



U.S. Department of Education

## Summer 2023 Grantee Voices from the Field Newsletter

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**U.S. Department of Education**  
Office of Postsecondary Education

### Grantee Voices From the Field

Summer 2023 Newsletter

**OPE Assistant Secretary Nasser Paydar  
Speaks at White House Initiative to Support  
Hispanic-Serving Institutions**



*OPE Assistant Secretary Nasser Paydar and Senior Director Beatriz Ceja speak at a meeting to advocate for student success at HSIs.*

Submission by Beatriz Ceja, Senior Director of institutional services, OPE

Nasser Paydar, assistant secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) at the Department of Education (Department), and Beatriz Ceja, OPE's Senior Director of institutional services, spoke at the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics (Initiative). The OPE leaders shared the important investments necessary to ensure Latino student success in higher education. Paydar spoke about improving access to higher education for all students and raising the bar for college excellence and equity. Ceja shared her journey as a first-generation college student and Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute fellow.



*Nasser Paydar, Beatriz Ceja, and Richard Cordray (Chief Operating Officer of Federal Student Aid) discuss access to higher education.*

Originally established in 1990, the Initiative was re-established in 2021 through an executive order by President Joe Biden, who expanded the Initiative's scope to center on advancing education equity and economic opportunity for Latino and Hispanic students, families, and communities.

[Visit the White House White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics on Youtube](#)

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## **Hispanic-Serving Institution Division Hosts Project Director's Conference**



*Group Photo with attendees of the HSI Division Project Directors' Conference.*

Submission by Kurrin Abrams, analyst in the Hispanic-Serving Institution Division

From May 22 to 25, the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) division hosted its 2023 project directors' conference "Equity and Excellence: HSIs Educando for the Future" at the Department's D.C. headquarters. This convening was the division's first in-person conference in five years and a reminder about the importance of in-person connection and collaboration.



*Stacey Slijepcevic, HSI Division Director delivers a presentation on advancing educational equity for Hispanic students.*

Over 400 people from across the nation gathered in Washington, D.C., for this year's conference. Nasser Paydar, Stacey Slijepcevic, and Beatriz Ceja provided program and policy updates. The conference's general sessions featured top Department leadership, including a surprise visit from Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. Secretary Cardona's



visit was a highlight of the conference, during which time he expressed his deep appreciation (in both English and Spanish) for the work of our grantees and their unwavering devotion to their students and their communities.



*Stacey Slijepcevic, HSI Division Director led breakout sessions to learn more about supporting HSI-funded programs.*

The conference provided an enjoyable and collegial venue to catch up, learn from each other, network, and reenergize our commitment to our students, communities, and colleagues.



*HSI conference attendees learned about such topics as using data to improve outcomes for HSI stakeholders.*



*Wil del Pilar, Senior Vice President of The Education Trust, presented on data for transformation*

Wil del Pilar, Senior Vice President of The Education Trust, explored how to use data for equity to transform HSIs from “serving” institutions to “transforming” institutions.



*HBCU Division Director, Vicki Robinson, led an engaging “Problem of Practice” discussion.*

Under the facilitation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Division Director Vicki Robinson, the conference included a “problem of practice” session where HSI division staff and grantees united to explore problems relating to student enrollment, retention, and engagement; institutionalization of project activities; student internships and research; hiring and retention of project staff; family and community engagement; and student trauma. Results were shared with the whole group during a report-out session to provide immediate and actionable solutions.





*OPE program specialist Rick Gaona leads a breakout discussion for attendees.*

The division plans to use the conversations and lessons learned from the conference to continue discussions through fall webinars on topics of shared interest. To learn more about the HSI project directors' meeting and other upcoming events, please email [HSInewsletter@ed.gov](mailto:HSInewsletter@ed.gov).

