In this issue, we celebrate the rich history of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans through historical reflection and by highlighting groundbreaking research that incorporates Asian American history into inclusive curriculums at the K-12 level.

We also highlight that May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, a significant time to bring awareness to mental health and the integral role it plays in the success of our students, faculty, and staff. When we work together to fight stigma and provide support and resources around mental health, we find strength and community.

Of course, the pinnacle of every May is commencement! As we come to the end of another academic year, we are incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication demonstrated throughout our campus community. The level of effort displayed by our faculty, staff, and most importantly, our students shines through as we celebrate this major milestone in their lives. The accomplishment of our students in completing another semester and ultimately receiving well-earned degrees is to be applauded.

This year's graduating class was one of the most diverse in KSU's history. The Spring 2023 Commencement featured 3,571 total degrees awarded across a wide variety of academic disciplines. Graduates anywhere from age 19 to age 81 walked proudly across the stage to receive their degrees. 36% are first-generation students, forever changing their family histories in significant ways. 89% of our graduates are Georgia residents, solidifying KSU as a choice destination for Georgia's best and brightest students.

When I reflect on this graduating class, I am most proud of the 8% of this class who at some point found themselves on academic probation. I am inspired by the determination they showed to rise above that temporary circumstance and to put in the hard work it took to reach the goal of earning their degree. Their perseverance and unwillingness to give up will serve them well in their journeys beyond KSU. It is in this tremendous display of determination that I see true excellence.

As we close out the year, we are wishing our newest alumni great success and look forward to continuing to engage with them in meaningful ways for years to come. Congratulations Class of 2023!

Dr. Sonia Toson
Chief Diversity Officer & Vice President
Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month holds great significance as it acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments, struggles, and contributions of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans throughout history.

The inception of AAPI Heritage Month dates to May 1990, when U.S. Representative Frank Horton initially established a weeklong observance during the first 10 days of May. Over time, it evolved into a month-long celebration through congressional action in 1990, with various presidents subsequently issuing annual proclamations. May was specifically chosen to mark two historical events: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, which was made possible by the significant contributions of Chinese workers.

The theme for the 2023 AAPI Heritage Month, according to FAPAC (Federal Asian Pacific American Council), is "Advancing Leaders Through Opportunity," highlighting FAPAC's dedication to nurturing leaders in the Federal and DC government.

There are several meaningful ways to commemorate this month, such as expanding your knowledge of Asian American and Pacific Islander history and culture, engaging in reading books, listening to podcasts, supporting Asian/Pacific Islander American leaders, artists, and entrepreneurs who are making a positive impact in your community, and using your voice to speak out against racism and injustice are also valuable actions.

Throughout this month, we show reverence to the remarkable Asian/Pacific Islander American heroes and heroines who have left their mark on our world. By honoring the past, embracing the present, and actively working towards building a fair and more inclusive society, we strive to create a better future for all. To learn more about AAPI heritage month, please visit asianpacificheritage.gov
Two Kennesaw State University faculty members have received a Spencer Foundation grant for a research project to incorporate Asian American history in Georgia school curriculum. Bagwell College of Education faculty Theresa Alviar-Martin, an associate professor of curriculum and instruction, and Sohyun An, a full professor of social studies education, say the $50,000 grant is the outcome of a grassroots effort from Asian American students, parents, and teachers in the metro Atlanta community. “The shootings were right in our backyard, so it really became a moment of reckoning for students, parents, teachers and others in the Asian American community in Georgia,” An said. “We concluded that education is the key to stopping hate against the Asian American women, elders, and students. If our students grow up learning that Asian American history is part of American history, they don’t see Asian Americans as foreigners, or dangerous threat to the nation.”

