Dear CEHD Community,

With the beginning of Fall semester 2021 came a major transition in leadership at the very top of our college. For many people in the college, this change was totally unexpected and has created myriad questions, concerns, and sentiments. I certainly was surprised and disappointed to learn that our now former Dean, Joyce Alexander—who I had worked alongside on the college leadership team since 2019—would no longer be leading the college. Therefore, I would be remiss if I did not publicly acknowledge and thank Dr. Alexander for her wonderful mentorship and support in the time we worked together. I am eternally grateful that she recognized the need to create this Associate Dean position that I have the privilege of currently occupying, and entrusted me with the awesome responsibility of taking the lead on our justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) efforts for the college.

As I reflect more deeply on this leadership transition in the college and all the changes currently taking place at the broader university level, I am reminded of our current Interim Dean’s favorite saying, “We can’t control the weather, but we can adjust our sails”. These are indeed challenging and uncertain times in which we are operating, particularly for those of us who are committed to JEDI work. But our team in ODDI will remain steadfast in our efforts by continuing to build upon the important JEDI work we have begun under the leadership of our former Dean. Moreover, we will work closely with our current Interim Dean and other people in the college to move us forward, even in the midst of this storm. This move forward will involve the implementation of our newly formed ODDI strategic plan. A part of this implementation is the launch this semester of the Critical Conversations on Diversity Matters Event Series, which was designed to create meaningful dialogue, encourage honest self-reflection, and elevate critical consciousness and action around important and timely JEDI matters across campus and beyond. Please see the story below in this current volume of the newsletter for more details on our inaugural event in this series.

John N. Singer, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion
This presentation brings together more than ten years of research on high-achieving graduate students, faculty, and staff of Color within and beyond STEM fields. I provide race-conscious answers to the following questions: What do we need to improve the experiences of Black, Indigenous, students of Color? How do we retain marginalized and minoritized STEM faculty? How do some minoritized STEMers manage to survive brutal academic climates, and what does it cost? Why do schools continue to proclaim the necessity for recruiting and maintaining students and faculty in STEM disciplines and departments when the climate of these institutions regularly drives them away?

Given the mission of education, discovery, and service, it is imperative to have well-informed strategies and policies dedicated to identifying, recruiting, and retaining underrepresented people of Color in STEM. In this talk, I will argue that race-conscious mentoring and programming are critical components of such a strategy. The objective of this presentation is to cultivate cultural competence in STEM faculty; and to demonstrate why it is necessary to include in our curricula a history of race and racism in STEM education in the US and abroad.

Bio: As a professor of diversity and STEM education at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, I investigate what it means to be racially marginalized while minoritized in the context of learning and achieving in STEM higher education and in the STEM professions. I study in particular the racialized experiences and racial stereotypes that adversely affect the education and career trajectories of underrepresented groups of color. This involves exploring the social, material, and health costs of academic achievement and problematizing traditional forms of success in higher education, with an unapologetic focus on Black folk in these places and spaces. My National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER grant investigates how marginalization undercuts success in STEM through psychological stress, interrupted STEM career trajectories, impostor phenomenon, and other debilitating race-related trauma for Black, Indigenous, and Latinx doctoral students.
The campus community invited to a Nov. 19 statue dedication to acknowledge Matthew Gaines’ contributions to the founding of Texas A&M University. The statue will be located on the Yolanda and Jimmy ’65 Janacek Plaza behind Rudder Tower and beside the Student Services Building. RSVP by November 12th.

Matthew Gaines was a Baptist minister who served as the senator from the 16th District of in the Texas legislature during Reconstruction. The first African-American state senator from Washington County, his leadership was instrumental in assisting the 12th Texas Legislature with taking full advantage of the Land-Grant College Act of 1862, also known as the Morrill Act, which created the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, now Texas A&M University. Read more here.

NOVEMBER 8TH IS NATIONAL FIRST-GEN DAY!

National First-Gen day is a day to celebrate the amazing accomplishments of current, former and future First-generation college students. In commemoration of National First-Gen day, the Byrne Student Success Center will be offering free treats and an opportunity to connect and chat with current CEHD First-gen students.

Kelley O’Neal, Director of the Byrne Student Success Center, is asking for current First-gen faculty and staff members to wear a "First-gen the Tradition Begins" t-shirt on November 8th. Please contact Kelley at (koneal@tamu.edu) for details on obtaining a t-shirt.
**HERITAGE MONTHS**

*Why are heritage months important?*

Heritage month celebrations are important in providing the space to teach and learn about cultural history, and also to examine the way in which these cultures are viewed within American discourse. It is important to celebrate cultural heritages and to examine how these groups are continually oppressed and marginalized in society. We should look more closely at how we view groups and subgroups in this country, and what place they have at the table. We must explore the important questions: How are we learning about heritage and culture? How do we interact with people that have different heritages and cultures from our own?

While there are designated heritage month celebrations, our hope is to continue to acknowledge the contributions made by all groups of people in the United States throughout the year, not just during the heritage month celebrations.

**SEPTEMBER: NATIONAL HISPANIC-LATINO HERITAGE MONTH**

**NOVEMBER: AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE HERITAGE MONTH**

---

**5 WAYS TO MAKE A REAL IMPROVEMENT IN HIRING BLACK PROFESSORS**

"In the wake of George Floyd’s murder, Black students, professors, and staff members heard many messages of support and solidarity from colleges and universities. Many of us perceived those statements as inauthentic and performative as they were rarely adjoined with any meaningful action — like, say, reversing the decades-long failure to hire and promote Black academics on the tenure track." [Read more from the Chronicle of Higher Education.](https://www.chronicle.com)