Preparing Working-Class Academics for Success

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Abstract

I was one of Ryan and Sackrey's *Strangers in Paradise*, an academic raised in a working-class family. After becoming a professor, I slowly grew to understand that being a successful faculty member requires learning a different set of survival techniques than those I needed to succeed in my undergraduate and graduate studies. As it was during my student years, nobody in my family or anyone they knew could counsel me on what it takes to earn tenure, promotion, sabbatical leave, or any of the other rewards the academy offers. Compounding this problem was a counterproductive belief, one frequently held by others from backgrounds like mine. Namely, the fear that asking for help shows weakness, prima facia evidence that I was unqualified to be an academic. Beyond the questions I was afraid to ask were the many questions I did not know to ask, questions with answers that would have saved me from countless headaches. In hopes of smoothing the way for recently hired working-class academics, this article presents seven lessons I wish I had learned before becoming a university professor, knowledge that had I acquired early on would have made my travels through the university labyrinth far easier – infinitely less trying.

Keywords

Working-class academics, diversity, first-generation college, *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, working-class professors, social class affirmative action

In an article published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, Allison C. Morgan and her colleagues reported the results of a survey they distributed between summer 2017 and autumn 2020 among 46,692 tenure-track professors at "1,360 Ph.D. granting departments…in Computer Science, Business, History, Psychology, Physics and Astronomy, Sociology, Anthropology and Biology" (Morgan et al., 2022, p. 1626). The researchers selected these academic subjects "for their diversity of scholarship and [because they] represent a broad sample of tenure-track faculty at research intensive institutions in the United States" (Ibid., p. 1626).

Morgan and her coauthors found that professors at these schools were "between 12 and 25 times more likely to have a parent with a Ph.D." than the general population (Ibid., 1626). They also noted that this disparity almost doubles at the nation's premier universities and has remained steady over the last half century (Ibid, p. 1625). The authors attribute this lack of diversity to the many social, financial, and cultural benefits accruing to the "socioeconomically privileged," the children of well-educated parents, caretakers who not only serve as role models but understand how education works…the written and unwritten rules commonly associated with academic success, including finding jobs as professors (Ibid., p. 1625; see also, Clotfelter, Chapter 9, 2017). Morgan and her colleagues reasoned that what they call "micro-class advantages" help explain not

only why the nation's professoriate is drawn from a small segment of the population but also the self-perpetuating nature of this system, like choosing like (Morgan et al., 2022, p. 1625; Michels, 1919, 1962).

Morgan and her peers proposed that this lack of "representational diversity" risks limiting the sweep of topics today's professors and their students, who later become professors, address in their teaching, writings, and other activities (Morgan, et al, p. 1625). This narrowing of interests harms the overall intellectual climate of higher education for students and faculty alike. One illustration of this problem is the failure of American universities to list statistics on their websites showing the social class backgrounds of their professors, data they provide about other traditionally marginalized groups and the perspectives they can bring to our attention. This lack of transparency about faculty origins sends an important message. While universities acknowledge that socioeconomic diversity among students improves the overall intellectual climate of higher education, schools do not apply the same logic to those who teach these students. This unwillingness to gather these background data makes it all but impossible to hold school officials accountable for their outcomes regarding the representation of professors not raised in what Morgan and her coauthors described as "socioeconomically privileged" circumstances (Ibid, p. 1626).

LESSONS LEARNED

My parents and grandparents never finished high school and all of them worked in blue collar occupations until retiring. In two previously published articles, I discussed lessons I wish I had learned before starting college, insights that would have made my journey through undergraduate school much easier (Oldfield, 2007, 2012). Unfortunately, it was advice my family members could not provide, given that they had no experience to draw on nor did they know anyone who could offer me the guidance I needed.

In one of the just cited articles I mentioned that I had never heard of a PhD until my first day in college when the woman teaching my required language course introduced herself as "Doctor" (Oldfield, 2007, p. 4). I was confused. I could not understand why the school would hire a physician to teach German. Another lesson I wish I had learned, really unlearned, beforehand was the belief that only smart people finish college; either you have enough horsepower to make it through or you do not (Ibid., p. 6). Simple as that. Midway through my first semester I realized that academic success has more to do with self-discipline, persistence, and good study habits, skills I lacked, as shown by my lousy high school grades.