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## **Secretary Cardona Participates in Historically Black Colleges and Universities Roundtable**

Submission by Megan Singleton, Ashley Hillary, and Sariane Leigh

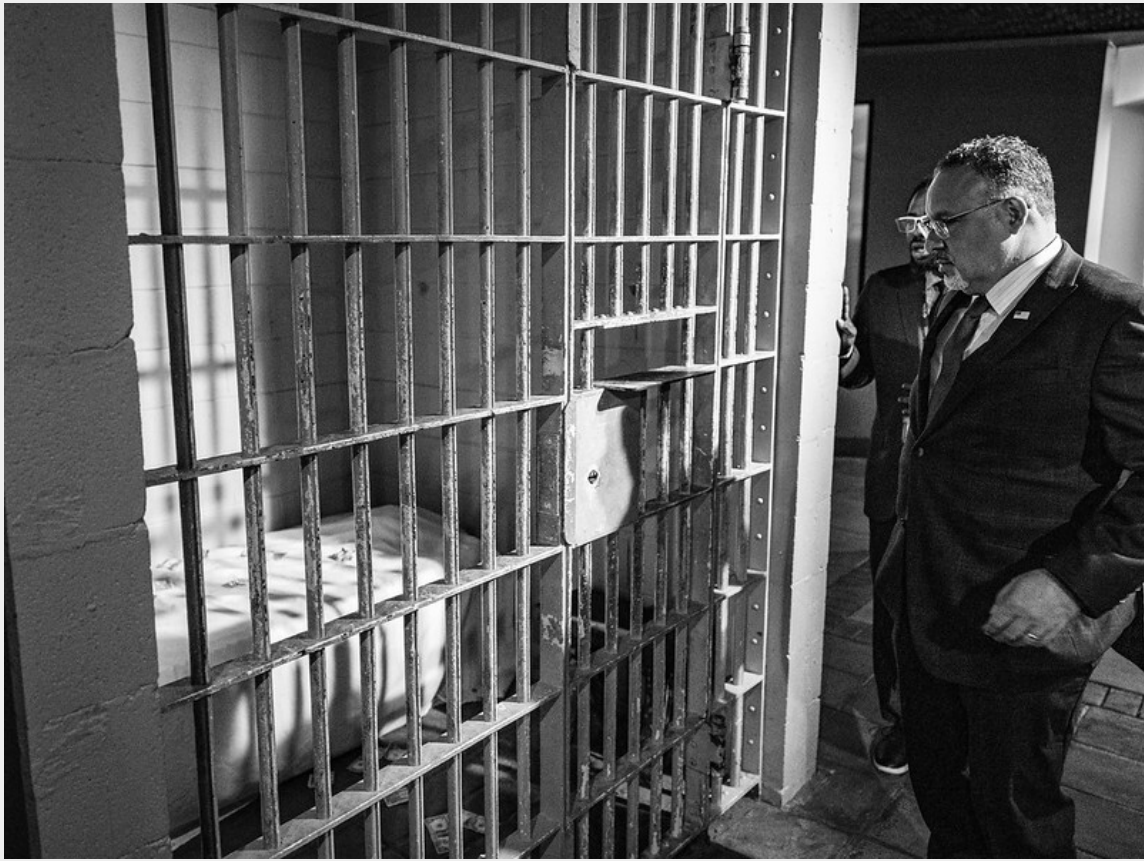
Secretary Cardona discussed his efforts to support HBCUs during a visit to Birmingham, Alabama, on Aug. 3.





*Secretary Cardona and Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin held a roundtable to address key issues facing Alabama HBCUs.*

Secretary Cardona spoke with university leaders and stakeholders about the needs of HBCUs, including building maintenance and infrastructure requirements. HBCU leaders shared with Cardona their efforts to support students through their college careers, such as by providing dual enrollment opportunities and access to mental health resources.



*Secretary Cardona visiting the jail cell where Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote "Letters from Birmingham Jail."*

Secretary Cardona highlighted the importance of Black history in American history curriculums and conducted visits to key sites in the American civil rights movement.



