life."

She suggests the context is unique—especially for first-time mothers—as are the symptoms, with anxiety and obsessive-compulsive behaviors playing a much bigger role.

"When you try to assess your own mental health in the midst of an experience you've never been through before, you have no reference point. You ask yourself, 'Is this normal?' But you don't know what normal is," Guy says.

Postpartum depression often is unrecognized for weeks or months, and it's usually the primary health care provider who steps in.

"When becoming a new mother, there's a fine line between tiredness and emotions and full-blown depression," Guy says. "Women and their families should be able to recognize postpartum depression when the first signs and symptoms begin to appear and know where to seek help that suits their needs."

Guy believes that while health care providers have a duty to assess mental health concerns in new mothers, there should be more general public health education as well.

"We need multiple ways of reaching women, including health care providers and public information, as well as accurate, reliable information online," she says. "A lot of women are turning to social media, which is not always helpful and can alter the reality of early motherhood."

Looking forward, Guy hopes to develop tools that can be used in the postpartum unit at hospitals to evaluate the risk of postpartum depression during the critical time before a woman goes home. By evaluating certain factors that can occur during pregnancy, the birth experience and the postpartum experience—including familial support, complications during delivery and trauma at birth—health professionals can better identify and address postpartum depression.

"I want women to feel informed and armed but not scared," Guy says. "We can do a better job in helping women recognize where they're at without frightening them." —Æ

GEARED FOR SUCCESS

UIL robotics competitions prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow

by Jessica Sinn

It's Friday night in the high school gymnasium. The bleachers are jam-packed with fans cheering for their favorite teams. The mascots and pep squads are pumping up the crowd, and the excitement is reaching a crescendo.

This may sound like a typical scene at a high school basketball game. But there's something different about the players shooting for hoops: They're homemade robots made out of metal, wire and other spare parts found in the garage. Created by students (grades 9-12), the robots are the star players in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) robotics competitions, which have become popular events in high schools across Texas.

Schools can choose to compete in two divisions and the challenges vary. Some competitions require students to build a robot that completes specific tasks—from shooting hoops to flying through the air. Other events require students to build robots and market their creations to a panel of judges.

No matter what the game entails, the goal remains the same: to provide hands-on learning and STEM education to students in schools across Texas.

“There is a clear need to prepare today's students for the jobs of tomorrow, many of which are STEM related,” says Dr. Charles Breithaupt, UIL executive director.

Dr. David Stevens, UIL director of academics, says the robotics competitions help students learn in a fun, competitive environment.

“The competitions really help them develop teamwork and problem-solving skills,” Stevens says. “They're cross-applying what they're learning in math, science and the arts to real world situations—whether it's fixing a sound system in a one-act play or repairing a refrigerator at home.”

In partnership with state chapters of national robotics programs—FIRST® in Texas and BEST™ Robotics—the UIL launched the robotics pilot program in the 2015-16 school year to encourage exploration in STEM fields. The UIL approved two new state championship events, in conjunction with FIRST® and BEST™, one in fall 2016 and one in spring 2017.

“The entire FIRST® community is honored to partner with the UIL to help further the extraordinary efforts of making robotics programs accessible to students throughout Texas,” says Ray Almgren, chair of FIRST® in Texas and chief marketing officer at SwiftSensors, Inc. “UIL's recognition of robotics is a turning point for the widespread accessibility and adoption of student robotics programs across the state and nationwide.”

Texas is the largest state to implement a Robotics State Championship, expanding opportunities to students who may not already be participating in current UIL events.

“The biggest advantage about UIL taking on robotics is that this programming is more accessible to schools across Texas, particularly the rural schools,” Stevens says. “You see students of all backgrounds getting involved in robotics and being successful with it.” —Æ

La Feria High School students put their engineering skills to the test in a UIL robotics competition. Photo courtesy of UIL



10

YEARS

of

Education



Little Longhorns raise their horns at the UT Elementary School dedication ceremony on Oct. 17, 2012.

Designed by Studio 8 Architects and built by Zapalac/Reed, the buildings house the administrative offices, gymnasium, cafeteria, demonstration kitchen, library, faculty lounge and classroom space for University of Texas at Austin College of Education professors.



Leveling the Education Playing Field for Latino Males

Q&A with Victor B. Sáenz

by Jessica Sinn



Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley, Dr. Victor B. Sáenz grew up in a middle-class family that was deeply committed to education. At an early age, he recognized the stark disparity of opportunities in a region of the state beset by poverty and limited access to education and health resources. Now as a DDCE Faculty Fellow and an associate professor in the College of Education, Sáenz is focusing his research agenda on improving educational outcomes for young boys and men of color, particularly Latino males.

We sat down with Sáenz to learn more about the achievement gap among Latino males and how he is bringing national attention to this understudied field of research.

