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U.S. Department of Education

OPE Grantee Voices from the Field Newsletter Fall 2022

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U.S. Department of Education
Office of Postsecondary Education

Grantee Voices From the Field

Fall 2022 Newsletter

OPE welcomes new assistant secretary, Dr. Nasser Paydar



Dr. Nasser Paydar, Assistant Secretary, Office of Postsecondary Education

Source: [U.S. Department of Education Press Releases](#)

Dr. Nasser H. Paydar joins the U.S Department of Education as assistant secretary in the Office of Postsecondary Education after most recently serving as chancellor emeritus of Indiana University, Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and executive vice

Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and executive vice president of Indiana University (IU). He was an IU faculty member for more than 36 years and held various administrative and executive leadership positions at the university. Dr. Paydar joined IUPUI in 1985 as an assistant professor of mechanical engineering. From 1989 to 2003, he held several positions in the school, including chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, associate dean for graduate programs, associate dean for academic programs, and executive associate dean.

From 2004 to 2007, he served as vice chancellor and dean of Indiana University–Purdue University Columbus. Dr. Paydar was appointed chancellor of Indiana University East in 2007 and he served in that role until he returned to IUPUI in 2012, when he was named the campus’s executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer. He became IUPUI’s fifth chancellor in 2015. As an IUPUI faculty member, he has served as principal and co-principal investigator on research grants from federal and state agencies and private companies, including Cummins Electronics, DePuy, the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Naval Air Warfare Center. His research in the area of solid mechanics, with applications in biomechanics and electronic packaging, has been published widely in scientific journals. Paydar earned bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in mechanical engineering from Syracuse University.

Read Secretary Miguel Cardona's Statement on the confirmation of Dr. Nassar Paydar

Statement from Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona on District Court ruling on the Biden-Harris administration's student debt relief plan



Please review the latest news on student debt relief.

Source: [The U.S. Department of Education Press Release](#)

Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona issued the following statement regarding the district court ruling on student debt relief:

"We believe strongly that the Biden-Harris Student Debt Relief Plan is lawful and necessary to give borrowers and working families breathing room as they recover from the pandemic and to ensure they succeed when repayment restarts.

"We are disappointed in the decision of the Texas court to block loan relief moving forward. Amidst efforts to block our debt relief program, we are not standing down. The Department of Justice has appealed today's decision on our behalf, and we will continue to keep borrowers informed about our efforts to deliver targeted relief.

"More than 26 million borrowers have provided the information needed to process their applications for relief and 16 million applications have been approved and sent to loan servicers to be discharged when allowed by the courts.

"Separately, we remain committed to taking other actions to fix longstanding issues in the student loan forgiveness system and hold schools accountable for leaving students with mountains of debt and without the skills and preparation to find good jobs.

"Despite this decision, we will never stop fighting for the millions of hardworking students and borrowers across the country."

Historically Black Colleges and Universities Conference back after three-year hiatus



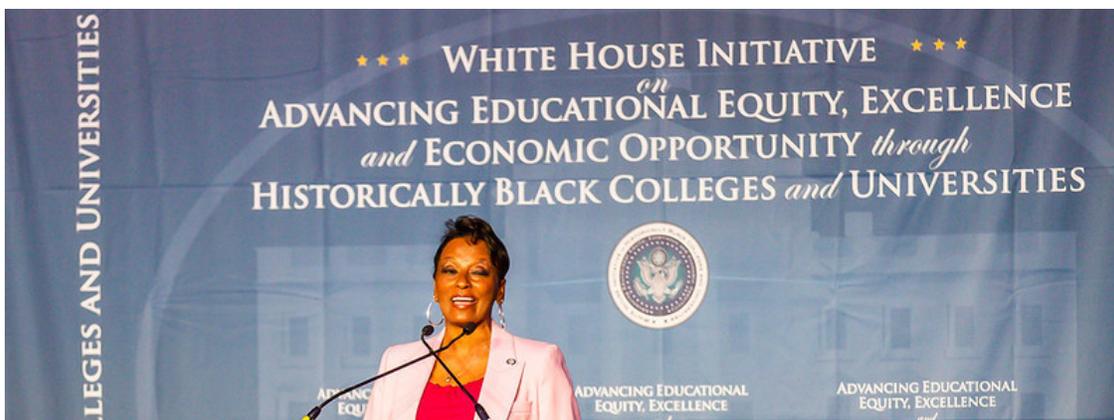
Sources: [White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)

