

# Education Exchange

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

2021

## FACES OF THE SOE

What makes our community thrive



## Dear Exchange Readers,

I write this message during the first week of classes in my new role as interim dean of the School of Education. It has been an eventful week, with a return to in-person instruction after COVID-19 moved many of us online, and unexpected flooding in the Northeast associated with Hurricane Ida.

Twenty-three years ago this week, I was a brand-new assistant professor during another memorable time for Syracusans: a Labor Day storm that wrought considerable damage locally and plunged my apartment into darkness for a full week. When I picture myself then, I am planning for my Literacy Methods classes on paper, by flickering candlelight.

Memorably enrolled in one of those classes was Cerri Banks, an undergraduate who later earned master's and doctoral degrees in cultural foundations of education that propelled her into a distinguished career as an administrator and researcher of higher education. Cerri returned this summer to her Orange roots as Syracuse University's new vice president for student success and continues to chair SOE's Board of Visitors. I cannot think of a better example than she of this line from former SU Chancellor Erastus Haven's charge to new students, now a fixture of contemporary Convocation ceremonies: "Somewhere along the way...you will become the teachers, and the teachers will learn from you."

As you read the fascinating, varied content in this issue, I hope you'll be inspired to promote learning, inclusion, and equity in your own context, as Cerri has. I hope you'll feel called to support SOE in whatever way suits you, by encouraging a prospective applicant, making a financial commitment, participating in a research study, or hosting a student in a field experience. And I hope you'll share your thoughts and experiences with us.

Our prevailing image from this moment may be of faces in masks, but I'm sure you can see us smiling behind the fabric about being together again as an SOE community. Best wishes for a happy, healthy and productive year ahead!

Warmly,



Kelly Chandler-Olcott

Interim Dean and Laura J. & L. Douglas Meredith Professor for Teaching Excellence



## Education Exchange

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### We would like to hear your comments.

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### On the Cover

Faculty, staff, students and alumni are the heart of the School of Education.

Images in this issue of *Education Exchange* taken during the COVID-19 pandemic were taken following proper guidelines. For more information on Syracuse University's health and safety policies, please see [syracuse.edu/staysafe](https://syracuse.edu/staysafe).





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# Dear School of Ed...

Thank you for answering our calls for feedback! We love hearing from our community.

#ProudtobeSOE

## Let us know what's on your mind:

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## WHY SYRACUSE

***“Syracuse is unique because of its longstanding tradition of honoring and building capacity in teachers. It’s not just about the heroics of the professors. The values are what drew me there in the first place and guided my career for a very long time.”***

I write to you this morning as a 1983 graduate of the Reading and Language Arts Center, a contemporary of Kathy Hinchman, and a student of Hal Herber, Pete Mosenthal, Don Leu and many others during that time. I read the *Education Exchange* yesterday and want to share some thoughts.

For me, coming to Syracuse meant coming to a place that deeply honored educators and teachers specifically. I was drawn to the values. I carried them with me over a 35 year career that stretched from schools in the Northwest Arctic to multiple, multiple experiences in urban schools in Lansing, Flint, Detroit and Memphis. I was not specifically educated to work in urban schools. Rather, I was provided a set of dispositions, starting at Syracuse, that are about openness to what is happening in schools and deep respect for the hard work of teachers. I listened, I learned. Where ever I could, I tried to help.

After my first job in Alaska, I moved to Michigan State where I worked for 22 years. I was on the forefront of the Professional Development School movement, working in a Flint, MI middle school for three years. I was attracted to the work at Michigan State because, at the time, we shared values very similar to what I experienced at Syracuse—deep respect for teachers and schools as the center of professional learning.

I moved to Memphis in 2008, as a result of the Michigan economic downturn and a job offer. Arriving in Memphis, I was enlisted by the Memphis City Schools to develop a literacy tutoring project for the massive numbers of elementary students who had been held back in grade. Ultimately, we trained 1200 local college students from 8 local colleges to improve literacy for 12 thousand elementary students over a 4 year period. I could not have imagined this work without my prior experiences at Syracuse and following.

I completed my career by working for Marc Tucker at the National Center on Education and the Economy. My assignment was to work with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to develop a career ladder system for teachers across the United States. Elements of this work have started to appear in several states. A culminating event was my trip with an NCEE team to Singapore, one of the top performing countries on PISA. There, I witnessed an educational system completely dedicated to the development and resourcing of teacher expertise. This was to the extent that professors do not teach teachers—recognized and proven professional teachers teach teachers while professors support the system in many other ways. I could see myself in the work of the professors in Singapore. And our team contemplated ways the US could move in similar directions.

The *Education Exchange* did a good job of picking up on a lot of these ideas. But I stopped cold when I read the data on page 2. That is all of the stuff that is easy to count, what impresses others in the academy, the alumni and the donors. What I do not want missed, however, is what I am conveying in this email. Syracuse is unique because of its longstanding tradition of honoring and building capacity in teachers. It’s not just about the heroics of the professors. The values are what drew me there in the first place and guided my career for a very long time.

Mark Conley '83



## RLA: A LEGACY OF IMPACT AND INNOVATION

***“There is one name that is conspicuously absent from the article, William D. Sheldon. Bill was the one who first brought national recognition to the RLA department.”***

**F**irst I wish to congratulate Kathy Hinchman on her election to the Hall of Fame. She joins an elite group, some of whom I had the good fortune to know and be influenced by both inside and outside the classroom.

There is one name that is conspicuously absent from the article, William D. Sheldon. Bill was the one who first brought national recognition to the RLA department. He was a pioneer. He fostered community involvement by bringing in local school children with reading difficulties to attend the reading clinic. He had the department offer reading and study skills classes to undergraduates. He was a mentor to graduate students in their research and scholarship. His list of accomplishments would go on for pages.

Bill was the one who led the department made up of scholars and innovators like Hall Herber and Margaret Early, and he too is in the Hall of Fame.

*Andrew B. Pachtman, Ph.D. G’76*

## KEEP MOVING FORWARD

***“What a delight to read of the directions our SOE is heading.”***

**W**hat a delight to read of the directions our SOE is heading. I am so proud to have been part of the early efforts. In my efforts 50 years ago to foster inclusion SU was not only supportive emotionally but also provided valuable resources like spaces for Jowonio School! So here we are after all these years and you all keep moving forward. Thank you for all you do.

*Peter Knoblock  
School of Education Professor Emeritus*



# Events

We kept our community connected throughout the year at these engaging virtual and in-person events.



12 NOVEMBER 2020

## 2020 Landscape of Urban Education Lecture Series: Leading in Precarious Times

Seven SOE alumni kicked off the virtual lecture series with a panel discussion on *What Makes a Leader, Taking a Stand, and Leadership Needed Now: A Conversation with Black SOE Alumni*. The discussion about school and community leadership focused on the evolving needs and strategies due to the pandemic, and how the SOE community can continue to support all students through leadership.

Panelists included Cerri Banks '00, G'04, G'05, G'06 (moderator) vice president for student success, Syracuse University; Paul M. Buckley G'12, vice president & chief diversity and inclusion officer at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center; Reba Hodge '02 G'16, school administrator, Van Duyn Elementary, Syracuse City School District; Gala Hughley G'20, mathematics teacher, Brighton Academy, Syracuse City School District; Don C. Sawyer III G'03, G'08, G'13, vice president for equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer at Quinnipiac University; Tyrone Shaw '10 G'12, teacher, McKinley Technology High School, Washington, D.C.; Kimberly Williams Brown G'11 G'16 G'17, assistant professor of education and steering committee member for Africana Studies, Vassar College.



3 MARCH 2021

## Annual Atrocity Studies Lecture on Nagorno Karabakh

*The 2020 Nagorno Karabakh War: Actors, Antecedents, and Aftermath*, an illustrated lecture by Khatchig Mouradian (Columbia University), mapped the trajectory and humanitarian toll of the 2020 war in Nagorno Karabakh and explored its historical and geopolitical contexts. The lecture series is hosted by the minor in Atrocity Studies and the Practices of Social Justice, supported by Lauri '77 and Jeffrey Zell '77.



Abigail Tick  
#WhyIdidntReport



Andrea Constant  
#SayHerName



Grace Asch  
#OscarsSoWhite



Adriana Lobo  
#NIUaMas

## The Social Justice #Hashtag Project

4 MARCH 2021

## The Social Justice #Hashtag Project: Annual Lender Center Fellowship Symposium

Casarae Abdul-Ghani, assistant professor of African American Literature and Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences, along with student fellows Abigail Tick '22, Andrea Constant '24, Grace Asch '22 and Adriana Lobo '22, presented original research examining the intersection between social media and social justice.

Mark Anthony Neal, chair of the Department of African and African American Studies at Duke University and Founding Director of the Center for Arts, Digital Culture, and Entrepreneurship served as keynote speaker.





**SPRING 2021**

## Welcome State Senators!

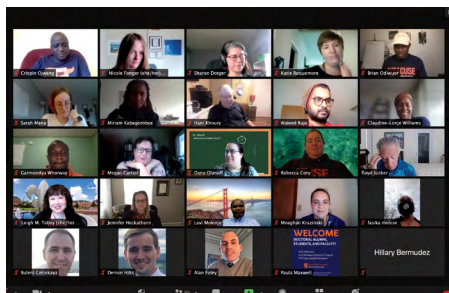
The Center on Disability and Inclusion welcomed New York State Senators Rachel May (bottom photo, second from left) and John Mannion (top photo, second from left) to the School of Education to visit the Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education and students from InclusiveU over the spring semester.



**26 MARCH 2021**

## Redefining Inclusion: Life as an InclusiveU Student

InclusiveU hosted a student and alumni panel during Forever Orange Week, a week celebrating the lifelong connection to Syracuse University that begins the moment a student first steps on campus, to share stories about their lives in college and beyond.



**9 APRIL 2021**

## Virtual Reception at AERA's Annual Meeting

Alumni, students, and current and emeriti faculty from across the School of Education showed up in their orange to network and reminisce. Over 50 participants headed to breakout rooms, sorted by SOE departments, to have smaller conversations and connect.

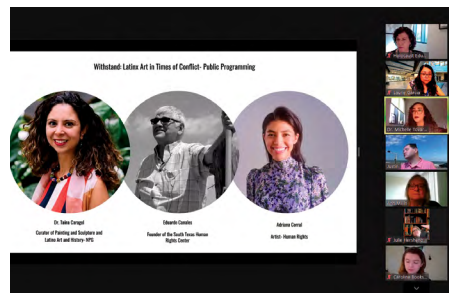
Each year, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting is the world's largest gathering of education researchers and a showcase for groundbreaking, innovative studies in an array of areas.



**16-17 APRIL 2021**

## Policed Bodies: A Community Conversation on Race, Disability and Justice

The Lender Center for Social Justice, The Center on Disability and Inclusion and The Landscape of Urban Education Lecture Series presented *Policed Bodies*, a two-day conversation on issues of race, disability and justice in the policing of bodies in communities and schools. The event brought together national experts, community activists and local stakeholders.



**24-27 MAY 2021**

## The Warren and Spector/Warren Fellowship for Future Teachers

During this four-day intensive virtual program held annually in partnership with the Holocaust Museum Houston, student fellows engaged with nationally recognized scholars and Holocaust survivors to explore historical, pedagogical and personal contexts for understanding the Holocaust.



**25 MAY 2021**

## The Big Shift: Special Education and Mental Health in 2021

What does the transition into the post pandemic world look like for families, teachers and individuals with disabilities in work and school? For Mental Health Awareness Month, *The Big Shift* panel discussion addressed the concerns and resources needed as we entered the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. ●

# Campus Collaborations

Faculty, staff and students reach across campus in innovative ways



*InclusiveU student Robbie Howes prepares to present his inclusive design project (May 2021)*

## InclusiveU Collaboration with Syracuse University Libraries' Blackstone LaunchPad and the College of Visual and Performing Arts

**I**ntelligence++ is a new inclusive entrepreneurship and design course taught by Don Carr, professor in VPA's School of Design, with support from Beth Myers, assistant professor of inclusive education in the School of Education and executive director of the Taishoff Center, and Linda Dickerson-Hartsock, adjunct faculty member in the Whitman School of Management and executive director of the LaunchPad.