? **How did you get started in your research, and why are you focusing specifically on Hispanic and Latino males?**

My research focuses on Hispanic and Latino males because education disparities are most pronounced for this population, especially given the demographic reality of this state. In graduate school, I began to delve into the research literature and data trends for young men of color and found myself asking the simple question: “What is happening to our boys?” That was the impetus for my research work in identifying key obstacles that often perpetuate certain outcomes for boys and reinforce the cycle that some term the “school-to-prison pipeline.” From the beginning, I have worked to reframe the discussion to focus instead on how to expand the “cradle-to-career” pipeline for Latino males, placing more of these young men on a college-bound path.

? **What’s holding these young men back?**

It’s important to understand how we frame this issue. It’s not the deficit of the young boy that we should focus on but rather how we should indict the deficits of the systems that miseducate these young boys—the deficits that push them out of our schools and out of our communities. They are not matriculating through to college and beyond at rates comparable to their peers because many are being diverted away through school discipline policies, special education diagnostic policies and inadequate teacher training, among other causes. The questions we should be asking are, “Why do our policies and systems keep failing these boys?” and “How can we address these systemic inequalities?”

? **During your eight years as a Faculty Fellow in the DDCE, what has been your biggest accomplishment?**

My biggest accomplishment has been to leverage all the resources and institutional support the faculty fellowship has provided. With these resources, I have been able to enact a wide-ranging research-to-practice effort that is now scaled-up and serves multiple partners and stakeholders across the state of Texas. Working under the auspices of the DDCE has allowed me to amplify and translate my research work to multiple audiences and expand my programmatic work in ways I could have never imagined in the early years. I am truly grateful for the faith and support that Dr. Vincent has given me over the years, and I am proud of the work we have done together by having the DDCE as a home base for Project MALES. —Æ

On the Job

Ten programs that are preparing students for the working world

by Jessica Sinn

In today's job market, stellar grades alone aren't sufficient for success. A college degree may be enough to land an interview, but to stand out in a big pool of candidates, newly minted college graduates must have a repertoire of skills that can only be learned through on-the-job experience.

In homage to the 10-year anniversary of the DDCE, we've rounded up 10 programs that are helping students gain the skills they need to hit the ground running in their careers.

THE PROJECT

Longhorn Center for Community Engagement

Last spring Anna Phan took the lead on one of the largest student-run community service projects in Texas. Aptly named "The Project," the daylong event puts hundreds of students in an



underserved community, where they work in groups on a number of neighborhood beautification jobs.

As a team lead, Phan helped organize and implement the many neighborhood beautification jobs at various sites around the Rundberg neighborhood,

from construction work to painting to landscaping and gardening. She not only developed a green thumb, but also learned how to manage a large team of

workers and collaborate with community members on a large-scale project.

"These community leaders were kind enough to let us and work hand-in-hand with the locals to help beautify the neighborhood," says Phan, an economics junior. "They taught me more about the surrounding communities of UT and could be potential employers."

Though the long hours of work—before and during Project Day—were tough, Phan says she is already reaping the rewards.

"The Project showed me what I'm really capable of doing," Phan says. "I never would've thought that I and a handful of other UT students could plan and host an event for 800-plus volunteers and make a difference in the Rundberg neighborhood. After the Project, I can say that I can conquer whatever I set my mind to."

COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH COURSE

School of Nursing in Partnership with the DDCE

While working as a neonatal intensive care nurse, Nicole Murry was focused on getting her patients back in good health so they could be discharged and sent on their way. It was a practical and efficient goal, but Murry couldn't shake the feeling that something was lacking.

"In the hospital, we're so focused on getting them better, but we don't know what happens after they're discharged," Murry says. "I started asking people about what resources were available for families in underserved neighborhoods and found there were very few."



With the goal of making a positive impact on community health, Murry came to UT Austin to earn a Ph.D. in the School of Nursing. In 2015, she enrolled in Dr. Miyong Kim's Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) class, which connects students of all disciplines with community health-focused organizations.

Together they work on a number of projects, such as grant writing, community outreach and programming. At the end of the semester, they give a presentation to potential funders.

"In nursing school, students are put in clinical environments," Murry says. "But this was a reverse setting where people in the community are brought into the classroom. In this class, I saw how students and community organizations could form beautiful partnerships."

After earning her Ph.D., Murry plans to give back to the next generation of nurses by becoming a teacher.

"I truly believe in the power of nurses," she adds. "We have a duty and a responsibility to focus on health disparities. If we can work together with the community, we can find some solutions to give people a better quality of life."

INTELLECTUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PRE-GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

DDCE and Moody College of Communication

When Daniel Conroy-Beam started his freshman year at UT Austin, he had visions of himself in a white lab coat and stethoscope. But as he started to explore his interests, he soon realized medical school just wasn't for him.