*Secretary Cardona at the memorial for the four girls who died at 16th Street Baptist Church - Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, and Carole Rosamond Robertson.*

Secretary Cardona honored the [four children who were murdered by a racially motivated church bombing at 16th Street Baptist Church](#) in Birmingham, Alabama.





*Secretary Cardona meeting with HBCU stakeholders and Birmingham mayor Randall Woodfin.*

Cardona told participants, “What we’re noticing is many of our Black students are looking at HBCUs as a place where they can go and be themselves and not have to deal with some of the not so overt attacks on Black curriculum or equity in general. That means that they need additional support, additional funding to make sure they have adequate educators and facilities to receive these students.”

“It’s sad that in 2023 there are students that can’t be their authentic selves on campuses across our country. We have a responsibility as educators to make sure our students feel welcome, and HBCUs do that exceptionally well,” he added.

Alabama is the site of 14 public and private HBCUs — more than any state in the country. Cardona expressed the federal government’s commitment to ensuring HBCUs in the state and nationwide have the same access to grants and contracts as other two- and four-year institutions. He noted that recent increases to Pell grants will help more students access a college degree.

Read more about Cardona's Alabama [tour](#).

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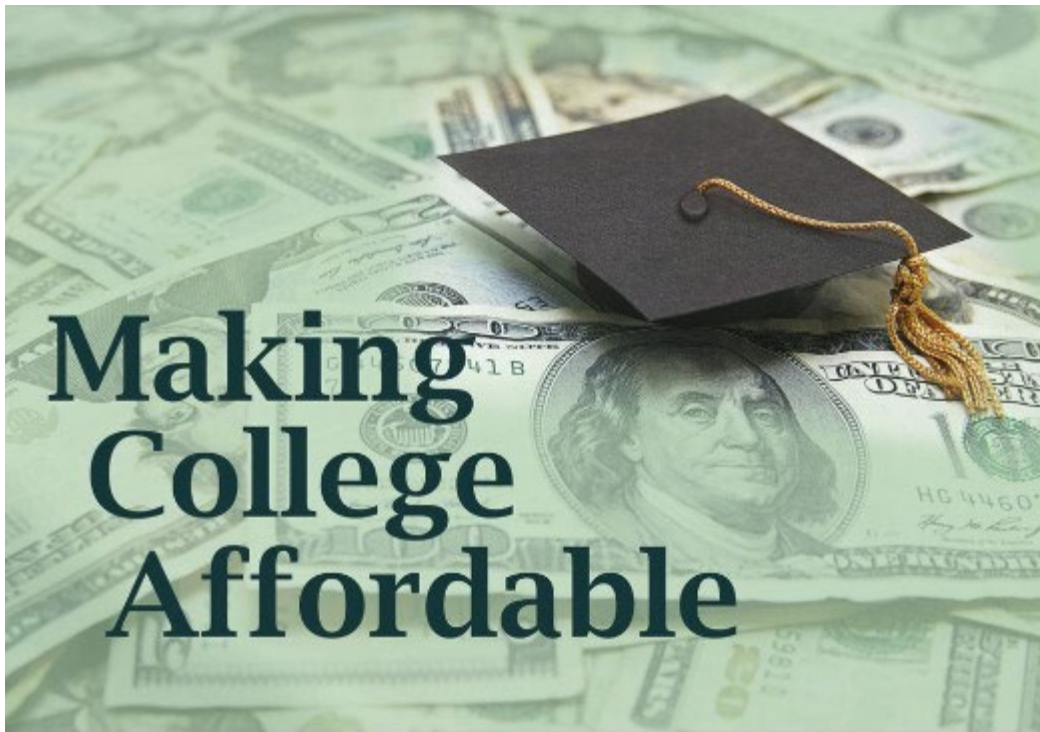
**Register for the HBCU Conference Sept. 24–28, 2023**



The annual National Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Week Conference is planned under the leadership of the White House Initiative on HBCUs and with input from the President's Board of Advisors on HBCUs and its conference sponsors. It provides a forum to exchange information and share innovations among and between institutions. Stakeholders, which include federal agencies, private sector companies, and philanthropic organizations, provide an overview of successful engagements that, if replicated, could improve instruction, degree completion, and the understanding of federal policies that shape and support higher education. The new HBCU newsletter highlights the success stories of our funded programs and their impact on forging excellence on HBCU campuses. Read the new HBCU newsletter [here](#).

