

Dr. Sandra Acosta
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College of Education and Human Development
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Creating Spaces for Differences: Transitioning Bilingual Education-ESL Students to Professional Teaching Careers

Summary:

Recruitment and retention, based on the shortage of qualified bilingual education teachers, are two crucial issues for Spanish-speaking Hispanics in Texas and across the US. Because bilingualism has not always been valued in Texas public schools, where English learners are perceived as a problem to be solved rather than an asset, agency and professional identification are crucial to bilingual education novice teachers' success. We propose a framework for recruiting and retaining Spanish-speaking Hispanic bilingual education undergraduate students (pre-service teachers) in the Bilingual Education Undergraduate Program at TAMU, to develop and expand a Texas A&M footprint in bilingual education that is unique and serves the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students in Texas public schools. Our study uses a qualitative research design, and draws data from student surveys, course evaluations, and text analysis of student's identity journals, faculty/instructors notes from mentoring sessions, and interviews with student mentors. We anticipate the following changes in the bilingual education undergraduate pre-service teachers' professional development continuum: (1) an increase in the quality of STEM cross-curricular lessons designed and delivered to English learners in bilingual education classes in the Bryan-College Station area; (2) an increased awareness of professional identity and undergraduates' ability to articulate as well as self-assess their professional identity in terms of first and second language pedagogy and English learners' performance; and (3) an increase and enhancement of human and social capital (networking within and outside school communities) through online mentoring and action research collaborations.

Dr. Ishara Casellas Connors
Assistant Dean for Diversity and Climate
College of Geosciences

GeoX Student Participation and Outcomes



Summary:

This research aims to fill a gap in our understanding about the disparities and access and success among geoscience students. Specifically, this research seeks to center the lived experiences of students who have engaged in access programming to understand access, college climate, and issues of equity within the college. Since 2011, Texas A&M College of Geosciences has led an engaging summer bridge program- GeoX. This project has had five goals:

- 1) Increase awareness of the geosciences by high school students from underrepresented groups
- 2) Highlight geoscience career opportunities
- 3) Expose students to the college campus experience at Texas A&M
- 4) Facilitate interactions, networking with faculty, staff, students, and companies
- 5) Provide information about the college admissions process

This research aims to provide a robust understanding of who enrolls in GeoX, and the experiences of students once then enrolled at Texas A&M. Two primary research questions will guide this work: Of the GeoX participants, what are the trends related to enrollment at Texas A&M University? How, if at all, does this differ based on social identity; and, what are the lived experiences of GeoX students once they enroll at Texas A&M University? Thus, this research seeks to gain understanding of these student experiences as well as help the College of Geosciences understand how these experiences may differ based on students' social identities. In doing so, it has the potential to positively impact both our access programming as well as the work we do to retain students once they enroll at Texas A&M.

Dr. Noemi Mendoza Diaz*Assistant Professor**College of Education and Human Development**Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource
Development***Career Trajectories: Improving STEM Climate and Equity through
the Investigation of Alumni Employment Pathways****Summary:**

Undergraduate technology education, as part of the STEM constellation, is impacted by the low representation of women and minorities. The NSF latest report on women, minorities, and persons with disabilities describes a relative increase of women in science and engineering, yet only in certain fields. In terms of minorities, the gap remains wide separating underrepresented minorities (URM) from whites and Asians (NSF, 2017). The purpose of this project is to provide critical information to Texas A&M University's diversity and inclusion programs through the investigation of career trajectories of the Technology Management Program graduates, emphasizing the experiences of women and URM students. It also includes the overall evaluation of graduate's perceptions as to how TAMU can increase and improve future women and URM graduates' college experiences. This investigation will shed light on factors affecting employment pathways that can be addressed during college years. The short-term anticipated impacts involve the evaluation of relevancy and effectiveness of current diversity initiatives at the college level, specifically for the Technology Management program. More informed programs tailored to women and URM student needs are also expected to emerge. In the long-term, a larger longitudinal study funded by a national agency source is expected to be developed, including integration of this study to a larger pool of STEM programs and career trajectories studies in and outside of TAMU.