When Conroy-Beam entered the Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) program, everything started falling into place. As an IE Pre-Graduate School Intern, he worked with a graduate student mentor who was studying evolutionary psychology.

"My mentor gave me a glimpse into graduate school life and academia," Conroy-Beam says. "Just as importantly, he gave me encouragement and convinced me that I was good enough to go to graduate school and to be a scientist."

Working alongside his mentor, Conroy-Beam gained hands-on experience in every phase of research, from developing hypotheses to designing experimental tasks to writing up and presenting data. He also got his first taste of academic life at the 2009 Human Behavior and Evolution Society Conference in California. The trip was funded by a Kuhn IE Award, which is granted to a select group of IE scholars each year.

“For the first time in my life I got to see cutting-edge research and be surrounded by people who shared the niche obsession I had been developing,” says Conroy-Beam (B.S., Psychology, ’11/Ph.D., Individual Differences and Evolutionary Psychology, ’16). “It was exciting and energizing, and after that conference I knew for sure that I could spend the rest of my life as a psychologist.”

Now an assistant professor of psychological and brain sciences at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Conroy-Beam is well on his way to becoming a leader in evolutionary psychology—and one of the very few African American scientists in the field.

AUSTIN CITY HALL FELLOWS Longhorn Center for Community Engagement

Shadhi Mansoori’s passion for health care started in high school when she interned at a low-cost clinic for uninsured East Dallas residents. While attending to patients with chronic illnesses, she saw a high need for preventive care.

Now she plans on working in public policy and later becoming a doctor. Her goal is to help low-income patients live longer, healthier lives.



“I’m interested in specializing in lifestyle design—helping people find solutions for health problems in ways that work with their own lives,” says Mansoori, a neuroscience junior.

In the meantime, she’s working with her Austin

City Hall Fellows team on developing a health care resources packet for East Austin residents. As a fellow, she has learned how to collaborate with city leaders, community members and her teammates on a yearlong project that could help bridge East Austin’s health care gap.

Before jumping into the project, she and her teammates wanted to make sure they were providing a useful service.

“We had a lot of meetings with community members and civic leaders to make sure this is a community-identified problem and that residents would be interested in having this packet,” Mansoori says.

A big takeaway from this experience, she says, is that community members must be heard in order to find sustainable solutions—a lesson that will serve her well when she pursues a career in public policy.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY CENTER

To say that Ashley Yerim Choi is passionate would be an understatement. To hear her speak out about LGBTQ+ rights, it’s quite clear that she has found her calling in life.

After graduating this spring with a degree in International Relations and Global Studies, Choi plans to continue advocating for LGBTQ+ equality and later pursue a master’s degree in public policy. Fluent in Korean and Arabic, she plans to pursue her good work here in the United States and in developing nations across the globe.

While interning for the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, Choi became more familiar with the grim reality of LGBTQ+ life in North Africa. Though it was difficult learning about the violence inflicted upon innocent lives, her work galvanized her desire to take action.

“I realized there is much more to be done anywhere in the world when it comes to oppression,” Choi says. “Instead of imposing my Western values, I want to work alongside local activists in those countries and learn from their positivity and resilience.”



At the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC), Choi has been honing her advocacy skills through a number of student-led projects, from organizing the annual Feminist Action Project Conference to managing and editing the Zine, an annual publication that gives back to the feminist community.

While working with her student groups, Choi has learned how to effectively communicate with other passionate people who don't all share her ideas and opinions.

"The GSC taught me to be as inclusive as much as you can and not leave any identities behind," Choi says. "I'm going to dedicate my entire life to LGBTQ advocacy. I feel alive when I do it."

DISCOVER LAW

Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence

Mia Imienfan Uhummwuango's interest in law school was sparked in her freshman journalism class when a lawyer/journalist came to speak about his coverage of the mass suicide rates of farmers in India.

"It was interesting to see how someone could bridge their legal skills with their journalism skills to advocate for these farmers who were losing their land," says Uhummwuango, a journalism junior. "My dad's a lawyer, but I never thought it would be interesting work until I learned about the opportunities a law degree can provide."

Now she's excited about becoming a lawyer and making a positive difference in her home country, where women and children must walk for miles every day to collect drinking water.

"I want to help societies, particularly in Africa," says Uhummwuango, who was born and raised in Nigeria. "I want to focus on improving the quality of life, especially for women."

Though she is still an undergraduate, Uhummwuango delved into law school classes last summer in DiscoverLaw.org PLUS, a program that aims to help students—particularly underrepresented students of color—prepare for a successful future in law.



Throughout the six-week program, undergraduates from UT Austin and Huston-Tillotson live on campus and learn how to prep for the LSAT, read, write and analyze legal documents, and even take on complex case assignments. The biggest challenge, Uhummwuango says, was delivering an oral argument before a panel of judges.