National HBCU Week will be held in Washington, DC on September 24-28, 2023. [Register Here!](#)

## **New Report Looks at College Costs.**



*The Policy, Planning, and Innovation Division in OPE released the 2023 College Affordability and Transparency report in March*

The Department recently released the [2023 College Affordability and Transparency Report](#). The findings in the report are based on the analysis of data submitted by higher education institutions on the 2021 College Affordability and Transparency Explanation Form. The report attributes student services, instruction, institutional support, and academic support as the most common areas experiencing cost increases, thereby leading to an increase in college costs. Staff additions, changes in reporting methodologies, increased enrollment, salary and benefits expenses, new program additions, and technology or infrastructure updates are factors that may further drive cost increases.

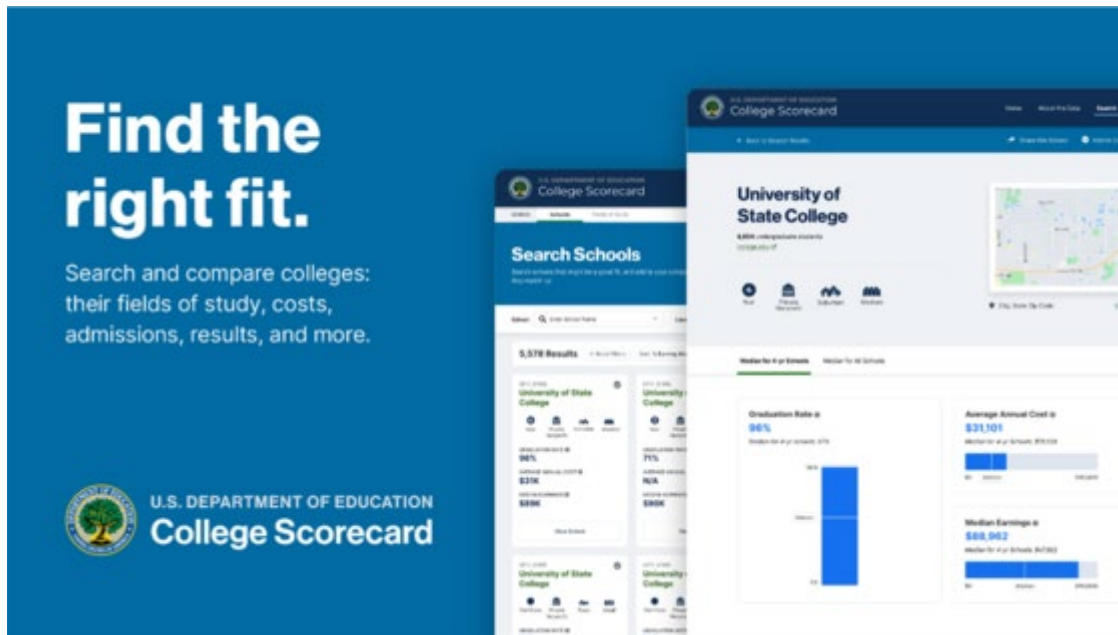
Approximately 79% of institutions with significant cost increases indicated exclusive control over student charges. Some reasons institutions reported as factors leading to the increase in their tuition and fees included changes in the largest program offered, increased credit hours for full-time tuition calculation, decreases in state appropriations, and overall expense increases. Reasons for net price increases also included methodology-related issues, cost-of-living adjustments, and reporting errors.

