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Students at the Margins and the Institutions That Serve Them: A Global Perspective

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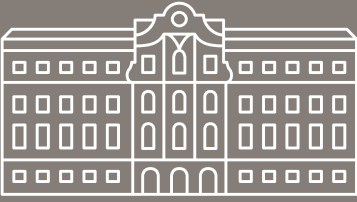
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Students at the Margins and the Institutions That Serve Them: A Global Perspective

Disciplines

Education | Higher Education



SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

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Students at the Margins and the Institutions that Serve Them: A Global Perspective



We define “students at the margins” as those who, because of their personal and/or social identities/positioning, have limited access to resources, face direct or structural discrimination, and are less likely to enter and academically succeed in education.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of higher education is to provide open and equal opportunities for students to learn, succeed and positively contribute to their local, national and global societies. Great strides are being made in increasing educational access, retention, completion and success, yet there is still work to be done particularly for students from disadvantaged or marginalized groups. Unprecedented shifts in migration patterns are causing demographic changes around the world. Additionally, governments, societies and higher education institutions are increasingly recognizing the need and responsibility to create legal and institutional frameworks for providing more and better opportunities for people from historically marginalized groups to gain access and achieve success at the university level.

A brief global scan shows that some countries and regions have a longer history of colleges and universities serving the specific needs of marginalized groups, while developments in other countries are just underway.

In the United States, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)—including Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Tribal Colleges and Universities; Hispanic Serving Institutions; and Asian American & Pacific Islander Serving Institutions—are a firmly established and an important part of the educational landscape. However, higher education institutions committed to providing educational opportunities for local communities marginalized along ethnic, racial, religious or other lines can be found on every continent.

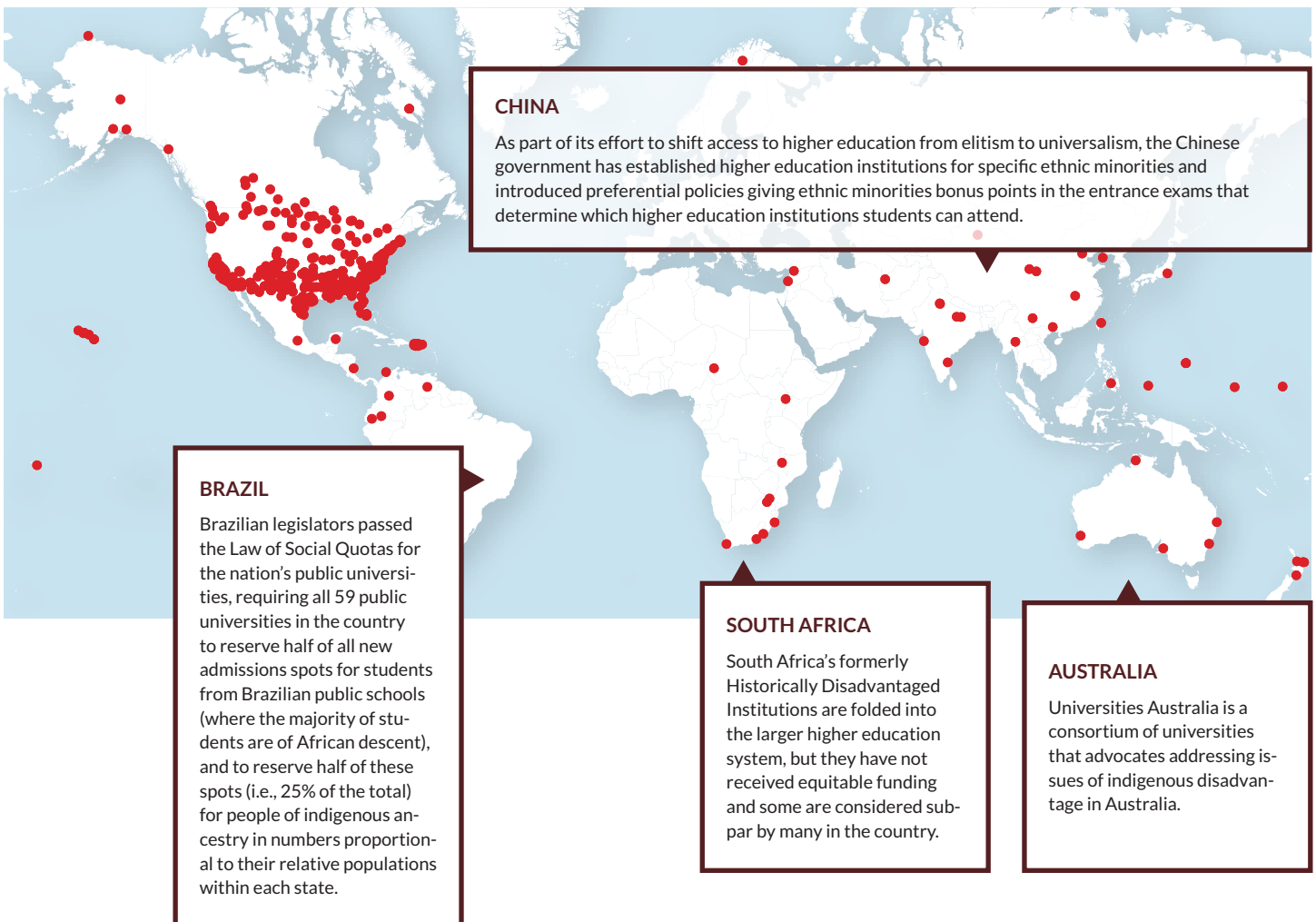
In light of shifting demographics and the growing focus on educational opportunity and access, increasing numbers of colleges and universities will be serving students from marginalized groups. And yet, for too long, institutions have operated in a vacuum, failing to collaborate across institutional types and across nations. This, in turn, has resulted in missed opportunities to resolve long-unsettled discrepancies in higher education attainment by marginalized student populations.