"I'm a quiet, reserved person, so it was hard getting up there by myself in front of everyone," Uhummwuango says. "But I learned that I can do public speaking and I do it well."

With help from her graduate student mentor in the IE program, Uhummwuango is getting ready to apply to law school this fall. Not only is she prepped for the LSAT, she also has a supportive circle of students, faculty and staff who will help guide her along her journey.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Like many college freshmen, Brandon Okeke needed a little help getting his bearings. He knew he had to meet a number of requirements to maintain his University Leadership Network scholarship, such as volunteer hours, internships and experiential learning training. But on such a



sprawling campus, he wasn't quite sure where to begin.

At a Black male student orientation, he learned about the many opportunities within the African American Male Research Initiative (AAMRI) and decided that would be the best place to start. Within the short span of the spring semester, Okeke has landed an internship position as a research assistant and volunteered at a number of events. Not only is he meeting the requirements of his scholarship, he is also building a solid network of friends and mentors at weekly "Power Hour" meetings, monthly gatherings at Gabriel's Café and other networking events.

Though he has only just begun his college career, Okeke is already preparing for the workforce by practicing his networking skills at events on and off campus, including the Leadership Institute, an annual event hosted by AAMRI that brings in African American students, scholars, advisers and mentors from schools across the state.

The greatest benefit, Okeke says, is learning how to break out of his shell. Now he is confident while speaking to new people in a professional setting—and in his ability to travel the world. In May, he will be among many other first-generation college students experiencing their first trip abroad as part of the Social Entrepreneurship in China course, a signature program within the Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence.

"I feel stronger, smarter and better about myself in general," says Okeke, a biology freshman. "I'm doing things I never would've imaged before, like planning and financing a study abroad trip to China. At first I didn't want to do it, but someone told me I'd grow from the experience, and now I couldn't be more excited."

PROJECT MALES

When Mike Gutierrez came to UT Austin from El Paso, he made a few friends in orientation, but he really needed to connect with a mentor who came from a similar background.

"It's just easier for students to build a relationship with people who have had similar upbringings," says Gutierrez (M.Ed, Higher Education Administration, '15/B.A., Psychology, '13). "Plus it gives you the sense that if they can be successful, you can, too."

He soon joined a First-Year Interest Group and learned how to take advantage of the university's many resources. In graduate school, he decided to pay it forward by mentoring students in Project MALES, a multipronged research and mentoring initiative that serves young men and boys of color. Now a program coordinator for Project MALES, Gutierrez is grateful for the valuable work experience he gained while guiding high school students into the college pipeline and working with undergraduate mentors.

"The reason why I went into the master's program was to learn more about higher education administration and gain more experience and responsibilities," Gutierrez says. "My graduate work really helped me learn how to interact with students and set expectations for them."

Inspired by the progress he's seen in his students, Gutierrez knows that he has found his true calling. In the future, he plans to take his mentoring career to the next level by becoming a director of a similar program or taking on an



executive-level position in higher education administration. Whatever the future holds, he wants to broaden the reach of mentoring programs to students of all backgrounds.

GATEWAY SCHOLARS PEER MENTOR PROGRAM

Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence

During her freshman year, Shelby Gaylor learned how to adjust to her new life on the Forty Acres with some help from her mentors in the Gateway Scholars Program. Inspired by their good work, she decided she also wanted to make an impact on students' lives.

Now as a mentor, she is helping undergraduates who—like herself—need a listening ear.

“I know from experience how overwhelming UT and adulthood can be, which is why I wanted to be able to offer my help to freshmen in need,” says Gaylor, an economics junior.

Every year, mentees work on a conflict-resolution project to sharpen their problem-solving skills. A big challenge, Gaylor says, is guiding them through the process and helping them work toward a compromise. Through these activities, she's learning how to be a stronger leader and an expedient problem-solver.

Whether Gaylor is leading a group activity or meeting with students individually, she's learning how to become an effective communicator—a strength that will help her when she lands a job in economic development.



“I try to form genuine relationships with my mentees, and sometimes it is difficult to get them to open up to me without prying,” she says. “I have to be able to read their demeanor and adapt the way I communicate to different personalities.”

UT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

UT-University Charter School

Erin Green is one of the lucky ones who found her true calling early in life. When a herd of 10-year-olds stream into her classroom, the smile on her face says it all. She was born to teach.

But after two rocky semesters of student teaching, she wasn't so sure anymore.

The prospect of teaching at a school that focused more on standardized testing than social and emotional learning seemed less than alluring.

Her love for teaching was rekindled the day she started student-teaching in Scarlett Calvin's fifth-grade class at UT Elementary School.

“I was so inspired by how much these teachers care about their students and how invested they are in helping them learn and grow,” says Green, who graduated in 2015 from the College of Education.