With an emphasis on interdisciplinary and collaborative innovation, the full-year Intelligence++ course is available to both undergraduate and graduate students from any school or college at Syracuse University, including students with intellectual disability from InclusiveU.

In this inaugural course, concepts developed throughout the year were presented to a panel of experts in a culminating competition in the spring, with \$30,000 in seed funding awarded to the most promising ideas for further development.

"To my knowledge, this is the only program that integrates students from various disciplines with students with intellectual disability into collaborative teams to problem solve design solutions," says Myers. "Incorporating perspectives from all users and participants will most certainly result in an enhanced and sustainable user-focused experience."

This flagship program was made possible through the support of the Zaccai Foundation for Augmented Intelligence, founded by Gianfranco Zaccai '70 H'09. The Zaccai Foundation seeks to develop, stimulate and leverage innovation to enable and empower individuals with intellectual disability, their families and their communities to improve quality of life and benefit society.

Innovations developed through the 2020-2021 Intelligence++ class include a dating and friendship app built with principles of universal design; a wearable device using sensors designed to assist students with disabilities by limiting the effects of distractions and helping to regain focus and concentration; and the world's first sensory deprivation cocoon, enabling an easier dining experience for individuals with sensory disabilities.

***"To my knowledge, this is the only program that integrates students from various disciplines with students with intellectual disability into collaborative teams to problem solve design solutions."***

Beth Myers



## Desires and Harmony: Light Work Features Student Paintings and Drawings

InclusiveU student Omari Odom '21 took viewers in the Sharon H. Jacquet Education Commons on a journey through his imagination in this exhibition—from his interest in cartoons, video games and popular culture as a high school student to his current fascinations and interpretations of musical artists and beloved characters.

Originally Odom was scheduled to work at Light Work, a non-profit photo and imaging center located at Syracuse University, as part of his InclusiveU senior year internship, but those plans were usurped by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not wanting to waste his talent and energy, Light Work associate director Mary Lee Hodgens thought of other ways to engage him. The decision was made to build a show around his work, in partnership with the Lawrence B. Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education.

Odom has been drawing since he was four years old and cartoons have always been his favorite subject. His earliest inspirations came from watching black and white Mickey Mouse cartoons, and at a young age he set his sights on becoming an animator and illustrator.

Odom attended Liverpool Central Schools outside of Syracuse, but the thought of attending Syracuse University was “just a dream.” Through the InclusiveU program, Odom completed classes such as Experimental Animation, Drawing for Comic Books and Intro to 3D Animation/VFX.

In addition to taking interesting classes, Odom said the best part about InclusiveU was “being an SU student and not being treated different from anybody else.”

Omari Odom (above) gave a virtual tour of his exhibition (right) last fall.



## Grant Enhances Mental Health Services for CNY Children and Families

Derek X. Seward, associate professor and chair of the Department of Counseling and Human Services and Melissa Luke, Dean's Professor in the counseling department joined forces with Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics's School of Social Work, the College of Arts and Sciences' Department of Psychology and Upstate University's Psychiatry Faculty Practice to create a collaborative training program to serve high-need and high-demand populations in urban and rural areas in the Central New York region.

Like communities across the United States, Central New York faces an acute shortage of mental health professionals, particularly those who work with children and families. The stigma of mental health issues, combined with long waits to see psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and social workers, often means that families don't seek help until they face a significant crisis.

Through scholarships for trainees, enhanced field placement opportunities, a focus on improving services for people in high-need and high-demand areas, interprofessional collaboration and scholarly research, the project seeks to improve the availability and quality of mental health services for children, adolescents and families.

“I think it will be a wonderful opportunity for our clinical mental health counseling students whose training is very focused,” Seward says. “This project will provide more richness and training around working in interdisciplinary teams, which they normally don't get until they begin their field experiences. Most licensed counselors practice in interdisciplinary settings so this early exposure to other mental health professionals will serve our students well.”

The project is funded by a grant from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HRSA's mission is improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable. The principal investigator is Carrie J. Smith, professor and interim chair of the School of Social Work, and the grant will provide more than \$408,000 in the first year and an anticipated \$1.24 million over four years to fund the effort.

The project will also focus on early identification of behavioral health services in the context of primary care. The project leaders stress that mental health, like physical health, is improved by proactive screening, preventative care and early intervention that can identify ways to support children and families before concerns become a crisis.

“We are planning to provide ongoing training to site supervisors and other licensed practitioners who may be interested in expanding their skills in areas such as interprofessional collaboration, helping patients and families find accessible services and specific topics like trauma-informed care and cultural understanding,” Luke says. The project team believes that this kind of capacity-building can help facilitate greater access to support services, counseling and mental health care in all kinds of settings. ●



Derek X. Seward (top) and Melissa Luke





Rolling inducted as president of the National Art Education Association

# A Path Well Traveled

**James Haywood Rolling Jr. appointed co-director of Lender Center for Social Justice**

James Haywood Rolling Jr. walked into the Museum of Modern Art in New York City wearing faded jeans, old sneakers and a backpack, just like the rest of his classmates from Cooper Union, a private college in the city. Rolling, still not much older than 16 after having started college a year early, was at the museum with the rest of his lithography class to see a special collection of prints.

As the students moved past the front desk, a security guard asked if he could help Rolling. The guard, who was African American, told Rolling that the delivery entrance was on the side of the building, implying that Rolling was a delivery boy and not part of the class.

"I felt like I had been slapped upside my head with his powerful uniform-clad words, sucker-punched by a representative of the (museum), the institution on whose property I stood," Rolling writes in his new memoir *Growing Up Ugly: Memoirs of a Black Boy Daydreaming*. "I was left stinging."

While his white classmates didn't react at all, Rolling realized he had been singled out because he was the only African American in the group. After explaining he was with the class, Rolling followed the group to another reception area on the upper floor. This time, a white female receptionist singled out Rolling and asked, "May I help you?"

"No, you may not help me! I am with the group!" Rolling said angrily before peeling away from the group and heading to the subway. It was the first time, Rolling writes, when "all I felt was my skin."

"I was a first-generation college student on a full tuition scholarship at the Cooper Union but no one walking past me could see that. My skin was all in the way," Rolling writes. "Fully aware of myself as others saw me, I felt ashamed and angry at what I was wearing—not the torn jeans and beat-up sneakers, but the skin."

Now a Syracuse University professor, Rolling says that day "shook his awareness" that his pigmentation sent signals to people that he was something other than a full-scholarship college student attending a museum exhibit with his class. It was, Rolling says, just one of the earliest examples of the microaggressions, slights and underestimations he has had to overcome in his life.



**“When you talk to James, you realize he is full of energy and creativity, but what resonates most to me is his commitment to the area closest to our hearts, social justice.”**

Marvin Lender

“From that day I understood I was always going to be perceived differently because of my hue, but I also didn’t want that to be an impediment for me accomplishing the things I was interested in doing,” Rolling says. “I wanted to become a catalyst for other individuals who are likewise traumatized by a society that clearly thinks very little of them and has low expectations for their achievement.”

Rolling, a dual professor of arts education in the College of Visual and Performing Arts and teaching and leadership in the School of Education, has spent his entire career as an educator focused on developing the next generation of diverse, creative leaders who travel paths they weren’t aware they could travel. And that’s why Rolling was the ideal candidate to replace Marcelle Haddix as co-director of the Lender Center for Social Justice at Syracuse University.

Rolling’s appointment was announced March 4 at the annual Lender Symposium and he began his three-year term at the start of the fall semester.

“I’ve never seen a resume with involvement in such a diverse group of areas,” says Marvin Lender ’63, who along with his wife, Helaine ’65, provided the inspiration and funding for the Lender Center. “When you talk to James, you realize he is full of energy and creativity, but what resonates most to me is his commitment to the area closest to our hearts, social justice.”

### **A Commitment to Students and Social Justice**

To fulfill their enduring mission to develop ethical and courageous citizens, Marvin and Helaine Lender provided a generous \$5 million gift to create a multidisciplinary center that would include research support, symposia and faculty and student fellowships. The Lender Center for Social Justice launched in September 2018, and Haddix, Distinguished Dean’s Professor of Literacy, Race and Justice in the School of Education, and Kendall Phillips, professor of communication and rhetorical studies in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, were named as the inaugural co-directors.

Haddix’s three-year term ended this spring and Phillips’ term will end next year. The idea of limiting a co-director’s term to three years, Phillips says, is to prevent “founder’s syndrome,” which occurs when someone who builds a system doesn’t allow it to develop and grow.

“Marcelle and Kendall have made an incredible contribution because they have set, not just the tone, but the structure on how the center will operate and the procedures by which we’ll be guided,” Marvin Lender says. “That’s very important, because we were starting from scratch and there was no model for this. To their credit, they have set the foundation here so that James and the people who will follow will have a starting point.”

With Rolling, Phillips says, the Lender Center found a co-director who will adhere to the center’s principles but also bring a fresh perspective. Phillips and Rolling previously worked together in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, where Phillips was an associate dean of research and graduate studies and Rolling was VPA’s first director of diversity, equity and inclusion.

“James is a tremendously accomplished scholar; his resume is staggering,” Phillips says. “And I think what really makes James stand out, to me, is that he combines a very impressive intelligence with a wide-ranging vision and a deep commitment to issues of social justice, equity, inclusivity. He really brings that full package.”

Rolling received his undergraduate degree from Cooper Union in 1988 and graduate degrees from Syracuse University (M.F.A.) and Columbia University’s Teachers College (Ed.M. and Ed.D.). He started his professional career as an elementary school art teacher, moved to Pennsylvania State University as an assistant professor of art education in 2005 and joined Syracuse University in 2007 in his dual role in VPA and the School of Education and as the university’s chair of Arts Education.

Rolling’s reach extends nationally as he was recently elected president of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), where he previously served as chair of the association’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Commission.



## **“Archie Bunker isn’t the enemy, it’s the systems that produce the Archie Bunkers.”**

James H. Rolling Jr.

Like Phillips, Haddix has had several opportunities to collaborate with Rolling on community-engagement and literacy-focused projects, and she considers him a mentor as she has moved up the academic ranks. Haddix says the Lender Center position was “a natural progression” for Rolling as more of his local and national work has centered around diversity, equity and inclusion.

“The Lender Center’s main mission is supporting and cultivating student leaders who are socially just and equity-minded, and I know James to be a committed and passionate teacher, educator and advisor to his students,” Haddix says. “That love and commitment to teaching and education is an important attribute to being one of the co-directors.”

### **If Archie Bunker Isn’t the Enemy, What Is?**

On Feb. 27, 2020, Rolling presented “Strategies for Effective Intervention into Systemic and Structural Inequities” at Syracuse University’s first Racial Equity Academic Symposium. His talk focused on how humans are immersed in, sustained through and sometimes imperiled by various types of systems.