On October 11 to 16, 2014, 53 thought leaders and educators from 20 countries met in Salzburg, Austria, for a global seminar entitled “Students at the Margins and the Institutions that Serve Them.” The major themes of the seminar were to:

- establish, sustain and continue to expand a global network of people committed to serving students at the margins;
- broaden the discussion about students at the margins by developing greater understandings of approaches, terminologies and theories, and by disseminating knowledge to larger audiences;
- incentivize the creation of, and showcase tools to learn about, past and potential successful cases of minority-serving programs and strategies;
- create a space to share expertise, findings and stories among scholars, administrators and students; and
- develop a greater understanding of the current landscape of access and success of students at the margins globally.

VISUALIZING MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS



PARTICIPANTS' INSIGHTS

“Help students know who they are to help them know where they’re going.”

—JENNIFER CORDOVA-JAMES, NORTHWEST INDIAN COLLEGE

“Students at the margins don’t have the same rights as those in the mainstream.”

—NEIL SPARNON, JESUIT COMMONS

“We don’t refer to our students as marginalized—they’re just our students. Rather than bringing the margins to the table, I teach my kids to build their own table.”

—MICHAEL J. SORRELL, PAUL QUINN COLLEGE

“I think of the margin not as a place of disempowerment, but as a place of extreme possibilities.”

—ZENA RICHARDS, UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND



► [Click here to listen to participants from the Salzburg Global Seminar Session discuss their work](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTH AFRICA

Given its history of apartheid, South Africa also has a history of separation and segregation in its higher education system. Since the fall of apartheid, the country has been making a conscious effort to provide opportunity to formerly disenfranchised individuals and institutions. During the seminar, participants offered their thoughts on higher education in South Africa.

Zena Richards, University of Witwatersrand, stated:

“Although academic preparation is a problem for many students, in the South African context it is a problem that affects low-income and predominantly students from disadvantaged communities. Greater recognition has to be placed on the fact that access is not only about enrollment and quality, and that to achieve meaningful access to education, equity and outcomes need to be addressed collectively.”

Venitha Pillay, University of Pretoria, stated:

“If we are to build equality and equity for access and opportunity for success, then the nature of inequality and the performances of power that reinforce inequality must be thoroughly understood. Three interrelated concepts are central to understanding and using a capabilities approach to achieve substantive transformation. These are capabilities and functionings, conversions and agency, and freedom.”

Suellen Shay, University of Cape Town, noted:

“The story of the transformation of South African higher education is a good and bad news story. The good news is the growth in sheer numbers of enrollments into higher education—a near doubling between 1994 and 2011. In this same period the numbers of black students grew from 55% to 81% of total headcount numbers. In this time of rapid growth, affirmative action policies played an important role from the late 1990s at historically white universities in ensuring that many black students were admitted where their school-leaving results would not have qualified them for admission.”