Now a full-time teacher at UT Elementary, Green enjoys going to work every day at a school where students are being nurtured in a safe, welcoming environment.

“Fighting for students and encouraging them to reach their true potential should be at the center of education, and UT Elementary is doing that in a way that I've never seen before,” Green says. —Æ



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Meet several DDCE grad student alums who are diversifying higher ed

by Leslie Blair

In the past 10 years, the DDCE has sponsored more than 120 graduate students. During their time in the division, they worked with mentors and took advantage of professional development opportunities to prepare for their future careers.

We caught up with a few outstanding alums to learn more about their good work and how they are improving the cultural landscape of higher education.

MANUEL GONZALEZ

*Institutional Support Consultant
TG (Texas Guaranteed)*

Dr. Manuel Gonzalez (M.Ed., '09, Ph.D., Educational Administration, '14) was one of the first team members for Project MALES, a research-based mentoring program that helps Latino boys and young men enter the college pipeline. Now Gonzalez is traveling the country, working with higher education institutions to improve their recruitment and retention strategies.

Takeaway from UT days



“Grad school is more than just coursework, presentations and dissertations. It is an opportunity to deeply explore your research interests, to expand your critical understanding of the world, and to experience diversity of thought and passion.”

Current position

“The fact that I get to help minority-serving institutions meet their goals of improving access to higher education and successful degree completion for underrepresented students and communities is something that excites me every day.”

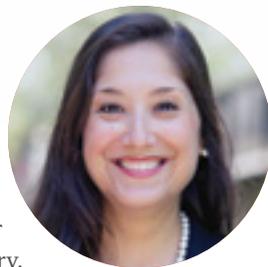
MELISSA MARTINEZ

*Assistant Professor and Director of the
Ph.D. in School Improvement Program
Texas State University*

With more than a dozen peer-reviewed articles and book chapters in her portfolio, Dr. Melissa Martinez (Ph.D., Educational Administration, '10) is now in her sixth year—and up for tenure—at Texas State University.

Standout UT experience

A native of the Rio Grande Valley and a former bilingual elementary school teacher, Martinez discovered an interest in her cultural past while taking the Equity and Access in Higher Education course taught by Dr. Gregory Vincent, vice president for diversity and community engagement. “I’d never read so much for a course in my life, nor had I truly engaged with readings and learned so much about the history of schooling for Mexican Americans in this country.



It was a very unsettling experience to know that while I was born and raised in Texas, this was the first time I looked more in-depth into my own community’s history.”

Mentors matter

Martinez attributes much of her success to her mentor Dr. Victor Sáenz, professor in the College of Education and director of Project MALES. “One of the keys to his success has been his ability to stay grounded and truly engage with people in meaningful ways.”

RYAN A. MILLER

*Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership
University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

As an undergrad, Dr. Ryan Miller (B.J., Print Journalism, '07/Ph.D., Educational Administration, '15) worked on the university's first campus climate study related to the LGBTQ+ community and worked for the DDCE in its early days. After earning a master's degree at Harvard, he returned to the DDCE

first as a staff member and later as a graduate student and postdoc.



Current research

Miller launched a new project this year investigating faculty members' strategies for teaching undergraduates about diversity in today's political climate.

Takeaway from UT days

“It was interesting to see all the perennially controversial issues in higher education—affirmative action, state funding, guns on campus, free speech, the contested mission of the university—play out at UT Austin. Learning and working at such an institution is an unparalleled opportunity.”

SARAH L. RODRIGUEZ

*Assistant Professor, Higher Education
and Community College Leadership
Iowa State University*

Dr. Sarah Rodriguez grew up in the East Texas town of Eustace. After staying close

to home and earning a bachelor's degree at Texas A&M University-Commerce, she received her master's degree from the University of Tennessee before coming to UT Austin to earn her Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership in 2015.

Mentors at UT

Rodriguez is thankful for the constellation of support provided by her personal coaches, challengers and cheerleaders including Drs. Beth Bukoski of the College of Education; Charles Lu of the Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence; Tina Jackson of the Charles A. Dana Center; and Victor Sáenz of Project MALES.



Current position

“We have an incredible team and a strong focus on the role of social justice in education. Even though I remain in a Lone Star state of mind, I could not imagine being in a better place than Iowa State University.”

ENRIQUE ROMO

*Executive Director for Access
and Diversity
Weber State University*

After working as deputy to Dr. Gregory Vincent, Dr. Romo completed his doctorate and became director of Project MALES. Now in snowy Ogden, Utah, Romo (Ph.D., Educational Administration, '12) has put down roots at Weber State and has become active in city government, serving on two commissions, including Ogden's first-ever Diversity Commission.



Takeaway from UT days

“The biggest lesson is accepting the failure and sacrifices that each one of us goes through on our academic journey. It is humbling!”

