

Systemic Shocks & Systemic Change: What Graduate Education Leaders Can Do

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Today

What is systemic change? Why are we perfectly positioned for it?

Cases of innovation & collaboration

Steps we can take

Most of us are wondering when life will get back to normal but normal is what brought us to such a precarious place. Nothing should ever be the same again and while that is an unnerving prospect, it may also be our saving grace.

Eventually, doctors will find a [coronavirus](#) vaccine, but black people will continue to wait, despite the futility of hope, for a cure for [racism](#). We will live with the knowledge that a hashtag is not a vaccine for white supremacy. We live with the knowledge that, still, no one is coming to save us. The rest of the world yearns to get back to normal. For black people, normal is the very thing from which we yearn to be free.



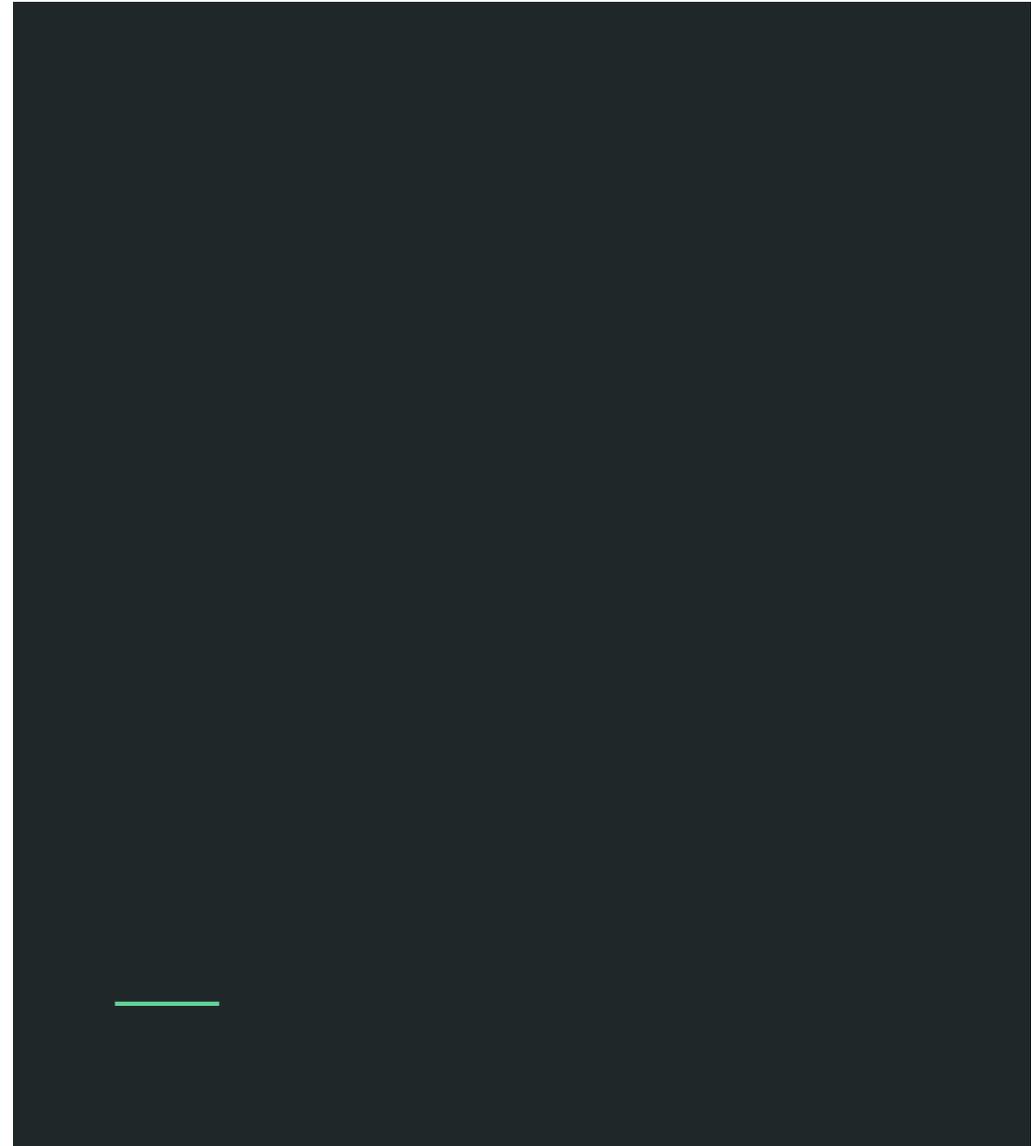
Roxane Gay

Change typically comes slowly in higher education, but these are not typical times.