I recounted the lessons I wish I had known as a first-generation college student, or first gen, hoping my insights would reduce the number of rules and expectations of the academic game others from backgrounds like mine would have to learn the hard way, through trial and error. Forewarned is forearmed.

After becoming one of Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey's *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class* (1984), I slowly grew to understand that being a successful professor requires learning a different collection of survival techniques, lessons that, again, nobody in my family or anyone they knew could help me with before or during my years as a faculty member. My lack of

such knowledge was compounded by a counterproductive belief shared by too many first gens who grew up working class. Armfield and Armfield described our problem this way:

> Coupled with not understanding the system, not having the community literacy skills to effectively navigate the system, [sic] and having to change the fundamentals of their communication styles, students from working class families often don't ask for help. They may not ask for help because they aren't sure they need it, they aren't sure what to ask for, or that the "student may need help dissociating the need for support from notions of personal weakness" (citing Casey, 2005, p. 33). Students from working class backgrounds are…used to obeying rules without asking questions. Not knowing what to ask, if they can ask, or who [sic] to ask are barriers to a student's growth within the academic setting (Armfield and Armfield, 2017, p. 24).

I carried these first-gen beliefs throughout my time as a college instructor. I assumed that I alone was responsible for deciphering the academic maze…asking for help was a sign of weakness, embarrassing proof of my ignorance, the same reason I did not ask why my undergraduate college hired a medical doctor to teach German. Equally troublesome for me as a professor were the questions I did not know to ask. Eventually I came to see that so much of higher education is akin to a chess game, where first gens are expected to learn the rules as they go, while the opposing players know much of what they need to know beforehand and if they hit a bump, need advice about which piece to move where, they can call home for pointers.

Seven Lessons I Wish I Had Learned Before Becoming a Professor

Weighing the writings of Ryan and Sackrey (1984) and Morgan et al. (2022), among others, prompted me to consider some of the many lessons I wish had learned about being a working-class academic, or WCA for present purposes, before I became one. Knowing then what I know now would have made my travels through the university labyrinth far easier – much less trying. Given the significant underrepresentation of WCAs Morgan and her coauthors noted in their research, and surely not a problem confined to the Ph.D.-granting institutions they studied, it is imperative that higher education begin actively recruiting and retaining more WCAs. Lacking such efforts, American universities can never achieve the demographic diversity and the resulting multiplicity of perspectives they proclaim as the hallmarks of quality learning (Clotfelter, 2017).

In hopes of smoothing the way for other WCAs, I offer the following lessons I wish I had understood about the culture of higher education before becoming a university instructor. These personal recommendations derive from the many questions I did not know to ask. (A note about style: I use the word university henceforth to include the term college.)

LESSON 1: Avoid distractions.

All academic departments, universities, and their surrounding communities offer a wide array of inviting diversions, situations not directly connected to what you must do to gain retention, tenure, or promotions. The ready availability of these experiences can be tempting to a fledgling professor, especially to someone new to the geographical area. Joining in too many of these activities can detract from the time needed to develop a convincing personnel file, one with qualifications

sufficient for advancement. Focus most of your efforts on pursuing what your university's review committees emphasize when deciding your fate.

LESSON 2: University operations depend on formal rules.

There are four important documents you should download, or otherwise request, and study as a newly hired WCA. The first of these publications is your school's *Personnel Manual*. Read this booklet closely paying special attention to the standards and expectations relating to tenure, promotions, performance reviews, and sabbatical leave. Center your efforts on meeting each of these measures depending on where you are in your career.

The second and third documents, assuming they are separate publications, to examine are your school's graduate and undergraduate catalogues. Competent academic advisors can answer most questions their advisees ask. Competent advisors who do not know the answer will know the names of people who do. Having deep knowledge of your university's catalogues will help you and your students avoid unnecessary problems: You do not want any of your advisees to receive last-minute notice that they have not fulfilled all their graduation requirements.

Fourth, download or request a copy of your new employer's standard student teaching evaluation form. Keep each survey question in mind while planning your courses. Scores on these individual items are what personnel committees consider when judging your pedagogical talents.

LESSON 3: Understand that students grade you.