Current position

“What I love about my current position is the unique opportunity to start a new area providing much-needed resources, co-curricular activities and opportunities to assist historically underrepresented students. I get to work with students, parents, stakeholders, administrators, legislators, educators and many others to understand how disenfranchised some of these students are and why it’s imperative to listen to their needs and provide options that will eventually lead them to a college degree.”

STELLA SMITH

*Associate Director for the Minority Achievement, Creativity and High-Ability (MACH-III) Center
Prairie View A&M University*

Dr. Stella Smith (B.S., Microbiology, ’97/Ph.D., Educational Leadership and Administration, ’13) was at UT Austin for more than 20 years as an undergraduate student, full-time staff member, graduate student and postdoc.

Mentors matter

Smith names several mentors who were influential for different reasons, beginning with Dr. Gregory Vincent, who helped her become a strategic thinker. Others include Dr. Sherri Sanders, who helped her support colleagues as people, not just coworkers; Dr. Richard Reddick, who taught her how to make research accessible to everyone; Dr. Aileen Bumphus, who taught Smith to dream big; and Dr. Wanda Nelson, who always modeled a level of grace and poise.



Current position

“The best aspect of my job is leading research initiatives that will enhance the narrative around how to support underrepresented students, faculty and administrators throughout the P-20 education spectrum.”

DANIEL SPIKES

*Assistant Professor of Educational Policy, Organizations and Policy
Iowa State University*

Dr. Daniel Spikes (B.A., English, ’01/Ph.D., Educational Administration, ’14) worked in several education pipeline programs, including the Longhorn Center for School Partnerships and the Neighborhood Longhorns Program. Now at Iowa State University, he has been recognized for his dedication to the university and the community through his work with Des Moines schools.



Research interests

Spikes studies the practices of schools and school leaders that serve to perpetuate or ameliorate racial disparities in education.

Mentors matter

Spikes is grateful for all his mentors, especially Dr. Mark Gooden, professor in the College of Education. “He took time out to ensure that I was prepared to enter academia, and he genuinely cared for me as a person. To this day, we are still closely connected as I work to get tenure.”

Get updates on more of our graduate student alums on the DDCE news site: diversity.utexas.edu. —Æ



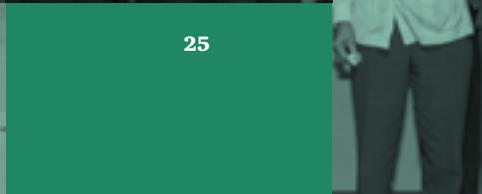
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YEARS

— of —

Campus Culture

Here's a look back at the LGBTQ Lavender Graduation reception, where Ixchel Rosal, former director of the Gender and Sexuality Center, and Dr. Ryan A. Miller, former director of the Office of Inclusion and Equity, were honored with Community Leadership Awards in May 2016. Though they left the university to pursue new career opportunities, they have left an indelible mark on the faculty, staff and students they served.





of Campus Culture in Photos

The Forty Acres has seen quite a few changes over the years—from statue removals to new degree offerings in ethnic studies to a landmark Supreme Court case. We rounded up a few moments from the past 10 years that have sparked important discussions about campus climate and altered the university’s cultural landscape.



A bronze statue of civil rights champion Barbara Jordan was unveiled in April 2009 on the UT Austin campus, following a week of special events honoring the late congresswoman. The Barbara Jordan Statue Project, which included faculty, staff, alumni and students, was directed by Sherri Sanders, who served as deputy to the vice president for diversity and community engagement.



The University of Texas System Board of Regents voted unanimously to change the name of Simkins Hall, a dormitory named after a former UT law professor who was a prominent member of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1800s, to Creekside Residence Hall in June 2010. The motion was informed by an advisory group led by Dr. Gregory Vincent, vice president for diversity and community engagement.



In 2011, Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) launched the disABILITY Advocate Program, providing disability education and awareness in campus-wide training. Assistant Director Emily Shryock and her service dog Morey (pictured here at the Trail of Lights) have been leading the program since its inception. Though Morey is no longer on the job, he will always be remembered for his loyalty and devotion to Emily and all the people he served in SSD.



In 2011, the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) and the Multicultural Engagement Center (MEC) were moved to the newly built Student Activity Center on the East Mall—a central hub of activity located in a high-traffic area on campus. The MEC (room 1.102) and GSC (room 2.112) both offer a wealth of resources for advocacy, education and outreach.

Photo courtesy of KXAN



In August 2015, the Confederate-era statues of Jefferson Davis and Woodrow Wilson were removed from the Main Mall based on the recommendations of a task force headed by Dr. Gregory Vincent. After reviewing the report and hearing from many members of the university community, including alumni and the public, President Fenves decided to relocate the statues elsewhere on campus.