The institutions that expressed plans to reduce costs reported adjusting staffing levels, modifying healthcare and benefit packages, eliminating underperforming programs, optimizing scheduling and operations, and renegotiating contracts.

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# Compare Schools With the College Scorecard



*Visit the College Scorecard website to learn more.*

Submission by Brian Fu, U.S. Department of Education

[College Scorecard](#) | [College Scorecard \(ed.gov\)](#)

The U.S. Department of Education's [College Scorecard](#) is a free and easy-to-use online tool that provides students, families, educators, counselors, and other college-access professionals with the information they need to make data-driven choices and find the right college fit. College Scorecard provides information on nearly all colleges in the United States, including career and technical colleges, community colleges, four-year schools, and many of those offering graduate and professional programs.

College Scorecard users can search for and filter schools by name, location, program offerings, and other key school characteristics and view data about costs, student loan debt, graduation rates, post-enrollment earnings, campus diversity, admissions test scores, acceptance rates, and more. Users may select multiple schools to compare their data on a single page and quickly identify the school that best fits their needs.

The College Scorecard supports students on their pathway to college and future careers by increasing the transparency of information that will help them understand the benefits of a higher education program. While data is available directly through the website, the College Scorecard also makes data available for download and through an API that is open to developers.

Last year alone, over 1.5 million customers logged over two million visits to the College Scorecard website to help find the best postsecondary fit. For more information, email the help desk at [scorecarddata@rti.org](mailto:scorecarddata@rti.org).

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## Recording of Student Loan Debt Relief Public Hearing Available on Department's YouTube Channel



*OPE Analyst, Aaron Washington (bottom left), leads discussions and public hearings for negotiated rulemaking.*

This public hearing is part of the Department's negotiated rulemaking for 2023–24 to make regulatory changes for the programs authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. For more information, please email Margo Schroeder at [Margo.Schroeder@ed.gov](mailto:Margo.Schroeder@ed.gov).

[Watch the Student Loan Debt Relief Public Hearing on YouTube](#)

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**Texas A&M Center for International Business  
Studies Impacts Students**







La Candelaria community member participating in a financial literacy training activity.



*Submission by Katy Lane, Director of the Center for International Business Studies, Mays Business School, Texas A&M University.*

The [Centers for International Business Education](#) (CIBE), in the Department's International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) Division, funded an outreach program for a group of undergraduate students from Texas A&M University's [Mays Business School](#). Students embarked on the experience of a lifetime in the Panama Global Sustainable Business program. They learned valuable insights into conducting business in Latin America during this spring break trip to Panama. The journey began with visits to historic sites and several companies in Panama City. Students furthered their cultural and business understanding by partnering with a local organization to create a sustainable impact within two communities in Panama's rural Penonomé region. The students conducted two business consultations with four diverse businesses and held six hours of financial literacy training that benefited 14 additional community members. They split into small groups to address their clients' accounting, marketing, and other business needs.



*Students conducting a business consultation with Mr. Guzman.*

The students assisted Mr. Guzman, a farmer from the El Escobal community, who has a business growing organic products and uses natural water sources to hydrate his crops.

The students presented him with marketing, accounting, and financial solutions, such as branding, establishing an accounting system, and monitoring year-to-year growth.

Mr. Guzman appreciated all he learned and said, "It has been a great opportunity since I was able to meet the volunteers and receive a great opportunity for my business and personal life. I hope [other communities] can also benefit from the presentations and the advice for their businesses. Thank you for your assistance."





*Students with Ms. Wong after presenting their final deliverables and recommendations.*



The students also worked with Ms. Wong, who owns the only *kiosco* (small store) in the La Candelaria community. She aims to reduce hunger by providing affordable food and encouraging other women to start businesses. The students assisting Ms. Wong discovered that her needs included help with managing inventory, general accounting, and marketing opportunities. As a result, they developed and taught her to use an income statement to keep track of what she buys and her revenue. They also made her a sign visible from the road and created a logo and flyers for her business. Ms. Wong stated, "It has been a great opportunity because [the students] provided us with excellent advice on all the topics necessary to grow our business."