Even WCAs hired at one of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Tier 1 (schools with very heavy research requirements), Tier 2 (schools with heavy research requirements), or Tier R3 (schools with moderate research requirements) universities, where faculty members' chances of tenure and promotion usually depend, in whole or in part, on the number and quality of their publications – the smaller the tier number the greater the expected number of publications – and less on teaching scores, still it is safer to have high rather than low marks on these measures (Cairns, 2022). While the other thirty Carnegie Foundation classified schools depend less on research and publication and more on teaching scores when judging faculty performance, no matter the school's level, having respectable teaching scores is inevitably a point of pride among those in the profession.

Here are three steps you can take to increase your chances of students giving you favorable marks on these end-of-term surveys.

Step 1:
It is important to understand that there can be a close connection between a substantive syllabus and favorable teaching scores. Devising a strong syllabus is worth your time and effort. If, for example, your school's evaluation form asks students whether your class is well organized, a syllabus detailing your grading scale, reading assignments, and the topics you will cover at each meeting should bring you favorable results on this item.

Perhaps the most efficient way to build a comprehensive syllabus is to start by seeing if your employer provides newly hired professors with a sample syllabus containing items that are commonplace to your campus, such as your school's academic and honor system statement. If your university provides you with a generic syllabus, you can build on this document by adding facts and considerations unique to each of your classes.

Next, search online for syllabi other professors have posted with course titles identical to or much like the classes you will be instructing. Naturally, this recommendation includes, if possible, requesting syllabi from your predecessor, the person who held the job before you were appointed. If you cannot find relevant syllabi online, search for college catalogues that list course titles that, again, are the same or much like the classes you will be covering. Contact the instructors who teach these classes and ask for copies of their syllabi.

Aside from fashioning the initial syllabi this way, go online periodically and search for recent and relevant syllabi. This strategy will help you stay current by introducing you to new ideas about technologies, topics, texts, audiovisual materials, and various instructional resources and techniques other professors are using in their courses.

At the end of each class meeting if you notice something in your syllabus that needs improvement, make the change immediately, while the idea is fresh in your mind.

A well-crafted syllabus has a final and often neglected benefit. Students value instructors who show their respect by having invested substantial effort organizing each course.

Step 2:
Another secret to achieving favorable results on your teaching evaluations is to be on the listen and lookout for information about which professors at your school are considered good instructors. Administrators and faculty who have been on campus for several years can be an invaluable source of advice about the most skilled teachers. A large majority, if not all, of these senior instructors or administrators, whether inside or outside your department, will have served on personnel committees where they reviewed teaching scores for professors seeking retention, tenure, or promotion.

Students are equally valuable in helping you learn which professors are effective teachers. Pay attention to what students say about which faculty members fit this description.

Finally, websites such as Rate My Professors, while a far from perfect gauge of teaching talents, can sometimes identify good instructors you might have overlooked.

Once you have gathered sufficient details about the professors deemed quality teachers, contact three or four of these individuals and ask each one to meet with you to discuss why they think students speak well of them. These sessions should yield critical insights into the techniques and approaches that work and, equally important, do not work for those you interview. For example, a sociology professor might mention the importance of giving frequent quizzes to ensure students are reading the assignments, using audio visuals, allowing enough time for in-class discussions, and the value of inviting a few outside speakers each term to discuss their area of expertise—

comments from practitioners can sometimes help students better understand topics covered in the course and decide whether they want, or do not want, to choose a certain academic major or career. *Step 3*: Studying the results of your teaching evaluations can help you identify what you did well and what needs improvement. Do not be disappointed if the first few sets of teaching scores are not strong. These results do not necessarily mean you are ill-suited for the classroom. Personnel committees typically judge teaching performance longitudinally. If your scores register steady improvement, which is often the case among the newly hired, personnel committee members will look favorably on your instructional skills. Professors are generally granted time to learn the trade, determine what works for them. Teaching is not as easy as it looks, especially when done well; it takes a lot of effort and knowledge to make something look effortless. Treat your scores as another opportunity to learn from your students.

Finally, track your end-of-term teaching statistics on a spreadsheet. If you are coachable – open to the wisdom of others and capable of recognizing where you are coming up short – you are likely to register continuous improvement on each survey item. If your school's personnel rules require that you provide written justification in your tenure or promotion applications, you can cite your rising teaching scores to support your case.

LESSON 4: Futureproofing has many rewards.