Dr. Valerie Hill-Jackson

*Director of Educator Preparation Programs & Partnerships and
Clinical Professor
College of Education and Human Development
Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture*

Texas A&M University Mentoring Up Program**Summary:**

There is a national call for secondary education to better prepare high school learners for life beyond graduation (College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR), 2016; MacPhail, 2015; Radcliffe & Bos, 2013; Rateau, Kaufman, & Cletzer, 2015; Sax & Gialamas 2017; Ullman 2014; Willits, 2014). A persuasive cadre of scholars posit that academic and social mentoring plays a vital role in the post-secondary preparedness (Angus & Hughes, 2017; Barrera & Bonds, 2005; Biggs, Musewe & Harvey, 2014; Deutsch, Reitz-Krueger, Henneberger, Futch Ehrlich & Lawrence, 2017) or self-efficacy of secondary learners (Chopin, 2009; Deane, Harré, Moore & Courtney, 2017; Erickson & Noonan, 2018; Meltzer, Basho, Reddy & Kurkul, 2015). As such, this study examines how college and career practices, implemented in a year-long University-based mentoring program, delivers academic support to first-generation students from low-income households to encourage postsecondary educational attainment. As a mentoring program focused on continual improvement and preoccupied with the success of our mentees, it is important to understand what factors of the Texas A&M University Mentoring Up (TAMU MU) program support the post-secondary readiness of the 20 high school students, from the Bryan community. This study is expected to positively influence the self-confidence of 20 Bryan ISD students, contribute to the body of literature on cultivating meaningful relationships with students, and the social, emotional, and academic needs of students in K-12 and higher education in recognition of unique social identity markers, such as racial ethnic background; and identify the successful aspects of the TAMU MU program, but also uncover program deficiencies that can be improved to better serve participants for all stakeholders.

Stephanie M. Ortiz
Doctoral Candidate
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Sociology

**Understanding the Dimensions and Implications of Online
Harassment**



Summary:

The links between online harassment and the offline world have raised important theoretical and empirical questions, yet, we have little qualitative data on the dimensions of online harassment, and especially how young adults, the group most likely to experience this harassment (Pew 2017), make sense of these incidents. Without these insights, it is not possible to know what patterns exist in how online harassment functions and impacts different populations, how and why those groups respond to various forms of harassment, and what interventions might be appropriate. The objective of this project is to understand the relationship between the various aspects of online harassment and the strategies Aggies develop in response. Texas A&M University (TAMU) is a unique site to examine online harassment because as an institution of higher learning, it is nationally recognized as one that values traditions and community. Thus, the underlying questions of this study are to what extent this campus climate extends online, and how feelings of belonging or exclusion play out in interpersonal interactions that Aggies interpret as identity-based harassment. This project's departure from survey methodology, and reliance on sociological theories that highlight the role of context and social identities in creating and reproducing patterns of social interactions, will significantly increase TAMU's knowledge of how exclusionary practices manifest in a new domain where students, across organizations, class standing and majors, spend a large portion of their day.

Dr. Ragan Petrie
Professor
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Economics

**Examining the Lack of Representation of Women and
Underrepresented Minorities in STEM Fields**



Summary:

This research aims to understand why so few women and underrepresented minorities choose to major in certain STEM fields such as economics, engineering, math, physics, etc., relative to other fields (e.g. psychology, nursing, etc.). Most of the research to date has focused on reasons why students might opt out of some fields, and we would like to also explore the other side, i.e. faculty attitudes, mentoring opportunities, perceptions of departmental climate. We hypothesize that some fields are better than others at being inclusive, or perceived as inclusive, and that might explain some of the sorting by gender and ethnicity across disciplines. This research will utilize an app that allows us to collect survey and behavioral data easily and at low cost, using monetary incentives to encourage participation by faculty, staff, and students. The findings will help us understand how departmental climate might contribute to women and underrepresented minorities being less likely to choose STEM-related fields, and help inform what type of interventions or approaches could help underrepresented fields be more inclusive.

Dr. Srividya Ramasubramanian
Professor
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Communication

“Dive Deeper into Campus Race Relations”



Summary:

In order to raise awareness about campus racism and encourage dialogues on this topic, our research team, in conjunction with Aggie Agora and the College of Liberal Arts, designed and implemented a series of difficult dialogues on campus race relations targeted at undergraduate students. This research will gather data through audiotaped conversations about race relations on campus among participants, and analyze personal reflections of co-facilitator experiences after each difficult dialogue session. We will also offer participants the opportunity to attend a follow-up one hour focus group discussion called “Dive Deeper into Campus Race Relations,” where they can reflect on their experiences participating in the difficult dialogues and also allow for deeper engagement with the topic among like-minded folks. In this project, we will use the literature on critical race theory, dialogic models, and social identity theory as the framework to analyze the conversations generated through facilitated difficult dialogue sessions and “deep dive” discussions. Among the benefits revealed in previously conducted sessions include: having these sessions be the first time they are confronted with issues of campus racism; feeling that they are more confident in the resources available to combat racism; most recommending these sessions be carried out university-wide; students of color not being surprised by the stories shared at these sessions, but asking what more can be done to stop racism. These outcomes will help build individual and collective responsibility towards greater inclusion of students of color at Texas A&M.