“Beyond this impressive growth and demographic shift in numbers, the picture is not so good. The overall participation rate is low, and for black students it is unacceptably low (14% for black African students compared to 57% for white students in 2012). If one looks at enrollment across different types of programs of study, the picture is worse. Black students are seriously under-represented at masters and doctorate levels and in key areas of study, for example, science and engineering. This has been referred to as a “skewed revolution.” The worst of the bad news is the huge waste of half of the country’s already small undergraduate intake that does not complete their degree. This is also skewed racially, with white students about 1.5 times more likely to complete than black African students.”

SOUTH AFRICA



MARGIN BUSTER AWARDS: INCENTIVIZING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE ACROSS THE MARGINS

The Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions and Educational Testing Service (ETS) offered micro grants to projects proposed by Salzburg Global Fellows. These projects focus on the marginalization of students from a variety of sectors of society and promote their inclusion in and access to higher education. Micro grants of \$2500 were awarded to two projects:

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EQUITY ADMISSIONS FRAMEWORK

Stella Flores, Vanderbilt University; Andrew Harvey, La Trobe University

This project aims to develop an international student equity admissions framework that will: stimulate fresh thinking on how colleges and universities can most effectively provide educational opportunities to disadvantaged or marginalized people; and it develops a taxonomy for institutions serving marginalized populations worldwide in order to serve as a common reference point for more efficiently and effectively facilitating the generation and sharing of knowledge, research and practices among these institutions.

BENCHMARKING TOOLS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SERVING UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Blazenka Divjak, University of Zagreb; Fran Ferrier, European Access Network; Marcel Maretic, University of Zagreb; Darko Grabar, University of Zagreb; and Mee Fong Lee, European Access Network

This project aims to develop a taxonomy for institutions serving underprivileged students in the form of rubrics with criteria, levels and explanations, based on literature and personal experience. The project leaders' aim is to relate the type of institution, mission, strategy, funding, locally defined minorities with access, retention issues and the impact on society.



▶ [Click here to watch an interview with Susana Muñoz, Assistant Professor at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee](#)



▶ [Click here to watch an interview with Graeme Atherton, Head of Access HE, United Kingdom](#)

MOVING FORWARD: COMMITMENTS FROM SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

During the seminar, participants worked in small groups aimed at solving larger issues pertaining to students at the margins. The participants committed to:

- advocate for, coach, empower and mentor students at the margins;
- create new institutions or formal spaces within existing institutions for students at the margins;
- bring knowledge about the experiences of students at the margins to local contexts;
- improve instruction and expand research agendas by integrating this new knowledge; and
- create new local networks and spaces for knowledge-sharing, and support colleagues doing this work.





▶ [Click here to watch an interview with Michael Sorrell, President, Paul Quinn College](#)



▶ [Click here to watch an interview with Jennifer Cordova-James, Northwest Indian College](#)



▶ [Click here to watch an interview with Adelmo De Souza Xavier, Professor in Bahia, Brazil](#)

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR'S PROGRAM

- Australia
- Austria
- Brazil
- China
- Colombia
- Croatia
- El Salvador
- Ghana
- Indonesia
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Korea
- Lithuania
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- Peru
- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- United States

MEDIA ATTENTION FOR THE SEMINAR: "STUDENTS AT THE MARGINS AND INSTITUTIONS THAT SERVE THEM"

Gasman, M. & Nguyen, T. (2014, October 15). Student Success: Words of Wisdom. *Huffington Post*.

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Muñoz, S. (2014, October 12). A Glimpse into the Lives of Undocumented Students. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*

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Nguyen, T., & Gasman, M. (2014, October 14). Displaced Students and Youth: A Global Perspective. *Huffington Post*.

Shay, S. (2014, October 15). From the margins to the table. *University World News*.

Sheehy, I. (2014, October 15). Refugees need access to higher education. *University World News*.

Watson, J. (2014, October 13). Paul Quinn College Sharing Story of Turnaround with World. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*

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Yair, G. (2014, October 15). The diversity of diversity. *University World News*.



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INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL NETTLES

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INTERVIEW WITH BETTY OVERTON-ADKINS

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