Alviar-Martin said the recent rise in incidents of Asian hate, including the March 2021 spa shootings in Acworth and Atlanta that claimed the lives of eight people, six of whom were Asian immigrant women, were hurtful and disempowering but also became the catalyst for parents, students, teachers, and scholars to stand up and demand ethnic studies for all and educational justice. “In education, when people teach about world history, it’s usually from a very Western lens. The stories are usually told from the colonizers’ point of view, so it’s often about conquest and wars,” said Alviar-Martin, who noted her own heritage from the Philippines, which was a colonial territory of Spain and later the U.S. “The curriculum doesn’t always critically consider how society is shaped by people who are affected by those conflicts historically and presently.” “We want to connect the common themes in experience from people we have talked to within local Asian American communities to include in the larger collection of literature detailing the experience of Asian American families living in the U.S.,” Alviar-Martin said. “And we think it’s appropriate that this is happening in Atlanta, which is very much known as a cradle of civil rights.”

The Spencer Foundation has been funding research exclusively in education since 1971.

For the full story on Theresa Alviar-Martin, Sohyun An, and their research, please visit KSU.edu

KSU Students’ Project Engages with Incarcerated Youth

Alviar-Martin and An say their primary research question is, “Who is advocating for K-12 Asian American studies in Georgia’s public schools, and what are their goals, successes, and challenges in advancing an accurate and inclusive history curriculum?”
In Fall 2018, Zy Justice arrived at KSU ready to pursue criminal justice but what she did not know, is that it would include acting and theater.

Justice and her classmates are involved in the New Connections Collision Project — inspired by the Alliance Theatre’s Palefsky Collision Project — as part of a class called Applied Theater in Community. Senior lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies Margaret Pendergrass and her long-time collaborator, Alliance Theatre artist Rodney Lamar Williams, came up with the project four years ago when asked to develop a theater program for youth in the care of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

“Part of the process of working with youth in the juvenile justice system has been preparing KSU students and faculty to be ‘in the room,’ whether in person or through a virtual classroom. It takes a lot of emails, training, and collaboration,” said Pendergrass. “But it's worth it. The real transformation happens in the class, and it's as transformative or more so for our students than for those who are in the system.”

For this year's project, the students performed “Long Way Down” for a special group of DJJ youths who have graduated high school or earned a GED while incarcerated. In the weeks since the mid-March reading, the KSU students have worked with those youths helping them to explore the themes of the novel and connect those to their personal stories through journaling and creative writing.

After earning a Master of Fine Arts in playwriting, Pendergrass started working with people in marginalized communities such as at-risk youth and developmentally disabled people.

This semester, Pendergrass’ students have experienced transformations as well, adjusting expectations and changing their own personal stories. In the class the day students read the play, Justice delivered her lines when they came up, and later said she marveled at playing a part in a dramatic reading. “It has definitely gotten me out of my comfort zone,” Justice said. “To take my criminal justice knowledge and incorporate it with theater was a different experience, and I've fallen in love with it.”

Justice sees a little bit of herself in the people the class works with in the juvenile justice system, and in the story of “Long Way Down.” She grew up in difficult circumstances in Marietta, the oldest of 10 siblings and thus the one to set the right example — and make the right choices.

“I just want to use what I've been through to let others know that it's okay to have experienced trauma,” she said. “It's okay for your childhood to not have been the greatest, but I'm personally going to use this pain for good.”

Be sure to visit KSU News for the full story on this program and Zy Justice!

More than 500 KSU Community members lend helping hands during the 2023 Day of Service

Staring in 2014, The Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement founded the Day of Service in conjunction with the student arm of the Department of Student Volunteerism and Service, pairing hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and community members with work projects at schools, parks, nonprofit organizations, and other community sites.

“This event has grown in participants and sites served each year, which is a testament to our
"community," said Kimberly Henghold, Director of Community Engagement. "This annual volunteer event is an outstanding example of our students' commitment to strengthening and fostering the partnerships within our community."