*Group visiting the Miraflores Locks at the Panama Canal.*

The Panama Global Sustainable Business program is one of many impactful experiences supported by the Department's CIBE grant through Title VI funding. The two distinct experiences on this 10-day program enabled students to learn about Panama's history and culture and its impact on the world's economy. Additionally, the opportunity for these students to visit local businesses in Panama City and engage small entrepreneurs in rural Panama provided a perspective not possible from within the U.S. These unique experiences that allow hands-on learning and engagement with locals help develop our future leaders and instill a global mindset and Aggie core values in Mays Business School students.

Learn more about Centers for International Business Education grants

## McNair Research Scholars Gain New Knowledge in Summer Research Program

*Submitted by: Alexa Olson, University of Rochester*

Lalita Dahal is one of over 60 scholars and 14 University of Rochester Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program students who completed a 10-week summer research program in July, hosted by the university's Kearns Center. Dahal spent the summer conducting hands-on research at the University of Rochester Medical Center lab. Her research focused on a rare disorder called splenic diffuse red pulp lymphoma or SDRPL. Dahal's project focused on mapping the microscopic localization of SDRPL using immunofluorescent chemistry and immunohistochemistry to identify distinct patterns that can differentiate SDRPL from other similar disorders. Dahal said her summer experience has made a big impact and, most importantly, gave her the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning in her field of study. "Working alongside experienced mentors and faculty members has been invaluable, as it has allowed me to gain practical skills and insights that cannot be acquired solely through textbooks or lectures," Dahal said.



*Dahal working on her research project, July 2023. Photo: Alexa Olson, University of Rochester*

The McNair Program was first established at the University of Rochester in 1992. Beth Olivares, Executive Director of the Kearns Center and Dean for Diversity in arts, sciences, and engineering, said it is a program that is unique. “Students from low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority backgrounds have access to research experiences with faculty doing cutting-edge research at a highly competitive research institution.”

Olivares said that experiences like the one Dahal participated in give students confidence and the knowledge of how research works at the graduate level and prepare them for graduate programs upon earning their undergraduate degree. “Our students are incredibly successful, with over 75% going into doctoral programs within a couple of years of earning their undergraduate degrees (if not directly), and have diversified multiple graduate schools and the academy, as well as national research labs, NASA, the CDC, and many other industries across the globe. McNair is the model on which we have built many of our other undergraduate research programs.”

Assistant Director for college programs at the Kearns Center Melissa Raucci says the students who have taken part in the summer program, have impressed her. “This group of students is amongst the most driven, talented, and intellectually curious I have worked with. A true representation of the value and impact of our McNair program.”

Dahal and the rest of the McNair cohort showcased their research to faculty, students, and staff at the annual David T. Kearns Center Summer Research Symposium at the end of July.

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## **Delaware State University Flight Training Program Established**





*Delaware State University ROTC Cadets.*

Submission by Ashley Hillary and Megan Singleton, HBCU Division

Delaware State University (DSU), in partnership with the U.S. Army Cadet Command, launched its Flight Training Program (FTP). This program will allow 10 U.S. Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets majoring as professional pilots to get their flight lab fees paid, a total of \$121,000 per student. "That is a major investment by the Army," said Lt. Col. (Ret.) Michael Hale, director of aviation programs at DSU.

"Currently, the number of women and minorities in our aviator fields are vastly under-represented," said Brig. Gen. Amanda Azubuike, deputy commanding general of U.S. Army Cadet Command. "In our Army, women and people of color make up a fraction of all aviators — and we're working hard to improve that. Through programs like this, we're gaining traction." One of the cadets joining the program is Tejay Kelly, a junior at the university. Kelly joined the Delaware National Guard after driving a friend to a recruiter's office and hearing about the opportunities the Army could provide him. The FTP will allow Kelly to change his major back to professional pilot, after switching to aviation management because of the costly flight lab fees.