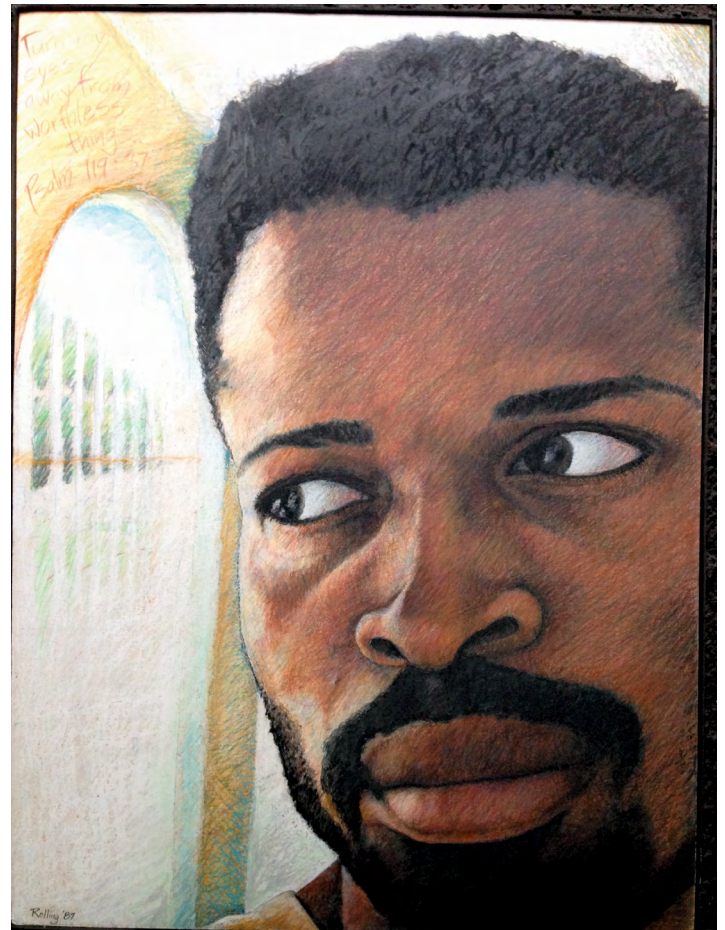
Since the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery in 2020, Rolling says he has turned his focus to researching how a thorough understanding of the nature of systems can become an advantage in the effort to effectively dismantle what is typically termed “systemic racism.” Last summer, at the request of the NAEA’s executive director, Rolling wrote an open letter to art educators that explored how to construct an anti-racist agenda based on the understanding that the primary problem is not individual mindsets, but actually the systemic conditions that produce those mindsets.

“Archie Bunker isn’t the enemy, it’s the systems that produce the Archie Bunkers,” Rolling says, referring to the famously bigoted TV character from the 1970s sitcom “All in the Family.”

Rolling’s recent activities—his diversity, equity and inclusion roles with the College of Visual and Performing Arts; the open letter and his recent presentation at the university’s Racial Equity Academic Symposium; and his new memoir, which is dedicated to youngsters who are looking to discover their own creative superpowers—are all the result of a lifelong journey that will continue at the Lender Center.

“I’ve always frankly thought of myself more as a creativity educator than an arts educator,” Rolling says. “So my interest has always been, how do we create a better society and greater common ground? How do we create better functioning and better relationships? How do we create effective communication and transformation?”

In other words, how can you redirect and educate the Archie Bunkers before they become Archie Bunkers, and what can the



Self-portrait by James H. Rolling Jr.

Lender Center bring to this effort? A former architecture school major at the Cooper Union before switching to fine art, Rolling is planning to build a few working models to find out.

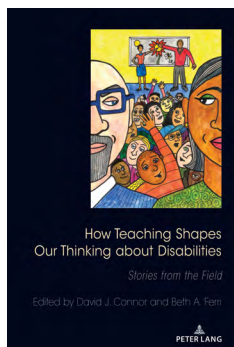
“One of the avenues the Lender Center might be able to explore is, how do you redesign the behaviors of institutions and structures that are resistant to change?” Rolling says. “I’m going to keep up my own scholarship about these matters and hopefully there’s a synergy between what I and Kendall and other directors who follow behind us—as well as future student and faculty fellows—can all do that will help inform that key question.”

The time is not just right for Rolling, it’s right for all of us. From the Floyd, Taylor and Arbery murders to the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, the last year has told us we are long overdue for change, and it’s time to start looking deeper at the reasons why it has been so difficult to change.

“We’re at a pretty low point, and we keep going down. We’re anything but turned around in this country,” Lender says. “The Lender Center is not the answer to all of the problems we are having, but we can make a contribution and do the right thing, and to do that we need the right people in place. James is one of those people.” ●



# Faculty Bookshelf



## ***How Teaching Shapes Our Thinking About Disabilities: Stories from the Field***

Beth A. Ferri and David J. Connor  
(May 2021)

This collection, edited by Beth A. Ferri and her longtime collaborator David J. Connor, brings together 20 contributors who share deeply personal and powerful stories about the lasting lessons they took away from their early experiences of teaching students with dis/abilities in K-12 settings. The authors and editors describe how their interactions with children and youth, parents and administrators, in the context of their classrooms and schools, influenced their shift away from the limiting discourse of special education and toward their become critical special educators and disability studies scholars. Connecting theory and practice, the authors share how they came to reclaim, reframe and reimagine disability as a natural part of human diversity and galvanized their research trajectories around studying issues of access and equity.

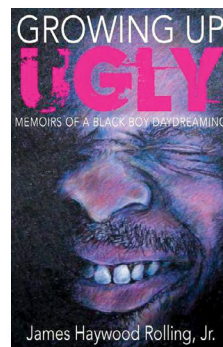


## ***Five Practices for Equity-Focused School Leadership***

George Theoharis, Sharon I. Radd,  
Gretchen Givens Generett and  
Mark Anthony Gooden  
(Feb. 2021)

This timely and essential book provides a comprehensive guide for school leaders who desire to engage their school communities in transformative systemic change. Sharon I. Radd, Gretchen Givens Generett, Mark Anthony Gooden and George Theoharis offer five practices to increase educational equity and eliminate marginalization based on race, disability, socioeconomic, language, gender and sexual identity and religion. For each dimension of diversity, the authors provide background information for understanding the current realities in schools and beyond, and they suggest “disruptive practices” to replace the status quo in order to achieve full inclusion and educational excellence for every child.

A call to action that is both passionate and practical, *Five Practices for Equity-Focused School Leadership* is an indispensable roadmap for educators undertaking the journey toward an education system that acknowledges and advances the worth and potential of all students.



## ***Growing Up Ugly: Memoirs of a Black Boy Daydreaming***

James Haywood Rolling Jr.  
(Dec. 2020)

*Growing Up Ugly* is an inspirational coming-of-age memoir that traces the upbringing of a painfully shy child with chronically low self-esteem—a Black boy reprimanded for daydreaming too much and raised in a struggling inner-city New York neighborhood—who eventually grew to become an artist, a leading educator and an award-winning scholar. In this new release from Simple Word Publications, author James Haywood Rolling composes a rich canvas of raw vignettes, family photos, original illustrations and poems in order to sketch a candid self-portrait. No matter who or what first made you feel ugly, here is storytelling that elevates its readers beyond their own scars, social anxiety or low self-esteem. This is a book for anyone who has ever been underestimated, bullied, abused or simply overlooked. It's time to re-imagine your way from daydreams to destiny. ●

# Professor of Music Education Elisa Dekaney Named Meredith Professor of Teaching Excellence

**“I believe in student-centered classrooms where students bring experiences and knowledge that contribute to the overall growth of our learning community. In the end, learning is a reciprocal process.”**

Elisa Dekaney

**R**ecognizing and rewarding outstanding teaching at Syracuse University, recipients of the Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professorship of Teaching Excellence are enrolled for life in the Meredith Symposium, and supported for a three-year term in conducting a project that can enrich both the practice and scholarship of teaching and learning.

Dekaney’s project, “Decolonizing the music curriculum: Unpacking the social construction of knowledge through the lenses of critical social justice,” will focus on a curriculum redesign with the Setnor School of Music and will engage students and faculty in informing meaningful changes in the area of diversity.

Dekaney was introduced to the Meredith Professorship program early in her time at Syracuse by School of Education professor emeritus Jerry Mager. “He invited me to join him at several Meredith events in which outstanding and innovative projects around learning and teaching were the focus. I recognized early on that excellent teaching was meaningfully rewarded at Syracuse University.”

“I believe in student-centered classrooms where students bring experiences and knowledge that contribute to the overall growth of our learning community,” says Dekaney of her teaching philosophy. She sees all musical expression as intrinsically valuable, and her classes incorporate a variety of musical forms, periods and locales. This encourages not only deeper student understanding, but more interaction and sharing of their own experiences and backgrounds. “In the end, learning is a reciprocal process.”

Along with her husband Joshua Dekaney, Elisa Dekaney has been the founder and director of Samba Laranja, the Syracuse University Brazilian Ensemble, since 2001. Under their direction, Samba Laranja performs regularly for K-12 schools across Central New York and for events in the community and on campus. She has conducted many Syracuse University choirs including the Oratorio Society, Concert Choir and Women’s Choir.

Dekaney is a professor of music education (a dual appointment with College of Visual and Performing Arts’ Setnor School of Music) and the associate dean for research, graduate studies and internationalization within VPA. From 2014-2020 she was a core faculty member for the Renée Crown Honors Program. ●





## Beth Ferri Named Associate Dean for Research

*Ferri with Otto the Orange at the 2019 School of Education Welcome Back Picnic*

**B**eth Ferri, professor of inclusive education and disability studies, has been named associate dean for research in the School of Education.

“Professor Ferri is an internationally and nationally respected scholar whose work is influential in inclusive education and disability studies. Her stellar research record, including securing external funding for research and doctoral training, makes her an effective mentor and leader for the School of Education’s dynamic research community,” says Interim Dean Kelly Chandler-Olcott.

Ferri has coordinated the Ph.D. program in special education since 2006. She has published widely on the intersections of race, gender and disability, including her collaborative work (with David J. Connor and Subini Annamma) to establish a new area of inquiry, Disability Studies Critical Race Theory (DisCrit). She is currently co-principal investigator of Project INCLUDE, a \$7.5 million, three-institution consortium (with Florida International University and Arizona State University), funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education to train and support doctoral scholars. In addition to over 60 journal articles and chapters, she has published five co-authored and co-edited books, including her two most recent volumes, *Stories from our Classrooms: How Working in Education Shapes Thinking about Dis/Ability* (with Connor; Peter Lang Press, 2021) and the forthcoming (with Annamma & Connor) “DisCrit Expanded: Inquiries, Reverberations & Ruptures” (Teachers College Press).

“The School of Education at Syracuse University has a long and distinguished history of faculty engaging in innovative, justice-oriented research and creative works. I am really looking forward to supporting the next generation of scholars and researchers as they move the ball forward and expand our knowledge base in creative new ways,” says Ferri. “In my role as associate dean of research, I want to help to raise the research profile of the School of Education, support grant development and foster collaborative inquiry.”

Ferri succeeds Melissa Luke, who served as associate dean from 2018-2021 and stepped down to focus on her role as a Provost Faculty Fellow. During her time as associate dean, the School of Education increased its external grant awards totals from \$4.04 million in fiscal year 2018 to \$9.09 million in fiscal year 2020. Luke was instrumental in expanding research support for faculty and graduate students, including enhancing the faculty mentoring program, implementing faculty leadership and professional development programming, establishing an office of research and grants administration and supporting development of three new School of Education research centers. As associate dean, she also expanded a new internal grant program for School of Education faculty.

“Professor Luke has helped strengthen the school’s cross-disciplinary connections, including leadership of University-wide research clusters. We appreciate her substantial contributions and look forward to her expertise benefiting the broader Syracuse University community,” says Chandler-Olcott. ●



# Alumni Roundup

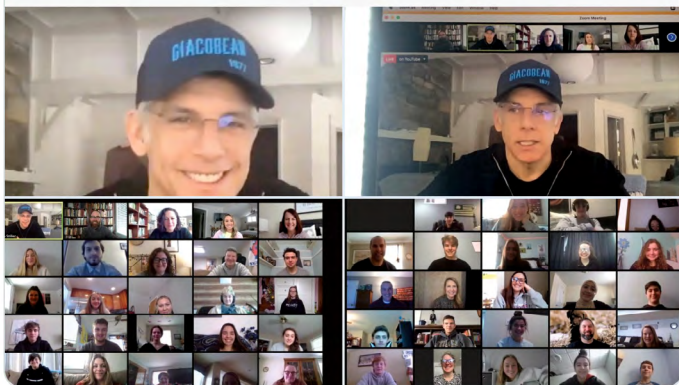


**Ben Stiller**   
 @RedHourBen

What a great way to spend a [#SnowDay](#). Thanks to [@konewvine](#) and all the teachers and students ( film makers and writers) from up in the Syracuse area for a chance to talk about the creative process.