**Most systemic
change comes about
precisely through
exogenous shocks.**

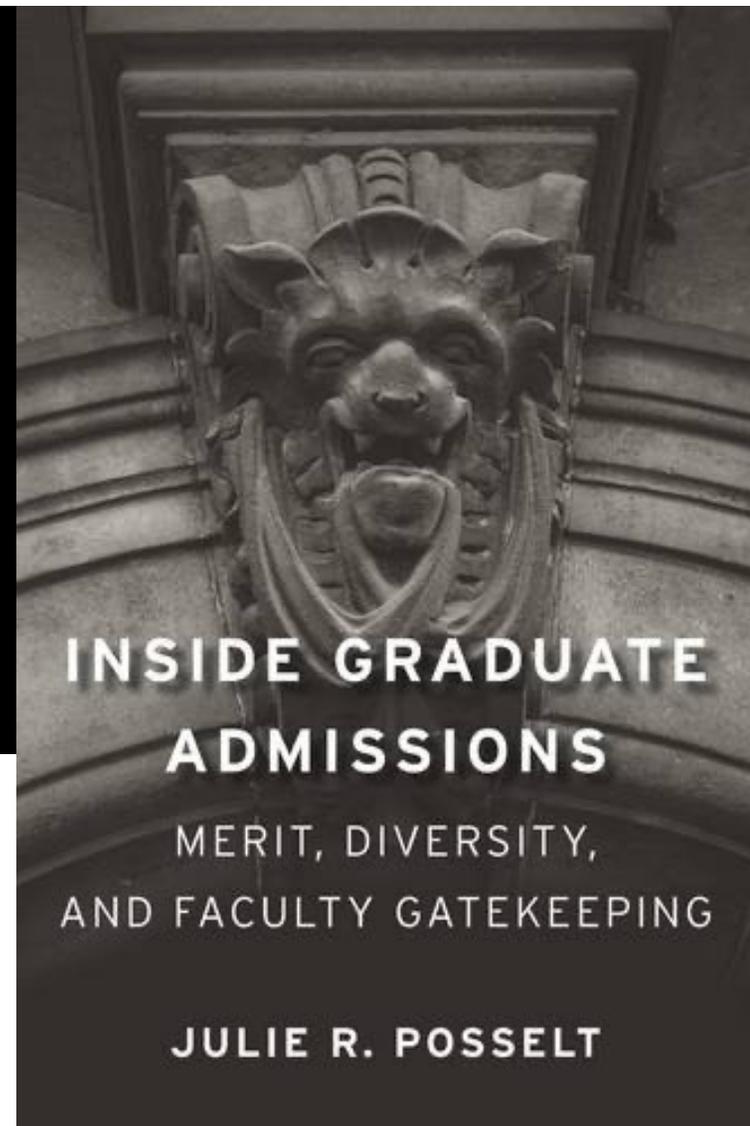
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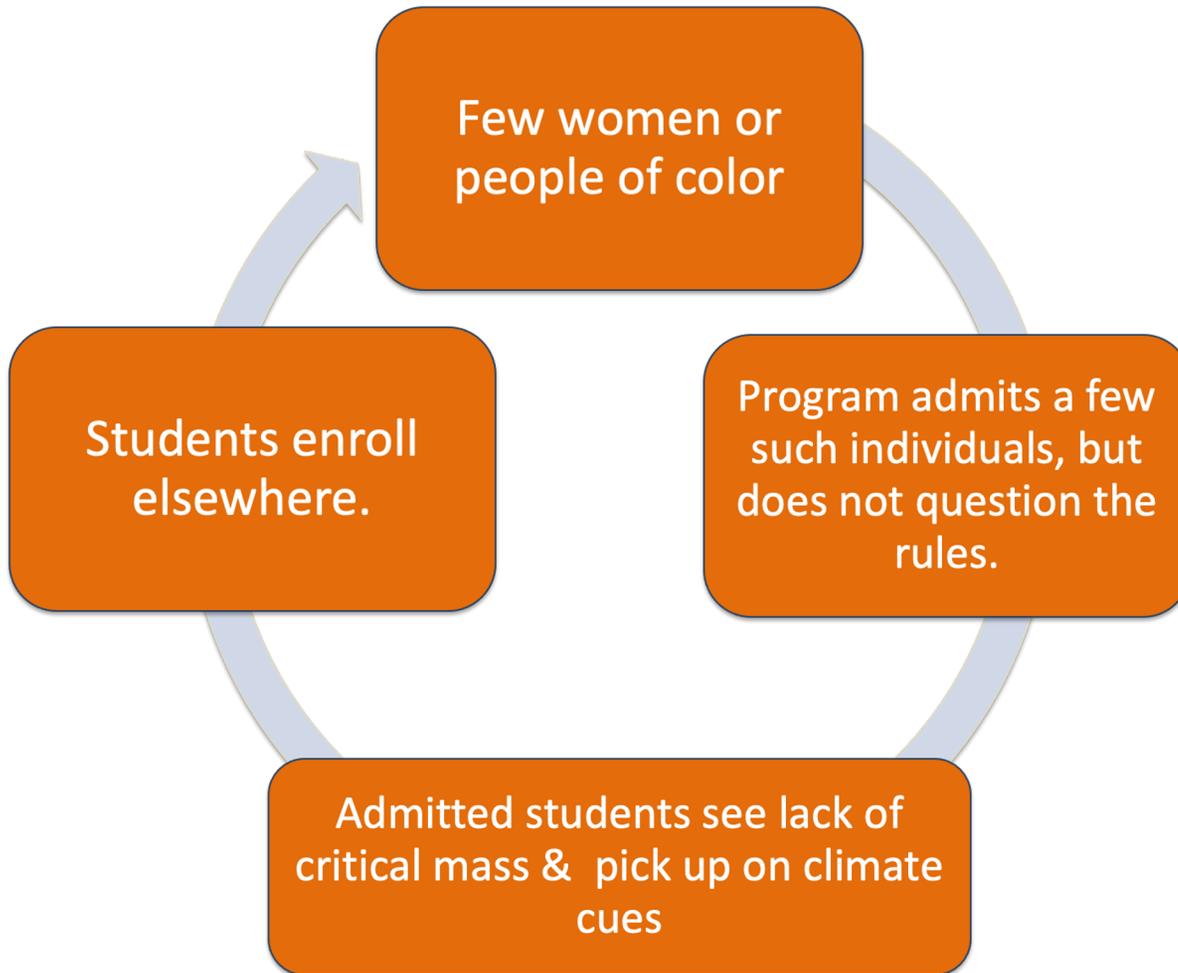
**The direct & indirect
consequences of our
actions – including
our responses to
COVID – can haunt
or help us.**