Photos: U.S. Department of Education

Submission by Sariane Leigh, analyst, Office of Postsecondary Education, Management Support Unit

The White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) held its first conference since 2019. Secretary Cardona and Executive Director Dietra Trent expressed a shared commitment to eliminate barriers facing HBCUs when providing the highest-quality education to a growing number of students.

The Department produced a vibrant program designed to actively engage participants in policy conversations, explore best practices, and forge new partnerships to strengthen our HBCUs.





Dietra Y. Trent, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities



Student flute performer and military color guard.



HBCU stakeholders attended workshops such as "Powering the HBCU STEAM Engine for Tech Innovation and Economic Growth"



Secretary Cardona learning about NASA's developments and partnerships with HBCU institutions.

Learn more about the 2022 HBCU conference

Fresno State gets freshman in gear with funds from OPE





“ReDefining Student Ready” Title V grant at Fresno City College offers a First-Year Experience program to encourage a strong start.

Submission by; David Childers, director of Title V Programs Fresno City College

After two long years of waiting and pandemic-related delays, the “ReDefining Student Ready” Title V grant at Fresno City College finally has a First Year Experience program to call its own.

FCC, one of the oldest and largest Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) in the country – welcomed nearly 150 first-time freshmen into the first-year enrollment (FYE) program as part of Pilot 1. The students are grouped into five separate cohorts – one for each of the college’s Guided Pathways – and those students will complete English IA and math together over the course of their first two semesters. Both the English and math classes are contextualized for their pathway – giving the classes added appeal and relevancy for the students. Students also receive embedded tutoring, a free laptop, priority registration and special workshops, events and field trips.

All of the students in Pilot 1 of the FYE program are direct matriculants from high school and represent over 30 different feeder schools. Over 75 percent of the students identify as Hispanic, and over 85 percent are students of color. Enrollment among males – a major emphasis for FCC - in the FYE program is also trending ahead of the college as a whole.

“The idea is to help ease one of the most difficult transitions in a young person’s life – going from the rigorous structure of high school to the freedom of college,” said Director of Title V Programs David Childers. “Since many colleges have been doing these programs for years, we had a lot of opportunity to observe and learn and design something unique and special for Fresno City College.”

Part of the uniqueness of the program is that grant funds were used to convert an old computer lab into an affinity space for the FYE students. In the first week of operation, the center logged over 500 visits from over 200 students – many of whom weren’t even part of the program.

“We are working to make the space even more welcoming and culturally-affirming,” said Childers. “We want this to be a safe space for all students – FYE or not. Once we get the students here and make them feel comfortable and connected, our hope is that they won’t want to leave.”

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities celebrates 30 years of HSIs and HACU's National Internship Program



HACU participants included Kurrin Abrams, OPE analyst (left) and Stacey Slijepcevic, OPE Director of Hispanic Serving Institutions-STEM (second from left)

Submission by Stacey Slijepcevic, director of the Hispanic Serving Institutions- STEM

On September 14, OPE Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) staff Kurrin Abrams and Stacey Slijepcevic joined Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and its president and CEO, Dr. Antonio Flores, for a celebration to recognize the 30th year of HSIs and celebrate the 30th year of HACU's National Internship Program. HACU led the effort to formally recognize campuses as federally designated HSIs, and this legislation was passed by Congress in 1992.

International Foreign Language and Education Updates



Submission by Amy Marrion, analyst, International and Foreign Language Education

Leah Valtin-Erwin, a 2021 [Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad \(DDRA\)](#) Fellow and doctoral candidate at Indiana University Bloomington, recently published an article “*Ukraine – Jesteśmy z wami!: War in Ukraine and Warsaw Transformed*” in *NewsNet*, a publication of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian

Studies (ASEEES). In the article, Leah shares her experience traveling from Bucharest, Romania to Warsaw, Poland on February 27, 2022, just three days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Leah, who is a historian of contemporary Eastern Europe, shares her experience as she witnessed the large influx of refugees into the city and discusses how her background and research in the region provided a unique perspective and outlook on what she witnessed.