**Keith Newvine** @konewvine · Feb 2

Over 300 people from @Bville\_Bees @fmschools @CorcoranCougars @WestGeneseeCSD @SUNYGeneseo @WCUofPA joined @RedHourBen on @zoom\_us & @YouTube today. Students asked thoughtful, insightful, funny questions. Ben was kind, patient, inspiring, and caring—& does a great @springsteen.



**Keith Newvine '02 G'08** hosted actor Ben Stiller for a virtual writing workshop with over 300 high school students from across Central New York.

Welcome back Coach! **Kayla Treanor '16**, a graduate of the selected studies in education undergraduate program, has been named the new head coach of the Syracuse Orange women's lacrosse team. She was a four-time All-American playing at Syracuse, and succeeds newly named men's lacrosse head coach Gary Gait.

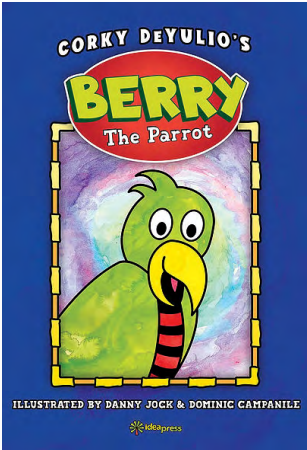


Special education teacher **Adrian Hernandez '01** used his free time during the pandemic to renovate school basketball courts at Desert View Elementary School in Pheonix, AZ. Using his own resources and money, along with some contributions from former colleagues, friends and family, the teams were able to continue playing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hernandez was interviewed about the project by Fox10 Phoenix. "We were not going to have a basketball season for either the boys or girls teams so I wanted to turn a negative situation into a positive situation for our community."





# #PROUDTOBESOE



**Wilson “Corky” DeYulio G’90** has authored a children’s book about *Barry the Parrot*. Barry is a colorful and intelligent parrot who starts the first of his many adventures in this inaugural book. Although the Rose family, of which Barry is a member, treats him very well and allows him to fly out of his cage and around the house, when he discovers the outside through the window he believes that freedom would bring him more happiness... Will it do that?

More at [ideapress-usa.com/perry-the-parrot](http://ideapress-usa.com/perry-the-parrot)



**Syracuse University School of Education**

July 28 at 12:30 PM · 🌐

Of the six Orange Olympians at the [#Tokyo2020](#) Games, three are [#ProudToBeSOE!](#)

- 🏑 Jenna Caira '12, physical education, helped Team Canada to softball 🥉 bronze.
- 🏊 Katie Zaferes '12, physical education, won 🥉 bronze in the triathlon for Team USA.
- 🏀 Kayla Alexander '13, social studies education, is in basketball group play for Team Canada.



**Katie Zaferes '12** (right) became the first Orange athlete since the 1928

Games to win multiple medals in a single Olympics. In the women’s triathlon, she claimed a bronze medal, finishing the rain-soaked course in 1:57.03. In the Olympics’ inaugural mixed relay triathlon, Zaferes helped lead the U.S. team to a silver medal.

Meet them all at [syracuse.edu/stories/orange-olympians-tokyo](http://syracuse.edu/stories/orange-olympians-tokyo). ●



# Educational Equity

## The Heart of 21st Century School Leadership

SOE's educational leadership programs promote institutional and educational equity

George Theoharis presents on educational equity to local school and district leaders.



Issues of access and opportunity are central to equity-focused educational leadership, which are also central to inclusive systems and philosophy. “Equity in education means full inclusion and educational excellence for every child, not just welcoming every child but ensuring opportunity to learn based on what each student needs,” says George Theoharis, professor of educational leadership and inclusive education.

Theoharis and his educational leadership colleagues—Leela George, associate teaching professor, and Courtney Mauldin, assistant professor—use popular illustrations that depict equity and equality as well as the historical and modern barriers that students face, portraying students watching a baseball game behind an uneven fence. Some students stand on lower ground, which changes the height of the uneven fence, or systemic barrier, in front


of them and blocks their access even further. Another image shows them working together to tear the fence down: justice. This is the unlevel playing field that equity in education seeks to remedy. In class, educational leadership students critique and remix their own images into the illustrations to show how they comprehend concepts of equality, equity and justice. “These images, and our programs, intentionally see the challenges of struggles as located not within the child but as the result of systems of inequality and inequity, the same viewpoint that guides us in the Department of Teaching and Leadership,” says George. “The images depict this by showing the three students as the same height, yet different because of their movements and colors.”

All too often, educational discourse embraces what the professors call *deficit thinking*, which positions the challenges and problems within the child, family or community. In the SOE programs—the certificate of advanced study (C.A.S.) and the doctorate (Ed.D.) in educational leadership—faculty ask students to wrestle with the ways they personally have embraced deficit thinking and where they see it in their schools.

“Inclusion means providing each student what they need in the same space and ending practices of selecting and sorting children based on ability, which further exacerbates the achievement or opportunity gap,” says Mauldin. She adds that educational equity “should impact all areas of schooling, from culture, staffing, outreach and family engagement to instruction, curriculum and scheduling. It is about understanding how all the identities students and adults bring to school impact them and the school,” Mauldin says.

Equity-focused leadership taught in the School of Education makes issues of race, class, sex, gender identity, disability, sexual identity and other historic and current marginalizing conditions in the United States central to educators’ advocacy, practice and vision. This concept centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools, and inclusion is a necessary condition for this equity.

Theoharis says that the challenges to creating more equitable schools are numerous. “Systemic inequity spans across historical, institutional, individual and interpersonal levels—interwoven with issues of race, poverty and disability.”

 Theoharis recently spoke with CNY Central on desegregation. Watch “The Map: Why is no one talking about desegregating Syracuse schools?” at [soe.syr.edu/edex-theoharis](https://soe.syr.edu/edex-theoharis).



**“People carry their histories.  
Your histories inform what you think,  
how you feel and how you react.”**

George Theoharis

“When we say historical, we mean that the problems we face today have their roots in centuries of human experience,” adds Theoharis.

He offers this example: Many families with homes in suburban communities in the Northeast and Midwest parts of the U.S., like the suburbs around Syracuse, can trace pieces of their economic status back to the GI Bill, when their grandfathers received federal assistance to attend college, participate in job training, start a new business and buy a home after their military service in World War II. These benefits were disproportionately available to white male veterans over African American and female veterans. Given that higher wages and home ownership are two fundamental ways to build family wealth, 70 years and three generations later the housing patterns, class differences and residential segregation reflect that history.

“People carry their histories,” Theoharis says. “Your histories inform what you think, how you feel and how you react.”

People who have been taught that they’re entitled to a good education expect one and will be more likely to demand improvement should they suspect their school is falling short, George says. Conversely, people whose lived experience in schools includes a pattern of unfair, disrespectful and exclusionary treatment will look for signs that patterns are repeating.



Courtney Mauldin

Inequity is also institutional, or structural, meaning “the way our system of schooling, and our entire society, are built and organized predictably lead to the types of disparate outcomes that exist today,” says Mauldin. The laws, processes and organizations used to engage in schooling and other aspects of today’s society perpetuate historical and current patterns of inequity and injustice.

“It is also essential that we recognize the importance of context when doing equity work. This means that we must be able to see the fence in the equity illustration—to really see it and evaluate historical systems and structures that have perpetuated inequity in our schools. Our work then, is to begin to dismantle those structures with a targeted reach.”

Adds Theoharis, “So many decades of tax, finance, housing and banking policies and practices have been built on top of the GI Bill that it is easy to avoid noticing how these institutionalized policies and practices extend existing inequities.”



## Educational Leadership Students Taking Theory Into Practice

**MOVING FROM** elementary school teaching to middle school administration this year was eye-opening for Nicole Heath ’07, G’09, G’10, G’21 (right). The number of students walking the halls in the first two weeks of school stunned her.



“Eventually I had to say to my admin team, the longer a student is out of class, the more they are being robbed of an equitable education. If we do not come up with a plan to get these students to remain in class, that is our fault, not theirs,” says Heath, a 6th grade administrative intern at Lincoln Middle School in the Syracuse City school district. She is a four-time graduate of Syracuse University, including two master’s degrees from the School of Education and most recently a C.A.S. in educational leadership.

Her team has decided to disrupt the building’s previous culture, which Heath calls “the idea that only the student is at fault for leaving the classroom, and the lack of accountability that is being placed on us, the adults, who are allowing this to happen.” In progress is a revamping of the building’s behavior hierarchy, getting support from the school leadership and sharing the new behavior with all staff.

Heath, who taught eight years at Seymour Dual Language Academy in Syracuse, cites a thought from Professor George Theoharis’ book *The School Leaders Our Children Deserve*: “If you do not view yourself as a social justice leader, then you have already done your students a disservice.”

**EQUITY AUDITS** in the Baldwinsville school district in suburban Syracuse revealed vast disparities in the student experience, says Deputy Superintendent Joseph DeBarbieri ’02, G’06 (right), a graduate of the educational leadership C.A.S. and now a doctoral student in educational leadership.



The audits, beginning with discipline (code of conduct infractions) and acceleration (advanced placement), revealed “there was no proportional representation of students consistent or at the very least closely aligned to our district’s population,” says DeBarbieri, formerly a principal and assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the district.

“This forced us to ask more questions to deepen our understanding of why student experiences are different and what we can do as a school community to implement change so that all students are provided opportunities to reach their full potential.”

The district used data from the audits to reshape acceleration criteria, inclusive co-teaching structures and practices, curriculums, culturally responsive text and novel selections and professional development.

Change was not easy, DeBarbieri says. “As a whole, this work is difficult, hard and challenging. But it is so important if we desire to meet the needs of all students.”

The effort is necessary to disrupt institutionalized practices of the nation’s schools, he says. “This work required a shift in mindset for our leaders and teachers, and recognition of our individual differences, personal biases, experiences and privilege.”



Leela George, center, working with educational leadership doctoral students

Housing inequity, he says, also contributes to school inequity: Because housing in the United States is racially and economically segregated, and children tend to go to schools near where they live, children end up going to school with other children of their same race and income level. For many people, the most common way of defining inequity is individual or interpersonal; many want to believe that racism is about overt, intentional acts of malice, such as white supremacist organizations and people who commit hate crimes.

“It is easy to think that only bad people who carry bad attitudes are the ones who perpetuate racism, sexism, class discrimination and other forms of inequity,” Mauldin says. “This view of inequity allows you to think that you are not a part of it, and though you might take a role in fixing it, you can continue to think that you are not contributing to it.”

Still, research has found that everyone carries their histories and biases, which contribute to negative judgment, exclusion and discrimination.

“We realize that part of the barrier to greater equity in schools is our individual ideas and beliefs about school and children—even those held by good, well-intentioned educators and leaders—and how those play out interpersonally,” George says.

George believes school leaders have a vital role in creating more equitable and just systems—like inclusive service delivery, increased opportunity for arts and advanced academics, organization of staff, supervision of hands-on science curriculum and an expanded curricular understanding of history—as well as a key role in providing professional development opportunities in addressing interpersonal and individual barriers.

The focus of the field of educational leadership has shifted over time, says Mauldin. Fifty years ago, it emphasized school management and being a disciplinarian. In the ’80s and ’90s, researchers and practitioners grew to understand that school administrators needed to be instructional leaders, a big shift that is still ongoing. The next retooling of the educational leadership field has been to wrestle with, and ultimately move toward, equity-focused leadership.