If there is an extended period between the date you finish your Ph.D. and the day you start your first job—say you defend your dissertation in early January and start teaching in late August—spend the interval preparing for the upcoming semester. In short, do not wait until the last minute to begin settling into your new surroundings. Your initial year as a professor will likely be one of, if not *the* most challenging of your career. Relocating, learning about a new city, meeting new people, attending welcoming parties, and readying to teach your classes are only a few of the many activities that will consume your time during these early days on campus. Starting each term with carefully planned syllabi and other class materials, such as tests and quizzes partly or wholly prepared, will lessen your workload and stress levels during your rookie year, and all the years that follow for that matter.

The same logic about futureproofing applies to using your spring breaks, summers, holiday recesses, and the period between fall and spring terms wisely. Unless you have other pressing matters, such as teaching summer school, family commitments, or unavoidable personal demands, spend your extra time reviewing the textbooks you are considering assigning, updating syllabi, writing papers or books for publication, and deciding which if any conferences you want to attend. Breaks offer the possibility of uninterrupted blocks of time, a chance to build momentum for these and other professional endeavors.

In sum, any tasks to be completed during the semester that can be finished beforehand will save you from having to do them once classes resume, when time is at a premium.

LESSON 5: Be on the lookout for confidants.

Once on campus, allow yourself time to learn the personalities of other professors and administrators. After you have gathered sufficient information, ask one or two of these individuals

to be your mentor(s). Look for professors or administrators who seem compatible with your personality, who appear wise to the many aspects of your school's culture, and who are known for maintaining confidences. Full professors and senior administrators often make good mentors. Their having met the formal and informal expectations required to gain their current rank suggests they have been on campus long enough to understand school operations; long serving faculty and administrators are more likely to know the well-kept secrets concerning some person, persons, or organization. Wisely chosen mentors can help you solve or avoid countless problems.

LESSON 6: Establishing a support group for people like you.

Unlike other marginalized cohorts, your school probably lacks an advocacy association for WCAs. If this description applies to your university and you are new to campus, consider starting such an organization, preferably in your second or third year, after you have had time to settle in. If, on the other hand, you are reading this article and are a WCA who has been at your school for at least a year, you are encouraged to start a WCA support group, and the sooner the better. Whether you are a newly hired WCA or have been on campus for more than a year, here is a sampling of issues to include among your founding efforts and concerns.

Reconnaissance: Your first objective is identifying potential group members. Notwithstanding that universities fail to maintain statistics on the socioeconomic origins of faculty, gathering this information might not be as difficult as it sounds, given that most people welcome the opportunity to tell you about themselves. Differentiating potential members amounts to little more than asking the right questions. As you meet and exchange pleasantries with other professors, some of them will volunteer facts about their social class background either without prompting or if you ask a few casual questions such as: "What did your parents do for a living?"; or "What made you want to become a professor?"; or "Were your parents teachers?" If the situation feels right, you can go directly to the point, avoid having to pose any of the preceding questions, by asking "Where did your parents attend college?" Use your imagination in picking questions and remember that your choices will depend on each professor's personality and flow of the conversation. The potential support group members you identify will likely know of other WCA professors on your campus.

Invitations: When you reach the point of asking people to join you at the first WCA Advocacy Association, or WCAAA for short, meeting, do not be surprised if your question triggers an immediate and enthusiastic "Yes!" Your invitation is probably the first time these instructors will have been asked to view their working-class origins as an asset worthy of interest group representation, instead of something to downplay.

Size: Limit the number of people you invite to the first WCAAA meeting to maybe six or seven professors. Your choice of invitees should include a mix of ongoing and first year WCAs. Because it usually takes time for people in emerging organizations to finalize the rules and norms, keeping the number of participants small prevents the initial sessions from becoming unwieldy…the problem of having too many chefs in the kitchen. A mix of fledgling and continuing professors guarantees a mingling of minds, a time-tested way of establishing sound procedures and reasonable objectives.

In the Beginning: During the initial WCAAA meetings members should focus on the essentials, such as who qualifies to join, how often and where to get together, bylaws, a constitution identifying the group's principles, among other necessary concerns. When deciding where to meet, if it is possible for everyone to gather at a local diner or a member's home, the informality of either setting should foster a more relaxed atmosphere versus the stressors associated with getting together at the workplace.

The founding members should end the first meeting by formally acknowledging the importance of allowing time for their efforts to mature, say a year or two, or three, to work out the inevitable challenges, the startup costs, that accompany the birthing of any organization. It is important that everyone recognizes, and keeps reminding themselves and each other of, the virtues of patience and persistence.