In 2023 KSU Day of Service volunteers spread across the area to work at these sites:

- Salvation Army Marietta
- Northwest Classical Academy
- Next Step Ministries
- Kennesaw Mountain Trail Club
- Simple Needs GA
- Georgia House Rabbit Society
- Radow Shoebox Project
- Books for Africa
- Good Mews Animal Foundation
- KSU Field Station
- Cherokee Garden at Green Meadows Preserve
- Adopt a Mile
- Youth Empowerment through Learning, Leading, and Service
- Georgia Writers Association
- Marietta High School
- YMCA McClesky-East Cobb
- Laurel's Edge
- North Cobb Regional Library
- Center for Children and Young Adults
- Smith-Gilbert Gardens
- Pine Mountain Middle School
- Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health
- On campus Earth Week project
- Cobb County Water System
- Chattahoochee Nature Center

Each Day of Service event represents the culmination of a year's worth of planning by a committee of representatives from throughout the University, co-chaired this year by Henghold and William Hargrove, Assistant Director of the Department of Student Volunteerism and Service.

Volunteers started the day by gathering on the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses. President Kathy Schwaig welcomed volunteers on the Kennesaw Campus Green, while Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Ronald Briggs greeted those on the Marietta campus.

"It was absolutely thrilling seeing so many volunteers come together to support our community, and the feedback from our nonprofit community partners has been resoundingly positive," Hargrove said. "Our team works diligently to manage these partnerships year-round, and it was a real treat seeing these relationships come to life."

This year's event featured several high-water marks, including the most registrations and most sites served.

Between the first Day of Service in 2014 and last year, more than 2,100 volunteers helped at 116 project sites.

To read or learn more about KSU's Day of Service, be sure to visit, experience.ksu.edu.
On Friday, April 28, 2023, the Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence held its annual Presidential Inclusive Excellence Awards. The ceremony, which featured student emcees, faculty research, and opening remarks from President Schwaig, was established in 2013, with the aim of highlighting and honoring KSU faculty, staff, and students who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion within the university community.

"When we added the community pillar to the R2 Roadmap last year, one of our key goals focused on nurturing a welcoming campus community, a sense of belonging, and a broad marketplace of ideas," said President Schwaig during her opening remarks. "We will continue to focus on these crucial elements as we begin our next strategic planning process this fall, and together we are better supporting our students and strengthening our community."

Embodying the remarks of President Schwaig, were nine recipients of this year's awards, including the R.C. Paul Excellence in Sustainability honoree, Dr. Vanessa Slinger-Friedman, who is the co-founder of the KSU Food Forest, an initiative that models and helps build sustainable agriculture systems that attempt to address social inequities and related health issues in low-income communities in Atlanta, and one of '50 Most Influential Latinos in Georgia,' Dr. Darlene Rodriguez, who was honored with the Outstanding Contribution Award.

The awards program also expanded to include three new honors under the DDIE Leadership in Inclusive Excellence award to recognize student organizations, administrative offices, and university colleges. This award honors those displaying exceptional leadership and commitment to KSU through programming, professional development, and other initiatives in diversity and inclusion. "I truly look forward to this ceremony every year as it provides an opportunity to honor and celebrate the work individuals doing across campus," says Ellori White. She added, "from our students to the faculty, we want them to know that their extraordinary deeds are not unnoticed but yet a reminder that we all can do a little more to make our world a better place."

The awards ceremony concluded with remarks from Chief Diversity Officer and Vice President, Dr. Sonia Toson, who urged KSU faculty, staff, and students to persist in its goals to achieve a diverse and welcoming environment!

For a full list of recipients, please visit, diversity.kennesaw.edu.
The Carol J. Pope Award for Distinction: Jason Rodenbeck

The R.O.H. Social Justice Award: Dr. Sanjuana Rodriguez

The Teresa M. Joyce Award for Excellence: Darian Hailes

The R.C. Paul Excellence in Sustainability Award: Dr. Vanessa Slinger-Friedman

Leadership in Inclusive Excellence - Administrative Office Award: Office of Fiscal Services
2023 Inclusive Excellence Awards Recipients

Leadership in Inclusive Excellence - Student Organization Award: Black Musicians Coalition

Leadership in Inclusive Excellence - University College Award: The College of Humanities and Social Science

Leadership in Inclusive Excellence - Student Award: Noelle Ford

Outstanding Contribution Award: Dr. Darlene Rodriguez
TAKING A PAUSE FOR SUMMER

We love imagining all the possibilities of the summer and celebrating all the achievements of the academic year during the last weeks of the semester. We know too that the end of the academic year can bring on some feelings. Feelings that not enough was accomplished.