"Opportunity presents itself, so I am going to take it," Kelly said.

Read the full story by Amy Turner [HERE](#).





Left photo: Brig. Gen. Amanda Azubuiké (center), deputy commanding general of U.S. Army Cadet Command and Delaware State University students. Right photo: Brig. Gen. Amanda Azubuiké and Delaware State University President, Dr. Tony Allen.

## University of California Merced Bridges Gaps With Summer Math Academies



*The Talent Search program offered students the opportunity to front-load math concepts the students will learn this school year.*

*Submission by Elisabeth Pulido TRIO Project Director for the University of California Merced Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP), Talent Search Project*

The University of California Merced Center for Educational Partnerships TRIO Talent Search Project hosted a four-week Bridging the Gap in Mathematics Academy in summer

2022. In partnership with Le Grand Union High School District and Delhi Unified School District, in California's San Joaquin Central Valley, the Talent Search Project targeted incoming eighth, ninth, 10th, and 11th grade students to participate in the academy. For four weeks, 100 students were transported daily to UC Merced for accelerated math coursework in a vibrant college learning environment.

For this partnership, teachers used various teaching techniques and methods like differentiated learning, blended learning, a high-tech approach to learning, and game-based learning. In addition, teachers' access to Delta Math provided modules to create high-leverage assignments and track student learning. Instruction was tailored to students' needs, combining traditional face-to-face and technology-based learning to offer students a fun, engaging, and interactive learning environment — sometimes even teaching outdoors.

The academy yielded a 92% completion rate. Completers had an 87% passing rate, with 88% receiving a grade of B or better in their sequential math course in their fall semester.

Learn more about the Talent Search-funded summer bridge program [here](#).

## Office of Postsecondary Education Employee Spotlight: ReShone Moore



ReShone Moore's journey with the U.S. Department of Education started in Federal Student Aid and progressed to over 10 years with the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Moore then transferred to OPE's Office of Higher Education Programs. There, she started in the Student Service Division as a program lead and now serves as Division Director for the Graduate and Special Focus Programs Division.

Moore believes in the transformative power of education. She was a teacher and is a lifelong learner. Her "why" directly lines up with the mission and goals of OPE, its programs, and the participants that she serves. She loves hearing voices-from-the-field success stories. To Moore, her work doesn't feel like a job because she is transforming lives through the programs in which she serves.

She works to make sure that others who work alongside her and come behind her have access and opportunity to everything they need to be successful every day.

**Grantee Feedback: Grantee Satisfaction Survey Results Coming Soon!**

Thank you to the 900 grantees who responded to the annual [2023 Grantee Satisfaction Survey](#). OPE values the grantee project directors' feedback and suggestions for improvements when interacting with the Department. Our programs use the feedback you provide to improve the delivery of services to our grantee community. Contact your OPE program specialist 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](#).



# Become a Peer Reviewer with the U.S. Department of Education

Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE)



[List of OPE Grant Competitions](#)



*Gain a Valuable Credential while helping to shape the Future of Higher Education!*

Each year, OPE convenes panels of external education professionals and practitioners to serve as peer reviewers. Peer reviewers evaluate and score submitted applications against competition-specific criteria and announced priorities. Application scores are then used to inform the Secretary's funding decisions.

## Benefits of being a Peer Reviewer



### Development

Network with and learn from other noted higher education colleagues



### Service

Serve the higher education community by providing your unique expertise



### Innovation

Be exposed to new & innovative ideas to expand and enhance higher education



### Influence

Make recommendations to the Department on which projects to fund

If you are interested in serving as a peer reviewer for OPE, please review the current competitions ([linked above](#)).

For qualification requirements and more information, please visit our website, [here](#) or call the G5 hotline at 888-336-8930.



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