“We believe that while school management and instructional leadership are pivotal, they alone are insufficient to create schools that are both excellent and equitable,” says Theoharis. “Our SOE programs extend these traditional aspects while grounding our work in theory and practice of equity and justice.” ●

## Two Programs in the Department of Teaching and Leadership Address How School Leaders Can Strive For Equity in Education

### CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED STUDY

The certificate of advanced study in educational leadership focuses on the idea that it’s the leader’s role to create more equitable schools. “Our program is grounded in the theoretical perspective of culturally responsive schooling leadership, instructional leadership and social justice leadership,” says Leela George, who coordinates the C.A.S. program. This begins with seeing the inequities across schools and districts and recognizing that educators have played a role in maintaining inequitable schools.

The 30-credit C.A.S. program consists of eight 3-credit courses and a 6-credit internship with seminar. Halfway through the program, students engage in a group exercise to discuss and plan the transformation of a school in need of improvement. The program culminates with a portfolio and presentation. Most students are practicing educators who study part time and complete the program in just under four years. Graduates are eligible to go through the process for School Building Leader and School District Leader New York State certifications. This year, the program has over 70 students.

### ED.D. EXECUTIVE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The Ed.D. executive doctoral program in educational leadership embraces the core concepts of the C.A.S. program while letting students explore a range of perspectives through elective and required courses. This includes structural/positivist, interpretivist, post-modern and critical (such as critical race, feminist and disability studies) theories. This range helps students situate their own perspectives and apply their scholarship and research to the equity issues they face in their own practice.

The backbone of the Ed.D. is a 33-credit cohort program for the last three years of the degree. Before recent program changes, some students stopped their degree progress at this point. “We have reimaged the Ed.D. to support their completion,” says George Theoharis, Ed.D. program coordinator.

Students take three years of the seminar and well as 5 required courses together as a cohort. The seminar includes scaffolding students through all the major independent requirements of the doctorate: research apprenticeship, qualifying exams, dissertation proposal and dissertation. A hybrid model of in-person and online classes allows students to commit to only one night a week on campus while continuing their professional roles.



# Linzy Andre and Cassaundra Guzman Named Orange Holmes Scholars



Andre (left), and Guzman (right)

**L**inzy Andre, doctoral student in counseling and counselor education, and Cassaundra Guzman G'21, incoming doctoral student in cultural foundations of education, have been named as the third cohort of Orange Holmes Scholars with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The AACTE Holmes Scholars program supports students from historically underrepresented communities enrolled in doctoral programs in education. Orange Holmes Scholars are first- or second-year Syracuse University School of Education doctoral students interested in teacher, leader or counselor education.

Andre has “a strong passion for serving diverse populations and advocacy for underserved clients and students,” says Yanhong Liu, assistant professor of counseling and human services and Andre’s nominator. Andre is the president-elect of the Syracuse University chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, the international counseling honor society, and the founder of Sunshine Advocacy, a private practice offering a wide spectrum of mental health services to diverse clients, especially those who are marginalized and underserved.

Guzman works with students across the Syracuse University campus through the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Office of Financial Literacy. She has “very clear interests in understanding the

educational experiences of first-generation students, how schools reproduce and reduce inequality and transforming education,” says nominator Gretchen Lopez, assistant professor of cultural foundations of education. Guzman is a graduate of the cultural foundations of education master’s program and currently serves as the financial secretary of the School of Education Graduate Student Council.

Andre and Guzman will work closely with Courtney Mauldin, who joins the Orange Holmes Scholars as the faculty advisor this year. Mauldin is an assistant professor of educational leadership whose research looks at the impacts of youth voices in school leadership, with a particular focus on elementary youth voices of color.

“I’m thrilled to advise and be in community with the Holmes Scholars students,” says Mauldin. “They each bring such relevant and needed perspectives to the field of educational research as well as meaningful experiences that I see as timely and essential in our current society.”

Holmes Scholars enter a national cohort of peers and alumni for networking and mentoring. During their three-year term, they receive financial support to attend and present their research at the AACTE Annual Meeting and attend the Holmes Scholars Summer Policy Institute. ●

## What is a Holmes Scholar?

The AACTE Holmes Scholars program supports students from historically underrepresented communities enrolled in doctoral programs in education. Orange Holmes Scholars are first- or second-year Syracuse University School of Education doctoral students interested in teacher, leader or counselor education.



# Undergraduate Stars

School of Education students receive top campus honors

## UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS

**T**wo School of Education students were named as 2021 Syracuse University Scholars, the highest undergraduate honor that the University bestows: **Julie Coggiola '21**, a music education major (dual with the College of Visual and Performing Arts), and **Lily Wolfer '21**, an inclusive elementary and special education major.

The Syracuse University Scholars Selection Committee, a University-wide faculty committee, selected the 2021 scholars from the senior class using criteria that included coursework and academic achievement, independent research and creative work, evidence of intellectual growth and/or innovation in their disciplinary field, a personal statement and faculty letters of recommendation.

### What does Syracuse mean to you?

**JC:** Syracuse is a major part of who I am and what I put forth in my day-to-day life. The main aspect of Syracuse that has impacted me though has been the community. The connections I have with professors, staff members and of course my fellow students have sculpted me into the person I am today. I am so lucky to be able to say that I was constantly inspired by the people who surrounded me. Without the people, SU would be a few blocks of land with cool-looking buildings. It is the people at this university that make it what it is and ultimately what it has meant to myself and thousands of others.



Julie Coggiola

### What's next and what lessons from Syracuse will you bring with?

**JC:** After a gap year I am planning on attending graduate school. But as I move forward in whatever I do, I think one of the main lessons I will bring with me is how to be a more empathetic person. I had always cared about others, but it wasn't until I came to SU and really delved into the music education program where I was able to learn how to better connect with others and understand what makes us all unique. I have learned that education is not just about what you teach your students, but also what your students teach you. Lifelong learning is an admirable trait of any person, and a great way to practice this is to continuously offer empathy towards others.

### What does Syracuse mean to you?

**LW:** My experiences at SU have allowed me to grow into a distinguished and confident scholar while molding me into the passionate educator and social justice activist I am today. Before attending Syracuse, I didn't even know inclusive education existed. I am so grateful to have walked through the doors of Huntington Hall and learned the concept that has changed the trajectory of my entire career. I will forever cherish my cohort of around fifteen women that I have been taking classes with and teaching with since my freshman year of college. We will be lifelong friends and we will continue to lean on each other in our future careers as educators.



Lily Wolfer

### What's next and what lessons from Syracuse will you bring with?

**LW:** Throughout my studies at Syracuse, I can still remember my favorite educators and exactly what they did to make me feel valued and safe in the classroom. Becoming a teacher, I will be able to be that favorite teacher that students remember for making them feel safe. I am so grateful to have received an education where our students come first, and inclusivity is the norm, and now I can bring that to my next job.



REMEMBRANCE SCHOLARS

This year’s Remembrance Scholars include **Jared Khan-Bagley**, an inclusive elementary and special education major from Ft. Lauderdale, FL; and **Micayla MacDougall**, a music education major (dual with the College of Visual and Performing Arts), from Syracuse, NY. “I am honored and excited to serve as one of the 2021-2022 Remembrance Scholars,” says MacDougall. “Being afforded the opportunity to be even more involved with this incredible program is a privilege that I am so thankful for.”

Khan-Bagley adds, “Being selected as a Remembrance Scholar will allow me to look back and act forward on the lives of the 35 Syracuse University students who tragically lost their lives in 1988. It’s an honor and a privilege to withhold the values that these scholars left behind and the continued impact that their legacy has on our community.”

Remembrance Scholars are chosen in their junior year through a rigorous, competitive process. Applicants submit an essay and another response in multimedia, artistic, musical or written format as part of a comprehensive application, and finalists are interviewed by members of the selection committee, composed of University faculty, staff and current Remembrance Scholars. ●

**“Being selected as a Remembrance Scholar will allow me to look back and act forward on the lives of the 35 Syracuse University students who tragically lost their lives in 1988.”**

Jared Khan-Bagley



Jared Khan-Bagley



Micayla MacDougall



# Professional Organizations Bring Leadership and Mentorship Opportunities



Derron Hilts

***“Now, as an emerging counselor educator, I more fully recognize the shared responsibility that we have as students and faculty, to cultivate a culture of leadership and advocacy.”***

## Derron Hilts

### Chi Sigma Iota

President (2020-2021)

Counselor-to-Counselor Mentorship Program  
Co-Chair (2021-2022)

**D**erron Hilts, doctoral candidate in counseling and human services, has been a member of Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), an international honor society that supports academic and professional excellence in counseling, since 2016. Completing his master's in counselor education at Duquesne, he served as chapter president and then expanded his involvement in CSI to an international level. He currently serves on CSI International's Leadership & Professional Advocacy Committee and the 'Excellence in Counseling Research Grants' and 'Poster Session Reviewer' committees.

Hilts says his involvement in CSI continues to provide an outlet to work with other committed, emerging and seasoned counselor educators to apply what they are learning in a meaningful way. Namely, assessing the needs of membership and engaging in data-informed decision-making to advocate with and on behalf of the community. “During my master's studies, I quickly recognized the connection of the process and content of this work and its relationship to school counseling,” Hilts says. “Now, as an emerging counselor educator, I more fully recognize the shared responsibility that we have as students and faculty to cultivate a culture of leadership and advocacy.”

Since beginning his doctoral studies at Syracuse University in fall 2019, he has served as president-elect, president and now mentorship program co-chair.

The Syracuse Sigma Upsilon Chapter of CSI has over 30 active members, but their events, initiatives and programs are not exclusive; all Counseling and Human



The 2021-2022 Syracuse University Chi Sigma Iota Executive Board

Services (CHS) students, faculty and alumni are encouraged and permitted to participate in chapter happenings.

This year, 41 Department of Counseling & Human Services affiliates have signed up to participate in the mentorship program—21 mentor/mentee pairs consisting of new graduate students, advanced master's students, doctoral students and program alumni.

Hilts and fellow doctoral student, Xiaoxuan Qu, spent the summer surveying and evaluating past program participants' experiences to craft goals and identify strategies to employ throughout the academic year.



School of Education students are encouraged to participate in professional organizations which can help them further engage in scholarship, make connections with colleagues and mentors, and explore opportunities for career development. Meet two SOE students who have served in leadership roles for their organizations' local chapters:

Structuring a mentorship program reflects Hilts' dedication to cultivating relationships and supporting others' growth and development. His primary research interests include school counseling leadership, counselor trainees' leadership development and comprehensive school counseling program implementation. His dissertation aims to investigate the individual and systemic factors associated with the leadership practices of school counselors.

Hilts is the primary investigator for an American School Counseling Association research grant-funded quantitative study exploring more than 2,200 school counselors' perceptions of the primary challenges to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. He is also currently conducting a CSI research grant funded study with two CHS faculty members, Yanhong Liu and Melissa Luke, which seeks to examine whether leadership attitudes and practices significantly predict school counselors' implementation of the ASCA National Model. Luke, Dean's Professor in the School of Education and a co-faculty advisor for the chapter along with visiting Assistant Professor Dr. Brittany Williams, is one of Hilts' professional mentors.



Armas (center) with Kappa Delta Pi members at Initiation in Fall 2019

### Maria Armas '22

#### Kappa Delta Pi

Fundraising Chair (2020-2021)

The School of Education hosts the student-led Alpha Delta Iota chapter of Kappa Delta Pi (KDP), the international honor society in education. Maria Armas, a senior majoring in mathematics education with a Spanish minor, joined KDP because she wanted to find a greater community of future educators to spend time with while in school.

KDP supports and advances educators throughout the phases and levels of their teaching careers. In 2020, Syracuse's chapter grew their membership from 14 to over 50 and offered several workshops for students in education-related majors.

While it wasn't a typical year on any college campus, the organization's board worked to keep their members connected and informed. "This year, we had a lesson planning workshop and there was also an information session for students who were going to be student teaching," says Armas. In addition to professional activities, they also hosted several "fun" events to stay connected during the COVID-19 pandemic, playing games over Zoom to get to know each other.