Regardless of how much time you have left this term, we want to encourage you to do a little re-centering. We encourage you to take a deep breath as we transition into the summer term to reflect on your support systems. If you’re winding down your term, it’s a great time to review your NCFDD Individual or Institutional membership. We offer lots of great resources that you may not have been able to take advantage of during the academic year. This summer, you may want to explore and experiment with some of them. So, this is a great week to ask yourself:

- Do I know how my NCFDD Membership works?
- Am I utilizing the resources that can help me get re-centered, writing-wise, and personally?
- Am I getting what I need?
- And if the answer is “no,” what can I do to go deeper into the available resources?

As such, here are a few resources you will receive through an NCFDD membership:

1. Core Curriculum Courses
2. The Buddy System
3. Monday Motivators
4. Discussion Forums
5. WriteNow Access, and more!

There are some moments in our lives and careers when we are so overwhelmed that it feels impossible to do it all. We hope as summer approaches you take a moment to pause, reset, and give yourself the credit for a successful year!

To learn more about NCFDD summer courses and other offerings visit facultydiversity.org.

UPCOMING NCFDD TRAININGS & EVENTS

- June 2023 14-Day Writing Challenge
- Summer 2023 Teaching Toolkit Program
- Skill #5: Moving From Resistance to Writing
- Supporting Academics with ADHD
- NSF CAREER Awards: Strategies, Tips, and Advice from Recent Recipients
MORE COLLEGE STUDENTS CONSIDER DROPPING OUT AS MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS RISE


A new survey shows that a significant number of college students struggle with their mental health, and a growing share have considered dropping out themselves.

Two out of 5 undergraduate students – including nearly half of female students – say they frequently experience emotional stress while attending college, according to a survey published Thursday by Gallup and the Lumina Foundation, a private independent organization focused on creating accessible opportunities for post-secondary learning. The survey was conducted in fall 2022, with responses from 12,000 adults who had a high school degree but had not yet completed an associates or bachelor's degree.

Isabel, a 20-year-old undergraduate student, graduated high school a year early and spent most of 2021 keeping up with three jobs. But when she started college that fall, she felt like she was “sinking.” It all came to a head during a Spanish exam. Isabel, who identifies as both Latina and Black, overheard a video that other students were watching about racism in her communities. Negative emotions swelled, and she had to walk out without finishing the test. She rushed back to her room, angry and upset, and broke her student card when hitting it on the door to get in. “And I just started having a full-blown panic attack,” she said. “My mind was racing everywhere.” Isabel says she begged her parents to let her stay on campus, but they insisted that she make the three-hour drive home, and she soon took a medical withdrawal.

The share of college students reporting anxiety and depression has been growing for years, and it has only gotten worse during the Covid-19 pandemic. More than 40% of students currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program had considered dropping out in the past six months, up from 34% in the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, the survey found. Most cited emotional stress and personal mental health as the reasons, far more often than others like financial considerations and difficulty of coursework.

But colleges are uniquely positioned to surround students with a close network of support, experts say. Taking advantage of that structure needs buy-in to create a broader “community of care.” “Colleges have an educational mission, and I would make the argument that spreads to education about health and safety,” Hotaling said. College faculty should be trained in recognizing immediate concerns or threats to a student's safety, he said. But they should also understand that students can face a range of mental health challenges and know the appropriate resource to direct them to.

This foundation I am building is constantly in need of maintenance. There's like a crack every day,” says Isabela. “Back when I was trying to figure everything out, I felt like I was looking for a screwdriver when I needed a hammer. Now, it's not that I know I can handle it – but I know that I have healthy coping mechanisms and strategies and people to help. That gave me confidence and stamina to do it again.”

To read more on how to build support for students, visit CNN Health.
4 WAYS TO IMPROVE Mental Health

1. FEEL YOUR FEELINGS
   Everyone has emotions, which is a part of the human experience. You have every right to feel them so give yourself permission to do so.