In June 2016 the Supreme Court upheld affirmative action in college admissions in a 4-3 ruling on The University of Texas' use of race as a factor in a program to increase diversity in the student body. In this photo, Dr. Gregory Vincent, is giving a statement to the press during the Supreme Court's second round of oral arguments in 2015.

Fostering Inclusivity in Classrooms at UT and Beyond

Participants in the inaugural seminar sharing ideas and perspectives about inclusive classroom environments.

by Jessica Sinn



For many students, roll call is a perfunctory chore they must endure before the daily lecture begins. They may not even realize that some of their classmates are feeling anxiety when the instructor rattles off the list of names.

“Will he pronounce my name correctly or even come close?” “Will the students laugh if she butchers my name completely?” Those questions often run through the minds of students during this standard classroom procedure.

These common occurrences may seem innocuous enough, but the stress can take its toll, according to Dr. Betty Jeanne Taylor, assistant vice president for inclusion and equity. What many instructors don’t realize, she says, is that the routine roll call can have a negative impact on students.

To prevent these ongoing stressors—also known as microaggressions—from affecting students in classrooms across the university, Taylor leads a seminar that gives instructors practical tools for fostering a welcoming environment. The goal, in large part, is to interrupt non-inclusive experiences in the classroom before they become commonplace.

“When these situations are normalized, that’s problematic,” Taylor says. “When discriminatory

acts become the norm and people shrug it off and say, ‘Well, that’s just how it is,’ the problem gets rooted deeper within our campus culture.”

Launched in 2014 by the DDCE and the Graduate School, the Inclusive Classrooms Leadership Certificate Seminar is divided into two parts. The first session covers the elements of the inclusive classroom and explores the campus climate, diverse identities and self-reflection. On the second day, participants explore various forms of bias incidents in everyday classroom scenarios and brainstorm proactive measures for preventing these incidents before they happen.

“The goal is to help instructors consider the design of their courses from a variety of perspectives to better support students,” Taylor says. “Even from a national perspective, we know that this is an essential part of being an educator. If you want to be a leader in academia, you’re going to need these skills.”

Taylor often hears from participants who were able to put their skills to good work in classrooms at UT Austin and across the nation. Based on the positive response—and the overwhelming number of people requesting a spot at the next seminar—there clearly is a need for this training, she says.

Recent participant Prisca Gayles now feels better equipped to talk about sensitive issues in her classroom. A big learning experience happened when she was discussing the topic of human rights violations in Colombia. Unbeknownst to her at the time, she was inadvertently making a student feel singled out.

“I didn’t realize I was doing it, but when I talked about this topic I would look at a student who came from a military family in Colombia,” says Gayles, a doctoral student in the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies. “At one point he said, ‘Don’t look at me. I don’t know anything about that.’ That experience shows that we must always be reflective about how we talk about a specific topic in class.”

Josh Kopin, a doctoral student in the Department of American Studies, also began taking a more mindful approach to his teaching style after attending the seminar. His

as a person in general,” Kopin says. “When I think about why I’m feeling closed-minded about something, I always find my reasons to be lacking. The seminar emphasized how important this kind of reflection is.”

In fall 2016, the program opened up to faculty members with a new research component added to the curriculum. To date, more than 300 instructors from 50 different academic departments have completed the seminar. Although many of these instructors have left the university to pursue careers in academia, Taylor takes satisfaction in knowing that they are expanding the reach of the program in classrooms across the nation.

“People could say, ‘How does this impact our climate?’” Taylor adds. “Graduate students who are teaching assistants are graduating and leaving our university. But they’re not considering the big picture. Current teaching



biggest takeaway was learning to keep his mind open to conflicting viewpoints.

“The more I reflect on perspectives that aren’t my own, the better I become as a teacher and

assistants are impacting our campus climate through their role in our classrooms as educators. And when they leave our university, they are taking what they learned and creating inclusive classrooms across the country.” —Æ

On the *DDCE* Scene

1 UT Austin President Gregory L. Fenves chatted with a student while taking a tour of UT Elementary, a research-based demonstration school located in East Austin.

2 Danielle Todd-Harris, Blackshear Elementary Fine Arts Academy fifth-grader and winner of the MLK Children's Oratory Competition, delivered a powerful speech in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the MLK Day morning kickoff rally on the East Mall.

3 Students from UT Outreach high schools across Texas came together at UT Austin for Longhorn Preview Day. Many of these students will be the first in their families to earn a college degree, thanks to support from the Longhorn Center for School Partnerships.

4 Texas Longhorns Head Football Coach Tom Herman addressed the challenges facing athletes of color at the 2017 Black Student-Athlete Summit, an annual event hosted by the African American Male Research Initiative.

5 Retired Army Col. Leon Holland (center) paused for a snapshot with President Gregory L. Fenves and Dr. Gregory J. Vincent at the Community Leadership Awards celebration at the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center. Holland was among several Precursors who were honored with the Dr. James L. Hill Leadership Circle Award.