Armas, who learned about KDP from her School of Education peer advisor, also helped to create a mentor system where newer members in the club received an older mentor to help them with classes, placements and more. She hopes that this year's board can host more events, meetings, speakers and fun activities for the entire club to participate in, in person. ●

# A Transcendent Experience

Board of Visitors member Diana Wege '76 brought music, community and nature together this summer through *Earth Requiem*

Songs of birds mingled with the choir's voices as *Earth Requiem*—a new, four-movement choral symphony inspired by the environmental justice movement—had its first performance early this summer at Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem, NY.

"Seeing the music from *Earth Requiem* performed for the first time was a revelatory experience," says its librettist, Diana Wege '76, a conceptual artist whose work explores the connection between the environment and social justice. Wege, a longtime benefactor of the School of Education and member of the Board of Visitors, also organized the free show, called "Wake Up! Wake Up! A Choral Tapestry Honoring Our Earth," that included readings and other vocal performances.

Hearing the symphony "was a transcendent experience. The hauntingly beautiful music

of the live choir and chamber orchestra was joined by the songs of nearby birds," says Vanja Malloy, Ph.D., director and chief curator at the Syracuse University Art Museum. "The performance underscored our unbreakable bond with nature and one another and urged listeners to protect the future of our planet. It is both visually and tangibly powerful. It unites humanity through a shared value that nature is sacred, and it is our obligation to preserve and protect it," says Malloy.

Wege valued audience feedback, especially from Harlem residents like the mother of the pastor at Mother AME Zion Church—13 blocks north of the park, where the choir rehearsed. "She approached and thanked me for doing the concert 'for us,'" Wege says.

"It was a good reminder that *Earth Requiem*'s environmental message is

meaningless if it doesn't come from a place of intersectional dialogue, addressing racial and other divisions, and creating a space for interfaith dialogue."

*Earth Requiem* is part of Wege's multidisciplinary art project, also titled *Earth Requiem*, that incorporates music, literature and painting.

This art project includes a new handmade book, *EARTH: The Anthology*, which features works of 12 environmental authors, including Robin Wall Kimmerer, SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Wege painted the book's binding.

Six copies of *EARTH* exist, one for performances of *Earth Requiem*. Of the other five, Wege will give one to the Syracuse University Art Museum; others to

**"...*Earth Requiem*'s environmental message is meaningless if it doesn't come from a place of intersectional dialogue, addressing racial and other divisions, and creating a space for interfaith dialogue."**

Diana Wege (left)

Below: Symphony Performance in NYC (Summer 2021)







Diana Wege (center) and NICE team members

the Library of Congress, the University of Michigan and Greenhills School in Ann Arbor, Michigan; and one will be auctioned or sold to a collector.

Wege chose one of the authors anthologized in *EARTH* to speak, Dorceta E. Taylor, a professor at the Yale School for the Environment and author of *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility*. Taylor “spoke beautifully and really commanded the audience,” she says.

In full orchestration, *Earth Requiem* will be performed by an orchestra of about 50 players and a 120-voice choir.

*Earth Requiem*’s choir and music director is Malcolm Merriweather ’07, who received a B.Mus. in music education from Syracuse University and is now music director of New York City’s The Desoff Choirs and an associate professor, director of choral studies and voice department coordinator at Brooklyn College of CUNY.

With movements by four composers—Eve Beglarian, Sophy Him, Errollyn Wallen and Jeff Beal—*Earth Requiem* is unusual. “Each composer realizes the many different sentiments of the text, ranging from fear and damnation to hope and solace,” Merriweather says. “They each bring their individual voice and style to their respective movement, including texts in over 50 different languages.”

As Wege and Merriweather planned the program, she says, “his eyes lit up, and

I could tell he knew exactly how to build a program that incorporated both elements of a mass and environmental themes.”

“I was attracted to this project because of Diana’s passion and advocacy for the future of our planet through art and music,” Merriweather says.

Wege also has a passion to end violence, especially in schools. She collaborates with the School of Education on a community building and conflict resolution program at the East Ramapo Central School District in New York’s Rockland County.

Eight years ago, Wege created We Oppose Violence Everywhere Now (WOVEN), a nonprofit organization based in New York City. Among its programs to achieve its goal “to end violence in our lifetime” is Nurturing Inclusive Community Environment (NICE), which implements community-building circles and conflict resolution practices in high schools and emphasizes New York State’s social, emotional, learning (SEL) benchmarks, restorative justice and mediation services.

The School of Education’s Office of Professional Research and Development (OPRD) conducted an evaluation study of the NICE program, focusing on implementation, improvement and outcomes “to build a model program that is sustainable, is transferable to other schools in the district, and is ready for adoption by school districts beyond East Ramapo,” says Scott Shablak, OPRD director. WOVEN will extend the NICE program in East Ramapo for three

years, moving into middle schools for this school year.

“Over the last year, our presence in schools has proven invaluable, as stressors due to the pandemic affected all school communities,” Wege says. “We focused our efforts on interventions, one-on-one interactions, grief support and attendance.”

Her financial support for SOE is extensive. A recent gift will help support the new Center on Experiential Pedagogy and Practice, says Heather Allison Waters, assistant dean for advancement.

“We are grateful for our relationship with Diana,” Waters says. “We connect with her on so many levels—as an artist, a conservationist, and an advocate for education and violence prevention—and also as a member of our board, as an active alumna in New York City and as a leader of the Wege Foundation,” based in Grand Rapids, MI.

Wege is glad to return the praise: “SOE has been supporting my dream of making every school nurturing and inclusive. They are the absolute best teachers college.” ●



*EARTH: The Anthology*

# BOARD OF VISITORS UPDATES

**The School of Education Board of Visitors** is a nominated group of alumni and friends who serve as leading ambassadors and advisors, charged with:

- **Supporting** the dean in implementing their vision for the direction of the School.
- **Participating** in fundraising for the School with personal commitments and by assisting the dean, and the Office of Advancement in identifying other potential sources of support.
- **Representing** the school to the larger community, including alumni, donors, University leadership and the general public.

Members meet once during each academic semester and convene in committees during the year to consult with the dean and other University leaders to develop long-lasting relationships among the school's donors and alumni.

## Meet Our Newest Members



### Nkenge Bergan '95

Bergan is the Associate Vice President at Kalamazoo Valley Community College who prides herself on being a creative educational leader, as well as a school culture and climate trainer. Bergan previously served 13,000 students and their families as the director of student services for Kalamazoo Public Schools to ensure their learning experience in school district was safe, nurturing and engaging. She has a bachelor's degree in inclusive elementary education from Syracuse University and a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from Western Michigan University.



### Susan Oberwager

Oberwager is a clinical psychologist in private practice, with a Ph.D. from Temple University and a B.S. from Tufts University. She serves as a Trustee of the Shipley School in Bryn Mawr, PA, and was board chair at Gladwyne Montessori School in Gladwyne, PA. She also serves as a trustee at the Morris Arboretum and on the American Art Committee of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and was previously a board member of Resources for Children's Health in Philadelphia. The Shipley School is the first independent school in the nation to offer an entire curriculum on the concept of Positive Education (PosEd), based on the theory of Positive Psychology. Oberwager looks forward to sharing her experience with the Syracuse education community, which already embraces the whole student.



### Julie Padilla, Ed.D.'11 G'12

Padilla is a contributing author for *Next In Line to Lead: The Voice of the Assistant Principal* 2nd Edition and has been a passionate educator for over a decade. As a first-generation college graduate, Dr. Padilla earned her bachelor of arts dual degree with majors in history and social studies education 7-12 from Syracuse University. She earned her master of science from Syracuse as well, in literacy education 5-12. In 2017, she completed a second master's degree in school building and school district leadership from Touro College. More recently, Padilla completed her doctoral studies from Northeastern University with a concentration on curriculum, teaching, learning, and leadership. She currently works as an assistant principal of a pre-K-7th grade school located in New York City.



## Welcome Back, Cerri!

**Cerri A. Banks '00, G'04, G'06** has returned to Syracuse to serve as vice president for Student Success and deputy to the senior vice president.

"I credit Syracuse University with changing the trajectory of my life," says Banks. "To be able to return to an institution and create the type of experience that I had for other students is an honor I had not expected in my career. Today's students are smart and savvy, but the challenges they face are demanding greater resources in dealing with mental and emotional health needs and issues related to race, gender and sexuality. It's our job to support, empower and prepare them to be successful—professionally and personally."

Previously, Banks was Skidmore College's dean of students and vice president for student affairs, overseeing all student services, serving on the president's cabinet and overseeing the bias response group and the COVID-19 campus planning and response. She served in a similar position at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA, from 2011 to 2016, and at William Smith College in Geneva, NY, from 2009 to 2011, where she was also director of the President's Commission on Inclusive Excellence.

Banks' undergraduate degree from Syracuse University was in inclusive elementary and special education (2000). She earned an M.S. in cultural foundations of education in 2004, a C.A.S. in women's studies in 2005 and a Ph.D. in cultural foundations of education in 2006. Her dissertation was titled "This is How We Do It! Black Women Undergraduate, Culture Capital and College Success-Reworking Discourse."



## Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education Welcomes New Advisory Council Members

### Carmencita Bua

A lawyer and corporate advisor trained at the University of Pisa, Italy, Bua served as COO of Continuum Innovation, a global innovation design consultancy with current offices in Boston, Milan and Shanghai. She is excited to enter the world of social integration and inclusion for adults with disabilities and serves as CEO of Tenuta Donna Gilda, a social farm in the Chianti region of Tuscany.



### Garry Payne

Born in Birmingham, England, Payne CLU®, ChFC®, CRPC®, AEP® is both a founder and partner of The Carta Group. He is a Past-President and member of the board of directors for the Ronald McDonald House of Central New York and is currently on the board of directors for Elmcrest Children's Center. Payne is also a past president and current member of the CNY Chapter of the Society of Financial Service Professionals (SFSP), a past president and member of the Syracuse chapter of the National Association of Financial Advisors (NAIFA) and a member of the Estate Planning Council of Central New York. ●



## School of Education Board of Visitors 2021-2022

Gregory Allen '73  
Marcia Baldanza 86  
Cerri A. Banks '00, G 04, G 06  
Nkenge Bergan 95  
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Juli Boeheim G 97  
Frank Comfort '67  
Carol Decker '68  
Christopher DeVoe 79  
Constance Foote 61, G 63  
Timi Hecker '92  
Sharon Jacquet 72  
Elyse Spector Kalmans  
Alice Kendrick '70, G 73, G 93  
Deborah Knoblock 88, G 90  
Deborah Little '14, G 16, G 16  
Raquel (Roxi) Nurse McNabb '98, G 99  
Julie Mendik '89  
Jeri Muoio G 83  
Susan Oberwager  
Julie Padilla, Ed.D. '11 G 12  
Jan Raymond '65  
Alice Rosen '83  
Helen Spector '68, G 72  
Wendy Thompson G 99  
Felicia Walker '87  
Diana Wege '76  
Laurie Wolfert 76  
Lauri Zell '77

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Ruth Brown '77  
Joseph Cangemi G 64  
Margaret Charters G 71, G 04  
Nan Gordon '72  
Gilbert Herer 54  
Lynn Kreischer 66  
Daniel Lowengard '72, G 73  
Jeryl Mitchell '81, G 83  
Joanne Monroe '76  
Aileen Picardi '58  
Nancy Schulman '73, G 78  
Barbara Shineman G 80  
Patricia Stith G 77  
Sinforosa Tan Kaung G 75



# Project Transition: Stronger Together

Recognizing the significance of the first-year experience, Project Transition intentionally involves the whole family in the college experience to increase retention, open communications channels and build a stronger connection to campus



Families arrive from the metro-NYC area in 2019



**R**esearch shows that there is a higher success rate for students who are historically under-represented in college if their families are engaged. Project Transition began as a partnership between Jan Strauss Raymond '65 and Charles (Chip) V. Raymond Jr. '66, the Citigroup Foundation, the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) and the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program, and has supported first-generation students and their families for over 20 years.