LESSON 7: The next steps to take after your support group is up and running?

There is a wide range of topics WCAAA members should address after having established the group's ground rules. Here is a sampling of issues to cover during the early meetings, topics that will get the organization moving and raise still other concerns to address at future gatherings.

Agenda Item 1: Professors who have been at the university for several years should review and discuss the fundamentals required to earn retention, tenure, and promotion. If publishing is the primary focus with teaching a close second, knowing this fact early on can help first year WCAs decide how to budget their time, and remind the more experienced members how to do this as well.

Agenda Item 2: Even at universities the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education identifies as Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3, schools that stress publications in personnel decisions, all WCAAA members should appreciate the many benefits of publishing books, journal articles, monographs, or other professional writings. These plusses include, among others, improving one's: 1) writing competency, 2) knowledge of the discipline, 3) critical and linear thinking skills, 4) research capabilities, 5) stash of materials for use in class and during conference presentations, 6) awareness and use of newly available computer hardware and software, 7) number of professional contacts, and 8) chances of having one or more publications lead to offers from other researchers to collaborate on future projects.

WCAAA members with publications to their credit should discuss the just mentioned benefits along with their own thoughts on this topic. If nobody in the group has published, faculty members, WCA or otherwise, who have done so should be invited to speak to WCAAA members about the many rewards of having one's ideas in print and how to make this happen.

Agenda Item 3: WCAAA members who have presented a paper or simply attended a local, regional, or national conference should explain to members who have not done so the rewards of participating in these professional meetings. Such discussions should begin by having seasoned WCAAA members explain that the primary purpose of these venues is for students, academics, and practitioners to gather and share concerns about their respective fields.

WCAs who have never been to a professional conference and have research papers in progress should be urged to submit proposals to present some or all their findings at one or more upcoming conferences. These novice WCAs, or NWCAs for present purposes, should understand that if the person or persons organizing the individual panel sessions accepts their proposal, they, the NWCA author or authors, are thus invited to attend the conference and present a draft of their work to the audience members. These NWCA presenters can then integrate any constructive suggestions they receive from audience members or assigned readers into the manuscript they eventually submit for possible publication.

WCAAAs who have been to one or more local, regional, or national conferences should identify some of the other bonuses beyond presenting a paper, if they did that, of attending professional meetings. Notably, these gatherings offer important learning opportunities, including, for instance, attending others' presentations, meeting new people at the swimming pool, in a pub, or over meals to share viewpoints. The formal and informal aspects of conferences can be a rich source of new research ideas and insights into effective teaching techniques. Casual conversations among attendees can be as instructive as the formal presentations, sometimes more so, given how the former lack prescribed time limits, other than the self-imposed.

NWCAs should be encouraged to attend a few panels that address topics seemingly beyond their specialties. These sessions can inspire works that connect disparate topics, relationships that make for future conference proposals, class presentations, and publications.

NWCAs should be warned against spending all or most of their free time in their hotel rooms grading papers, preparing lectures, or researching their next publication. These tasks can wait. Instead, NWCAs should attend as many activities, both conference-related and informal, as possible. Conferences are for conferencing, not treating the hotel room as another workspace. These meetings are intended to enrich the attendees' perspectives. If a WCA, NWCA or otherwise, arrives home with only one new idea, the trip will have been worthwhile. A single new perspective or personal connection, or both, can change a career for the (even) better.

Finally, veteran WCAAA members should provide a few seemingly mundane suggestions about presenting research at a panel session. This means, for instance, practicing the presentation several times to stay within the allotted time, using audiovisuals, not being shy about gathering business cards from conference goers, even big names in the field, having copies of the paper and the author's own business cards at the ready, and emailing oneself the manuscript in case something happens making the original file unavailable when needed. The airline might have mistakenly delivered the luggage or laptop, or both, to the wrong destination. One cannot be too prepared. Conferences goers are not immune to Murphy's Law.