2. JOURNALING
   A few sentences a day can help reduce stress and help identify and express your emotions.

3. DO WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY
   Choose to do something exciting or relaxing, it is all about you and what makes you feel good!

4. TALK TO SOMEONE
   Find someone you can trust to talk to about your feelings or seek those trained to help.

NEED MORE SUPPORT?!
KSU offers many services to support your mental wellbeing! Use the QR Code to find the best option for you!
THE DIVISION OF DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE (DDIE) EXPANDS INCLUSIVE HIRING TRAINING WITH NEW PLATFORM

On February 13, 2023, the Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence announced the online version of their highly requested Inclusive Hiring Training. The training, which was primarily taught by a member of the division, is now available to all faculty and staff members who are eligible to participate in the hiring process. Additionally, the training only needs to be taken once annually and participants will receive a certification upon completion.

To access the inclusive hiring training:

- Follow this link to access the KSU Inclusive Hiring Training channel: https://share.percipio.com/cd/HFIBa14IA
- If prompted, log in with your KSU NetID and password.
- Click Watch to start the inclusive hiring training.
- Once complete, follow the directions below to download your completion certificate.
  a. Click your name to open the Personal Profile
  b. In the dropdown menu, click Activity.
  c. The Activity page will load. Locate the completed Inclusive Hiring Training.
  d. Click the Download Certificate button next to the course you wish to access a certificate of completion. Follow your device’s download settings to view and print your certificate.

If you have any issues with accessing or completing the training, please click here for help.

If you experience any technical issues with the training module, please contact the KSU UITS Service Desk at (470) 578-6999 or email service@kennesaw.edu.
The Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence
Spring 2023 Virtual Trainings

**FEB. 22ND**
Cultural Competence
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**MARCH 2ND**
Inclusive Community Building.
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

**MARCH 27TH**
Inclusive Community Building.
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**APRIL 7TH**
Fostering Respect and Civility
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

**APRIL 24TH**
Fostering Respect and Civility
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**JUNE 5TH**
Reflective Structured Dialogue
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
Robert Boone grew up in Augusta in a musical family. His father was the minister of music at their home church, and Robert and his brother Brandon played drums and bass, respectively, in the church. He chose KSU after a strong audition with John Lawless, director of percussion studies.

“I just remember that at the audition, Professor Lawless made me feel super comfortable,” Boone said. “But he also went over some of the things that I could do better as a percussionist. So, I got a chance to experience his teaching style, which involved a lot of positive reinforcement.” Throughout his time at KSU, Boone said his professors treated their students like colleagues and collaborators, including hiring students for gigs, which helped them make the switch from student to professional musician. “Robert was so accelerated when I met him,” Chesarek said. “He had great timing and tempo and a natural feel on the drums with strong technique to back it up, but he worked really hard, too.”

Months after Boone received his master’s in jazz studies, his former professor Scotty Barnhart called and offered the opportunity to audition for the Count Basie Orchestra. The audition lasted for a month—a week in New York, two weeks in Japan, then another week in Kansas City—before Boone officially took over.

With the Basie Orchestra, he spends months on the road both abroad and in the U.S. In Atlanta, he teaches jazz percussion at Georgia State University and is an in-demand session drummer, playing gigs several nights a week. It’s a lifestyle he wouldn’t have any other way and one that he credits KSU with helping him achieve.

“From becoming a better drummer to learning how to truly be a professional, my classmates and faculty from Kennesaw State pushed me to where I am now,” he said. “This is exactly what I want to do.”

For the full story of Robert Boone, Jr, visit kennesaw.edu!
Whether just getting started or a diversity warrior, these resources are sure to encourage, inform, and motivate you to support diverse excellence here at KSU and beyond!

**READ – CRYING IN H MART**

**WATCH – ASIAN AMERICANS BY PBS**

**LISTEN – HOPE STARTS WITH US**

**CONTACT US**

KSUDIVERSE@KENNESAW.EDU