Thousands of students and their families have been served through the program, which facilitates a family weekend bus trip from the metro New York area. Families who may otherwise not be able to travel to campus spend the weekend learning about the college experience alongside their student.

Junior Diana Garcia Varo '23 has been involved with Project Transition since her freshman year. "The HEOP/SSS staff gave me a warm welcome, which made navigating the college campus much easier, as it reminded us that we do belong here." She says Family Weekend was an eye-opening experience, especially for her parents and two younger siblings who attended. They had never set foot on a college campus, and she was able to give her parents a tour of the art studios, other campus facilities and her dorm and introduce them to staff, professors and other families. "This experience helped ease homesickness as a first-year student and gave my family the security of knowing that I was in a safe space with HEOP/SSS's guidance."

This past January, HEOP and SSS started reaching out to similar programs such as Kessler Scholars and the Posse Program to gauge their interest in participating in Project Transition. SSS associate director Amy Messersmith, says, "The rationale behind this outreach was that because all of these programs serve similar populations, we thought Project Transition could be an opportunity for us to come together around this common goal of making the college experience more accessible to first-generation students and families."

This new version of Project Transition aims to create a more solidified and comprehensive initiative by engaging other marginalized populations at Syracuse.

HEOP associate director Marieke Davis says that the challenge is getting everyone here and making Syracuse truly inclusive. "In addition to Family Weekend, we are planning more experiences to create a solid network of support and deeper family engagement."

One project that hopes to do just that is the Project Transition Testimonial Video, being produced and edited by Garcia Varo. She aimed to capture the essence of the experiences of first-generation students and others looking for additional support through personal photos and anecdotes. "From this video project, I hope to shed light on the importance of sponsored programs that guide students financially, socially and academically."

Garcia Varo knows that, through Project Transition and that first family weekend, her family was able to see that she had a strong community support system at Syracuse. "They came to two of my art exhibitions where they saw my drawings, ceramics and woodwork. They became more aware of my potential as an artist and came to realize that, because not everyone has the privilege to attend a prestigious university like Syracuse, it is important to seek opportunities and not be set back by obstacles that may come along the way." ●

**"This experience helped ease homesickness as a first-year student and gave my family the security of knowing that I was in a safe space with HEOP/SSS's guidance."**

Diana Garcia Varo


## ALIGNING A MISSION

Based in the School of Education, the **Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program** (HEOP) and **TRIO Student Support Services** (SSS) program serve academically at-risk students from lower income-earning families, many of which are primarily first-generation college students or from underrepresented populations. With the support these programs provide through academic counseling, financial aid, community building events, career development activities and other supportive services, HEOP and SSS students graduation rates mimic that of others who come to the university with stronger academic profiles.

Through the **Irene and Morris B. Kessler Presidential Scholars Program**, an exceptional group of Syracuse University students who are the first in their family to go to college receive four years of support to help them succeed at Syracuse and beyond. First established at the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and Arts by Fred and Judy Wilpon, the Kessler Scholars Program has grown as the leading scholarship program for first-generation students. The program provides comprehensive support through wrap-around, multi-tiered services to ensure students' success from the moment they enroll to after graduation.

Syracuse University partners with the **POSSE Foundation** to admit high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential from Miami. Selected students receive a full-tuition Syracuse University Posse Leadership Scholarship.

Additional collaborators include **The Office of Student Success and Retention**, the **Parents Office** and **Office of First-Year and Transfer Programs**.

 Watch Garcia Varo's testimonial video on Project Transition at [soe.syr.edu/edex-pt](https://soe.syr.edu/edex-pt).

# Learning to Embrace Vulnerable Wholeness

McPherson is dedicated to flipping the script on masculinity and relationships

**D**on McPherson '87 was honored with the 2021 William Pearson Tolley Medal in recognition of his leadership in higher education, particularly around issues of the student experience, identity and gender violence.

His most recent platform for his work, ASPIRE, aims to create a “community of caring” leaders and learners throughout a social ecosystem that includes schools (K-12 to higher education), workplace and families/communities.

The purpose is to establish common language and lessons that enable uncomfortable conversations, empower sustainable strategies, promote allyship and support healthy relationships. The “community of caring” encompasses and meets the needs of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), men’s violence against women and anti-racism work.

His vision of a new aspirational masculinity is based on loving, caring and vulnerable men who thrive in healthy relationships, of which his long friendship with School of Education professor Jeffery Mangram '88, G'09, G'06 is a prime example.

“The popular and prevailing images of masculinity have long been of stoic, physically appealing, intimidating and virile individuals,” McPherson says.

McPherson and Mangram were football teammates on the undefeated 1987 Syracuse University team: McPherson the All-America quarterback and captain, Mangram a star defensive back. They met as teammates in 1984, when Mangram was a first-year student and McPherson a sophomore.

“He was confident, and his action spoke louder than anything he said,” Mangram says of the young McPherson. “He commanded the room in which there were many guys who commanded the room. He was the alpha.”

Of their friendship nearly 40 years later, Mangram says, “We both share our vulnerabilities with each other. I think that emotional support creates a genuineness that I crave and that is so hard to experience today.”

Retiring from pro football in 1994 after playing in the NFL and Canadian Football League, McPherson shifted his focus to men’s violence against women. Joining Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society, he became director of its Mentors in Violence Prevention Program in 1995, taking over for the program’s founder, Jackson Katz.

At 29—as he wrote in his book *You Throw Like a Girl: The Blind Spot of Masculinity* (Akashic Books, 2019)—he realized how he had mastered performing the popular image of masculinity. “I had delayed the inevitable—that moment every man faces, when he realizes he didn’t say, ‘I love you’ enough or put away his pride more and hug those he cared about, living in the unashamed and vulnerable wholeness.”

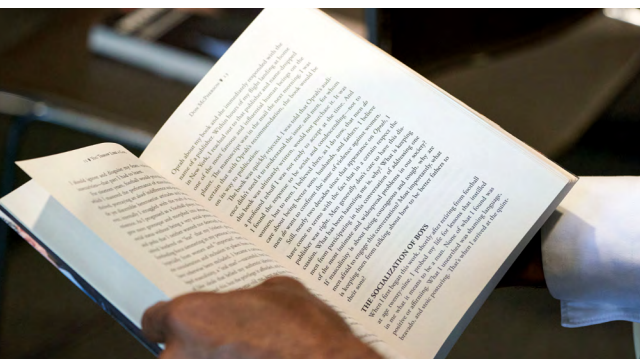
A new Don McPherson emerged. “Once extricated from that culture and immersed in the work, my voice was very natural and freeing, as I like to say, freed by feminism,” he says.

He’s visited more than 350 college campuses, community organizations and national sports and violence prevention organizations to conduct workshops and lectures for more than 1 million people. From these experiences, he formulated ASPIRE that recognizes a social ecosystem in which higher education sits in the center.

McPherson calls this portion of ASPIRE “Recruitment to Employment,” a strategy proposing that such work on social issues is the responsibility of all departments and offices on campus from how students are attracted to campus, to how they are prepared for what he refers to as the “DEI Economy.”

It’s a topic he and Mangram have discussed often.

“Donnie believes that if higher education institutions insist on and continue to build on the work pre-K educational institutions began around character and their virtues, SU graduates, for instance, will



McPherson’s book, *You Throw Like a Girl*, explores popular images of masculinity.



**“It’s time for us as men to expand the definition of what it means to be men, understand the complexities of our gender, and learn to be loving, caring and whole as we raise the next generation of boys to be loving, caring and whole.”**

Don McPherson (right)



be better prepared for workplace issues such as sexism, racism, intolerance, theft and the like,” says Mangram.

Lessons from sports apply in ASPIRE and in stopping men’s violence against women. McPherson wants to emphasize excellence, not scare tactics in what he calls the heat of the moment—the test, the game, the time that reveals preparation and character.

“In the classroom, in sports, in theater, we prepare for the heat of the moment with sound, positive principles and strategies. When it comes to social issues, the uncomfortable conversations are replaced with prevention language and scare tactics,” McPherson says. “We prepare for challenges in the classroom by teaching and nurturing excellence. ASPIRE is designed to be aspirational and focused on teaching excellence, as opposed to prevention.”

Mangram concurs: “I agree with Donnie from this standpoint: College graduates need to be consciously taught skills in which to engage a multicultural world in which change is ever-present. It is about being proactive instead of reactive.”

Note that the professor calls his former teammate “Donnie.”

As McPherson explained in his book, most athletes are known by three names: their given name, which family and close friends use; their media name, which fans use; “and the name their teammates call them that signifies camaraderie, affection and style...that fellowship that made football the game I loved.”

For McPherson, those three names, in order, are Donald, Don McPherson and Donnie Mac.

He describes how his friendship with Mangram developed after “we were thrust into the involuntary relationships within the football team that required us to learn how to work together before we actually knew each other.” Players tended to gravitate to those who made them feel comfortable on the surface.

“But Jeff rarely just engaged on the surface. He was intensely curious and an enthusiastic learner. Though we shared a lot in common regarding football, we were from different worlds. Brunswick, Georgia, is a long way from Long Island.”

Mangram came to Syracuse from Brunswick, a city of 15,000 on the Georgia sea coast in a county of nearly 60,000. McPherson, son of a New York City police detective, grew up on suburban Long Island.

“We bonded in learning about each other in very robust conversations,” says McPherson.

They agree their friendship endures because of their expressed love for each other.

“We share the ebbs and flows of our existence, with a lot of laughter sprinkled in there,” Mangram says. “We tell each other that we love each other, and that sustains me until we talk again.”

That love flows, McPherson says, from how successful organizations learn to manage involuntary relationships, such as that undefeated Orange football team. “Nowhere is this more transparent than in sports. Successful teams are those where individuals learn to love and trust one another. It creates special bonds that are lifelong and intimate.”

“You Throw Like a Girl” has been the title of McPherson’s college campus lectures since 1996. Originally presented as the language of sports, it quickly became the term for understanding narrow masculinity and misogyny. It is a prominent scene from a 1993 movie, *The Sandlot*, about the love of nine California boys for baseball in 1962, in which “You play ball like a girl” is one of the memorable lines. “As an insult, it is arguably one of the most aggressive assaults on the psyche of boys and men,” he wrote in his book.

It’s also an ironic title. In teaching boys and girls how to throw a football, he wrote, boys are always initially harder to teach, since they think they already know how. Girls listen and apply what he tells them in the right order. “In every one of those cases, to ‘throw like a girl’ meant throwing the proper way,” he wrote.

Students are active participants in his lectures, McPherson says. Adults need to approach them on the students’ level, matching wisdom with awareness in presentations.

“Society is evolving rapidly, and while students are aware and hungry for dialogue, many adults are unwilling or incapable of engaging in uncomfortable, nontraditional discourse,” he says. “The strength of my work has always been the ability to make complex issues and content relevant and accessible. To that end, I have found students always highly engaged in the conversation.”

What McPherson calls “aspirational masculinity” is “deliberate, intentional, loving, caring, egalitarian and nonviolent.” In his book he wrote, “It’s time for us as men to expand the definition of what



**“Donnie believes that if higher education institutions insist on and continue to build on the work pre-K educational institutions began around character and their virtues, SU graduates, for instance, will be better prepared for workplace issues such as sexism, racism, intolerance, theft and the like.”**

Jeff Mangram

it means to be men, understand the complexities of our gender and learn to be loving, caring and whole as we raise the next generation of boys to be loving, caring and whole.”

His father exemplified, but never articulated, those qualities. “My father was hardworking, tough and stoic—an old-school dad,” he wrote.

So it was vital to the growing friendship of the two football players when Mangram visited the McPherson home and displayed his curiosity and thirst for learning.