Agenda Item 4: In *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, Bowen, Kurzweil, and Tobin (2005, p. 176) proposed that students of modest beginnings need "vocal champions." The same logic applies to WCAs. Support group members should discuss tactics for recruiting and hiring more WCAs. There are many ways to achieve this goal. One approach is for WCAAA members to serve on their university's personnel selection committees. Working in this capacity these members can identify candidates who are or appear to be WCAs by looking for class indicators in each applicant's cover letter, resume, and recommendation letters. Potential clues

include whether the person ever worked in a traditionally blue- or pink-collar occupation. Other signs suggesting an applicant is a WCA include having graduated from a community college, or a small public college versus Harvard, Northwestern, Dartmouth, Duke, Stanford, or another prestigious academy (Clotfelter, 2017). Periodically, support group members should devote a few minutes of meeting time to discussing still other class markers they have found helpful in identifying WCAs, such as an applicant with a degree from Berea College in Kentucky, a school with a longstanding commitment to enrolling students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

When recruiting efforts reach the telephone interviewing stage, WCAAA members involved in the faculty selection process should inquire of each applicant's socioeconomic origins in the spirit of the earlier-suggested questions. The same logic applies once candidates with still-to-be discovered class origins are interviewed on campus.

No matter a job interviewee's background, WCAAA members should emphasize that it is better to hire a non-WCA if the on-campus interview reveals that a WCA candidate will not be, for whatever reason, a good fit for the job. Hiring an unworthy WCA will only harm the campaign to have school officials consider socioeconomic background as a diversity criterion.

Finally, in "Why We Need Better Data on Faculty Diversity," an essay she wrote for *Inside Higher Education*, Laura W. Perna proposed that "An excellent and diverse faculty is vital to individual colleges and universities and to our communities, states, nation and globe" (2023, p. 1). She continued, "A diverse faculty brings diverse perspectives, and these diverse perspectives enhance teaching and advising, research and scholarship, clinical practice, and engagement with the community and world" (Ibid., p. 1). Without the ready availability of data about the social class origins of faculty, it is impossible to hold individual schools responsible for their integrative outcomes. Moreover, expanding the definition of diversity to include socioeconomic background will inspire academics everywhere to recognize the strong connection between social class heritage and educational attainment, thereby raising awareness of the problem. A similar thing happened when universities began including race, ethnicity, and gender among their diversity considerations. WCAAA members should heed Perna's advice and insist that their school's leaders formally acknowledge social class background as a diversity standard. WCAAA members should not stop there. They should explain that this new policy must include having university officials survey current faculty and future job applicants about their socioeconomic backgrounds. Once collected, a summary of these statistics should be included on the university's website along with the other demographic information commonly listed there. Transparency. These reforms will enable WCAAA members and others committed to social class diversity to hold school officials responsible for their democratizing effects. While the US Supreme Court (*Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard,* 600 U.S. 181 (2023)) has ruled that universities cannot weigh race when deciding student admissions, as Kahlenberg demonstrated in *The Remedy* (1996), the Justices have never rejected the use of social class as a policy measure. Taylor (1991, p. 23) calls class-based diversity "legally unassailable," a description that still applies.

CONCLUSION

The gradual recognition of sexism and racism has caused universities to provide metrics on their websites showing the racial and gender composition of their respective faculties. These actions

have raised consciousness about the need and justification for nurturing a more representative professoriate according to race and gender; higher education is no longer willing to ignore the various forms of prejudice and discrimination that have curtailed academic opportunities for members of these two groups. The same level of awareness about the limiting effects of social class origins for first gens raised in poverty or working-class circumstances has yet to be formally acknowledged as a legitimate diversity consideration among university faculty. Given the findings Morgan and her colleagues provided in their *Nature Human Behaviour* paper (2022) about the disproportionate number of faculty raised with class privilege, along with other studies showing the rising costs of attending college, the number of years required to complete a Ph.D. or a professional degree, and the ongoing upward redistribution of wealth, universities must, if they are indeed sincere about their commitment to diversity, begin inviting more WCAs into their ranks and once hired, provide these faculty with the resources and support services necessary to flourish (Clotfelter, 2017). Without these welcoming efforts, Perna's promise of "[a]n excellent and diverse faculty" will remain unfilled (2023, p. 1).

Author Bio

Kenneth Oldfield is emeritus professor of public administration at the University of Illinois Springfield. He has published articles on various subjects including how structural changes in the environment can affect public health outcomes, property tax uniformity, tax increment financing, queer professors from the working class, community college funding, the Volunteers in Service to America program, GRE predictive validity, the human genome project, and using class-based diversity criteria to democratize higher education by recruiting and placing more college students, professors, and administrators who were raised in poverty or working class surroundings by parents or guardians who never went beyond high school, if that far.

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