6 Milly Lopez (right), associate director for community and external relations in the DDCE, and Victoria Hewitt, a University Leadership Network student worker, welcomed visitors at Explore UT, a Texas-sized open house that is a springtime tradition on the Forty Acres.

7 Students took a break from their gardening to show some love during The Project 2017. Organized by the Longhorn Center for Community Engagement, The Project is UT Austin's largest day of service. —Æ





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The University of Texas at Austin: Then and Now

Pastor Joseph Parker writes a letter to Heman Sweatt

Mr. Sweatt, first and foremost it's important you know that we continue to remember and honor you. Well after your passing, we will forever appreciate your courage in transforming The University of Texas at Austin.

In recent years you would have enjoyed meeting with Presidents William C. Powers and Gregory L. Fenves. Both men have been concerned with increasing the number of students, faculty and staff of color and making the campus a more welcoming environment. In addition to improving relations between the East Austin community and the university, they have taken affirming actions to heal the pain that the East Austin community has historically felt.

In particular, you would have felt kinship with the man in charge of leading diversity and community engagement efforts, Dr. Gregory J. Vincent. He has great knowledge of your case against the university as well as the affirmative action cases that have followed. Since the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement was launched some 10 years ago, the university has seen increases in the number of professors and students of color as well as positive structural and systematic changes to ensure that students of color will be successful. The DDCE has also elevated necessary conversations and provided safe places for dialogue both on campus and in the community.

That is not to say some concerns do not remain. There are some who wonder about the university's sustained commitment to the community, irrespective of the DDCE. Is

the commitment due to the passion of those in the DDCE? Or is the university as an institution committed to this transformation?

Interstate 35, or East Avenue as you knew it, still acts as a physical, cultural and metaphorical division between the Anglos to the west and African Americans and Latinos to the east. There is also an ever-heightening sense of anxiety about the dislocation that has taken place on the East Side—causing some to harken back to the forced segregation in the 1920s.

But you would be proud to see the changes the city and university have made. In 2005, the county courthouse was renamed in your honor, now and forever known as the Heman Marion Sweatt Travis County Courthouse.

Whether it be through academic initiatives, the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the first African American undergraduates, the annual Heman Marion Sweatt Symposium on Civil Rights, the renaming of Creekside Residence Hall, (formerly Simkins Hall named after the prominent klansman and law professor) or the renaming of the southeast side of campus to the Heman Sweatt Campus, change has come to the Forty Acres.

Please know that while this change began with you, it will continue forevermore.

Joseph C. Parker Jr., a native of Birmingham, Alabama, is a longtime friend and advisory council member of the DDCE and the senior pastor of David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Austin. A member of The Precursors, he entered The University of Texas at Austin Law School in 1979.

Connect with Us!

Can't get enough of this issue?

Check us out at diversity.utexas.edu



More accolades... Dr. Kristen Hogan, education coordinator at the Gender and Sexuality Center, is heading to The Lammys! Her recent book “The Feminist Bookstore Movement” has been nominated for a Lambda Award, the most prestigious LGBTQ literary award in the nation.

More stories from East Austin ... Watch a series of videos documenting the challenges residents are facing in their rapidly changing historic neighborhoods. The videos were created by students participating in the Longhorn Center for Community Engagement’s Alternative Breaks program.



More students helping students... Get to know several Gateway Scholars who are helping undergraduates make the most of their college experience and graduate on time.

More big events... Read a recap of the DDCE’s third annual Black Student-Athlete Summit, a three-day conference that addresses the challenges and opportunities for student athletes of color.



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Spring 2017 Tweet

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read this fantastic
writeup by
@Jessewashington
#ESPN #TheUndeclared
#BlackStudentAthlete*

Top Tweet earned 51.1K impressions
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#TheUndeclared #BlackStudentAthlete
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Words to Live By



“Black, White, Hispanic, Asian—we’re all unique. And together we should embrace this one principle: I am my brother’s keeper. I am my sister’s keeper. Division is a math problem. Let’s just solve it.”

—Artist Tyson, Gus Garcia Young Men’s Leadership Academy student, speaking at the Greater Austin Area My Brother’s Keeper community-wide dialogue, held last spring during SXSWedu.



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The University of Texas at Austin
Division of Diversity and
Community Engagement

The University of Texas at Austin
Division of Diversity and Community Engagement
110 Inner Campus Drive, Stop G1050
Austin, Texas 78712

Celebration Time, Come On!

There's a party going on right here, a celebration that lasts throughout the year! In the words of Kool and the Gang, it's time to come together. Please join us at various community-wide events happening on and off campus as we celebrate 10 years of the DDCE. Information about our upcoming anniversary-themed events will be available on our website: diversity.utexas.edu.



The University of Texas at Austin