“Some of my favorite memories of Jeff are sitting at the kitchen table in my childhood home on Long Island grilling my father with questions about the job” of a police detective, McPherson says.

“He asked my father questions we, his children, never asked and was genuinely fascinated by the opportunity to talk with him. I’m not sure who appreciated that more, my dad, Jeff or me.”

From those experiences grew McPherson’s new vision of a healthy masculinity that he has taught to students for decades, a journey that brought him to this year’s Tolley Medal. ●

McPherson with  
Interim Dean Kelly  
Chandler-Olcott



## The School of Education presents the William Pearson Tolley Medal for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

**D**on McPherson '87 was honored as the 2021 recipient in recognition of his leadership in higher education. Syracuse University established the Tolley Medal in 1966 in honor of the man who served as the University’s Chancellor from 1942 to 1969 to recognize outstanding contributions by national and international leaders in what was then known as adult education.

Learn more about the award presentation at [soe.syr.edu/research/projects/tolley-medal](https://soe.syr.edu/research/projects/tolley-medal).



### THEN AND NOW

Jeff and Don in New Orleans before the 1987 Sugar Bowl (left) and at the Tolley Medal presentation in September (right).





# New Scholarships Support Students During the COVID-19 Crisis

Syracuse University created Current Use Scholarships to meet the needs of students who experienced loss—financially and in other ways—due to COVID-19. Donors make a \$5,000 gift for each of five years that the University immediately uses to assist students with their scholarship and financial aid.

The success story of her father, an immigrant from South America, inspired Julie Padilla '11, G'12 to create a Current Use Scholarship for the School of Education and name it for him, the R. Persaud Memorial Scholarship.

“As a first-generation American, a first-generation college graduate, the idea of giving back to Syracuse University, a place I called home during my undergraduate and graduate studies, truly resonated with me,” says Padilla, a former social studies teacher and now assistant principal at Rochdale Early Advantage Charter School in Queens, NY. She received an Ed.D. in educational leadership from Northeastern University in 2020.

A native of Guyana, her father came to the United States as a small child. He started an aircraft repair station near John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City in 1995. The company performed maintenance and alteration on aircraft and aeronautical products for carriers ranging from UPS and Air China Cargo to American Airlines and Lot Polish Airlines. He died nearly five years ago at age 55.

“His legacy is his compassion, his understanding that you can help others around you reach their potential, that even though you are a single person you can have a profound effect on so many lives, and that should never be forgotten,” Padilla says.

Her parents always gave back, she says, so she followed their sense of philanthropy.

“I am forever grateful for Syracuse, forever Orange, and it made sense based on the ability to contribute to this amazing institution while making a large impact simultaneously,” Padilla says.

As an undergraduate at Syracuse, she was a dual major in history and social studies education 7-12, then received a master’s degree from the School of Education in literacy education 5-12. In 2017, she completed a second master’s degree,

in school building and school district leadership from Touro College.

As a social studies teacher at John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School in Bronx, NY, from 2012 to 2020, she applied the best lesson she’d learned at the SOE, “the concept of understanding.”

“I learned that understanding requires patience, it requires growth, it requires listening, and you need to do that for everyone you encounter,” she says.

When she was teaching, she says she would work to learn exactly who each student was.

“I would care about the person behind the learner and the student,” Padilla says. “Hearing the stories that young people had, hearing their perspective, hearing more about their identity allowed me to connect with them, learn from them and really think about how I can not only teach them but work to ensure I was teaching them so much more than just content knowledge.”

As an assistant principal, it is imperative “to embed aspects of culture, of social justice, of current events into what we do daily, into the education we are providing young people,” she says. “We need to empower the youth of today so they feel equipped and more importantly so they have the tools at their disposal to craft the change they deem necessary.”

In the community, she has been elected to the board of directors of both Lit World—which works with children worldwide to learn the power of reading, writing and storytelling—and Grace Outreach Bronx—which helps women enhance their academic skills, pursue higher education and find employment.

Her time at the School of Education helped her realize a successful educator and professional needs to be open-minded, self-aware and understand what it means to be a leader. A leader, she says, must display empathy, transparency in communication, selflessness and honesty with others.

“Being a leader involves a drive, an integrity about what you do and how you do it, having a sense of humility, but also being resilient through it all.” ●



**“As a first-generation American, a first-generation college graduate, the idea of giving back to Syracuse University, a place I called home during my undergraduate and graduate studies, truly resonated with me.”**

Julie Padilla  
Above, with her father, 2011

## What Are Current Use Scholarships?

Syracuse University created Current Use Scholarships to meet the needs of students who experienced loss—both financially and in other ways—due to COVID-19. Donors make a \$5,000 gift for each of five years that the University immediately uses to assist students with their scholarship and financial aid.



# Sunshine in Syracuse

## Coakley-Thompson Endows Scholarship for Bahamian students

**P**roud of her Bahamian heritage, Wendy Coakley-Thompson Ph.D.'99 has long puzzled over why Bahamian culture has been overlooked in the United States.

Four years ago Coakley-Thompson, now an instructional systems designer for the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration, started a publishing house, Duho Books, which describes itself as celebrating the vibrant culture, history and people of the Bahamas.

She balances her career as a communication and instructional technology professional with what she calls "my twin passions," her creative pursuits as a writer and advocacy of Bahamian culture.

Coakley-Thompson has combined all these interests with her recent gift to the School of Education: a scholarship for graduate students studying instructional design, development and evaluation who may have an interest in cultural, historical, socioeconomic or other issues affecting the Bahamian diaspora. It's called the Dr. Wendy Coakley-Thompson Sunshine in Syracuse Graduate Scholarship.

"It's as simple as the hope that the scholarship will enable Bahamian students to bring the warm Bahamian spirit and a sliver of a tropical paradise to Syracuse," she says.

Tired of teaching elementary school students, she had come to the SOE to study for a doctorate in the Department of Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation (IDD&E) because of its combination of technology, broadcast production elements and education.

"I received a first-class education at Syracuse University in general and in the School of Education in particular," says Coakley-Thompson. Before completing her dissertation, she returned to the Bahamas to

teach and said she was stunned by the lack of access to technology and the strategies to integrate it into education.

"I wanted Bahamian educators to have the same opportunities that Syracuse had afforded me."

So, more than 20 years later, she's endowed the scholarship for IDD&E students.

"The Sunshine in Syracuse Scholarship should give Bahamians by birth and by descent access to a stellar education, state-of-the-art technology and a strong, thriving network, which I urge them to use to benefit the Bahamas in innovative and creative ways."

"IDD&E programs have been growing, and students are applying from across the country and around the world. Many of them will benefit from Dr. Coakley-Thompson's generous support," says Jing Lei, professor in instructional design.

Her time as a doctoral student demonstrated the importance of determination and persistence, what Coakley-Thompson calls her best lesson learned at the SOE.

"Never give up on a dream, as much as you may want to from time to time, she says. "A doctoral program is grueling, and mine was no exception. The program and Syracuse's frigid weather tested my mettle in ways that I never could have imagined."

She recalls telling her dissertation defense chair, Roosevelt "Rick" Wright Jr., now professor emeritus of television, radio and film in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, "that I may have bitten off more than I could chew, to which he said something like, 'Well, you've just got to keep chewing.'"

She completed the dissertation, "The use of popular media in multicultural education: Stressing the implications for the Black/non-Black biracial student," and began a career of teaching at the

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Wendy Coakley-Thompson



University of Georgia and Strayer University in Herndon, VA, and working at the American Red Cross and the U.S. Census Bureau, among other stops.

Her family had been part of the West Indian diaspora that moved in the 1950s to Brooklyn, NY, where she was born and lived until she was almost 4. At that point her parents, missing their large family and wanting to be active as their ancestral home was on the verge of independence from Great Britain, departed for the Bahamas. Coakley-Thompson stayed until she was 17, then went to college in New Jersey.

Of Americans' cultural ignorance of the Bahamas, she says, "Other countries are quite aware of the Bahamas. However, it's been my experience that Americans tend to conflate all people from the Caribbean with Jamaicans. That used to infuriate me. As I matured, though, I realized that it was better to light a candle than curse the dark."

Creating Duho Books lit that candle. A duho is a seat made from a single piece of wood, representing an anthropomorphic figure with sculptured head and engraved geometric designs on the back.

Coakley-Thompson writes mainstream women's fiction, including *Writing While Black*, *Triptych*, *Back to Life* and *What You Won't Do For Love*.

Duho Books features various perspectives on the Bahamas and Bahamians by authors whose works are set in the Bahamas (S.L. Sheppard), who write about the supernatural (N.A. Cash) and an American author of Bahamian descent writing about the intertwined histories of the Bahamas and Cuba (Marin Frederique).

"All I can say is that, just because Americans don't see Bahamian culture and literary traditions, doesn't mean that they don't exist," Coakley-Thompson says. ●

Wendy Coakley-Thompson







**“The research is clear that kids will pursue the same level of education as the mother. My dream was for my children and grandchildren to have a better life.”**

Mary Curcio  
Above right, with her granddaughter

## Paving the Way

**How a lifetime passion for education led Mary Curcio G’95 to begin a new chapter after retirement**

**M**ary Curcio G’95 always wanted to be a math teacher but, as a mother of six, knew the path forward might not be a straight line. She also knew that setting an example for her children that anything was possible would need to begin with her own trajectory. “I knew if I didn’t get a degree, my kids wouldn’t either.”

At the age of 35, she started at Jefferson Community College, earning her associate’s degree in two years. Continuing her studies, she was accepted at SUNY Oswego but needed support to attend. She applied for a federal Paul Douglas Teaching Scholarship, which would provide financial assistance to help her purchase books, pay for childcare and gas money. But Curcio was viewed as too nontraditional because she was over 30, and she kept getting denied.

She truly believed this scholarship was her ticket to SUNY Oswego, and contacted her local legislators with one question: “How many women over 30 are receiving this scholarship?” Curcio asked again and again. “They would not give me answers. But I would not give up.”

Curcio eventually secured the scholarships to study at SUNY Oswego, where she received a bachelor’s degree in secondary education in mathematics.

“Once I finished my degree at SUNY Oswego, one of my favorite professors, Dr. Kathy Lewis, encouraged me to apply to the mathematics education program at Syracuse University. Lacking confidence in myself, I did not pursue this,” she says. But Lewis kept pushing her, and eventually she applied.

In 1993 at age 40, Curcio was accepted into the mathematics education program. Joanna Masingila, a professor of mathematics education, was her advisor. Curcio says she learned more about teaching at Syracuse than anywhere else. “Joanna was phenomenal. This program is where I learned to teach and do research,” she says.

“I was just a little housewife from Orwell, NY.” After receiving my master’s degree, I was hired at Westhill High School, “right out of the gate,” says Curcio. “Eventually I moved up to administration, became a principal, superintendent, and retired five years ago.”

Curcio credits her success to female mentors who helped her believe in herself. She knows this is still critical today. “The women who mentored me weren’t afraid to share their expertise. This led me to mentor others along my professional career.”

And now, she’s created a legacy for own children. “The research is clear that kids will pursue the same level of education as the mother. My dream was for my children and grandchildren to have a better life.” Curcio speaks proudly of her children, among them an occupational therapist, a registered nurse and an engineer.

After a rewarding career in public education in Upstate New York, she currently teaches math for elementary education majors as an adjunct instructor at Cayuga Community College, and spends her free time giving back to students and teachers by working with Read to Them, a national non-profit that aims to create a culture of literacy in every home.

She is also a member of the Literacy Coalition of Oswego County developing literacy communities that are foundational to diminishing poverty. “Literacy is key to everything, including bringing children out of poverty,” she says. “Adults will stay more engaged in a literacy program that engages their children and the family, than in an adult literacy program.”

She adds that you can’t expect districts to do the lift all alone, learning is a community effort. “To become lifelong lovers of reading, children must be reading at home.”

And Curcio is more than happy to be a part of that equation. ●



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