Alexandra Sousa
Doctoral Candidate
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Communication

“Narratives of Difference” at Texas A&M University



Summary:

This study will analyze how racial/ethnic minority and majority undergraduate students constitute their own narratives, in relation and in contention with those Texas A&M itself has constructed in regards to diversity and inclusion. The “narratives of difference” that students construct are impacted by the narratives of their organization, their presence within certain spaces, and their personal experience. This study seeks to answer what “narratives of difference” students at Texas A&M have constructed; how these impact student sense-making and socialization; and the impact of similarities and differences between “narratives of difference” at the individual and organizational level? Analysis of archival data, photo voice, and walking tour interviews will be used to address these questions. The study already has important implications for processes of sensemaking, socialization, and stigma literatures, as well as identity in organizations. For Texas A&M specifically, this study will shed more light on the experiences of its diverse student body and how they are represented by the ways the university addresses issues of diversity and inclusion.

Lisa Stewart, MEd
Associate Director
Texas A&M University- Galveston
Seibel Learning Center

“Onboarding First-Gen, Low-Income Students to Prime for Academic Success”



Summary:

Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG) developed the First Scholars Program to address the needs of first-generation students through a scholarship of \$5,000 per year for four years, and participation in a Living Learning Community (LLC). Additionally, we are working internally to improve communications and enhance collaboration between the offices managing the living elements, the course elements, and the financial elements. We anticipate that providing a more comprehensive onboarding process for all future cohorts of the program would help us increase outcomes, as measurable by average cohort GPA, retention data, and student-reported measures of belonging. Our intention is to develop a one-week orientation program that will assist these students in establishing a level of comfort with the academic and social aspects of TAMUG prior to classes starting. We believe that this will have a measurable impact on the students' sense of belonging and perception of academic readiness. Further, we hope to find a positive correlation between these measures and the students' actual academic performance.

Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan*Associate Professor**College of Education and Human Development**Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource
Development***Nurturing, Investing, and Advocating (NIA): Increasing the
Recruitment, Retention, and Graduation Rates of African Americans
in Human Resource Development****Summary:**

The core values of Texas A&M University are deeply important to the vision and mission of the university and 2010/2016 University Diversity Plan. Excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service embody the lives of “Aggies.” Because Human Resource Development (HRD) supports that tradition in its teaching, attracting more African American students to the program will support the overall development of future Aggie leaders, who will serve the state of Texas, the nation, and the world. This project will explore the implementation of a race, identity and social equity initiative to purposely increase the presence of African Americans in Human Resource Development. As such, Project Nurturing, Investing, and Advocating (NIA) is a purposeful recruitment, retention and graduation plan to increase the enrollment of African American students in the undergraduate HRD program in the College of Education. Survey data will be recorded and used to inform protocol development for the purpose of conducting one-on-one interviews and focus groups with African American students from the present campus community and around the state of Texas. As a result of purposeful recruitment, retention, and persistence strategies, the goal is to increase the graduation percentage of African American students by 25% by 2021. The long-term goal of HRD is to have a student body that is 15% African American.

Dr. Shaida Kalbasi
Assistant Professor
School of Public Health
Department of Epidemiology

Study title



Summary:

This project aims to better understand how minority students frame their college experience. In particular, the goal will be to uncover the discrimination that this population might experience and the role of systemic racism in shaping the discriminatory actions of other students as well as faculty and staff. In particular, we seek to answer the following research question: What are the discrimination experiences, if any, of freshman and sophomore minority students on the Texas A&M College Station Campus, and what is the mental health status of these students? We will examine such factors as national origin, time of immigration (if any), skin color, language skills, and religion in terms of their possible influence on discriminatory behaviors. An evaluation of their mental health status to find a possible association between the experience of discrimination and poor mental health will also be done. A negative attitude displayed by other students and/or faculty/staff at Texas A&M can result in both low academic performance and a lack of interest in college social life by these minority students, caused by them feeling excluded and rejected. We proffer that shining a light on the discriminatory behaviors that exist may help initiate a more inclusive culture for this specific minority group.