To read the entire piece and view additional photos, [check out Leah's article in the May 2022 edition of NewsNet](#), published by ASEEES.

[The Fulbright-Hays DDRA Program](#) provides grants to colleges and universities to fund individual doctoral students who conduct research in other countries, in modern foreign languages and area studies for periods, of six to 12 months.

Morgan State University’s Summer Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad in Senegal



Submission by Carolyn Collins, analyst, International Foreign Language Education

Morgan State University (Morgan State), recipient of a short-term [Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad \(GPA\)](#) grant, conducted a five-week, intensive immersion program in Senegal in summer 2022. Fifteen participants, including U.S. educators and students, learned about the country’s history and the intersections of

youth, culture, education, religion, African traditions, and institutions of the republic during the program. The participants improved their proficiency in French and learned elementary Wolof, the most widely spoken language in the multiethnic, multilingual nation. The Morgan State GPA aimed to promote the professional development for the educators and students by helping them to create new curricula and guiding them in the teaching of the history, culture, and educational structures and policies of Senegal.

The program featured site visits (*left: participants visit Goree Island*) and opportunities for learning about the Senegalese culture. A highlight of the trip was a community service day, during which participants visited a school for blind children near the city of Ziguinchor and donated clothing and educational materials.

Participants shared the following reflection on the program: “The *Fulbright-Hays* Group Project Abroad enriched our professional and personal perspectives about the culture and languages of the people in Senegal. Studying in Senegal gave us a unique opportunity to interact not only with Senegalese educators, but also with religious leaders, students in public schools, government officials, education leaders, artists, and business owners. The GPA experience allowed us to continue our research, learn and improve our language proficiency skills in French and Wolof, as well as infuse our curriculum with new cultural knowledge for the benefit of our students and colleagues.”

The *Fulbright-Hays* GPA program provides grants to institutions and private, nonprofit education entities that organize programs for K-12 teachers, college students, and faculty to engage in short-term or long-term overseas projects focused on training, research, and curriculum development in modern foreign languages and area studies. GPA short-term projects include seminars, curriculum development, and group research or study. GPA long-term projects support advanced intensive overseas programs that focus on languages, the humanities, or social sciences.

OPE Employee Spotlight – Dr. Tonya Hardin, Higher Education Programs



Dr. Tonya Hardin, management and program analyst for the Higher Education Programs (HEP) office, has worked in the deputy assistant secretary's office since May 1999. Tonya continues to be instrumental in helping move OPE grantee funds to universities and students. Dr. Hardin ensures that public notices reach the point of publication. Tonya values innovation in higher education and is proud to help ensure that funds for more than 5,000 grants reach U.S. universities and students. Tonya says, regarding the OPE organizational values, “I believe working together is important. I really value integrity. People should be able to count on us to do what we say we’re going to do.” Tonya also takes her work outside of the office by hosting college

tours for high schoolers in her church and community. “There’s nothing like being with a young person on a college campus when they’re on that campus and you see the light bulb come on when they realize the possibilities that are available to them for life beyond high school. It is a beautiful moment for them and for me.”

Announcements

Coming soon: 2022 Grantee Satisfaction Survey results

The Department will soon preview the results of the [2022 Grantee Satisfaction Survey](#). Thank you to the 984 OPE grantee project directors who shared feedback and suggestions for improvement with the Department. Our programs use the feedback you provide in the survey to improve the delivery of services to our grantee community. Contact your program OPE officer to learn more about the survey.

OPE peer review opportunities

The Department provides opportunities for individuals to participate in its peer review process, reviewing applications for competitive grant funding. Learn how to become a peer reviewer by reading the [Department's peer review guidelines](#).

Share your good news with the grantee community

Email photos, stories, updates and other news to OPE's Management and Support Unit, at OPECOMS@ed.gov.



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