Evaluative cultures explain why academics define merit in ways that undermine diversity.

- Program culture → Criteria & processes in use
- Disciplinary culture → logics, language
- Academia's culture → Ambivalence about change; discomfort talking about race





What does it take to interrupt this vicious cycle?

SYSTEM:

a set of elements connected by feedbacks, dependencies, and interactions—internally and with the environment— that helps to achieve something.

SYSTEMIC CHANGE:

“...occurs when change reaches all or most parts of a system, thus affecting the behavior of the entire system.” Mark Connolly, writing for the Accelerating Systemic Change Network

Examples of systemic change

Improving connections



Examples of systemic change

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Creating levers that affect large portions of the system



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Managing complexity

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Revisiting the outcomes to which elements and their connections are directed.

Case studies of change efforts

Discipline/Field	Focus of equity effort	Level of Analysis
Applied Physics	Race & Gender	PhD Program
Chemistry	Gender	PhD Program
Civil Engineering	Gender	PhD Program
Psychology	Race	PhD Program
Astronomy	Race & Gender	Disciplinary society
Physics	Race	Disciplinary society
Geology	Gender	Field Course

Organizational Learning

- “*A head-hanging embarrassment*”: The departments ranking sank amid multiple failed tenure cases for women
- *A groundswell for change in the 1990’s*: “This isn’t who we are”
- *A step back*: Coordination with the ADVANCE program to systematically investigate what was going on.
- *A systematic change effort*: Reformed evaluation & hiring practices
- A “*watershed moment*”: hiring “the top candidate in the country her year, of any chemist.”
- Optimism & development of a critical mass of new women faculty.

Posselt, J., Porter, K. B., & Kamimura, A. (2018). Organizational pathways toward gender equity in doctoral education: Chemistry and civil engineering compared. *American Journal of Education*, 124(4), 383-410.

“Critical mass went a long way to **organically attracting** women PhD students.”

The department became known for being “friendlier to women, particularly in certain areas like **organic synthesis** which is typically really macho.”

Attention to experiences and “small cues” sent in recruitment and within lab life.

Questioning their own goals & values enabled recognition that they’d been short-sighted.

-Example: Hiring women as “diversity hiring” vs. Hiring women in the intellectual core of the department.

From a vicious to a virtuous cycle of learning

Improving policies, representation, and the climate for women faculty made it natural to take on the improvement of these issues for graduate students.

Now, they are taking on institutionalized racism.

They are more confident and skilled in addressing racial inequities in *both* the faculty and student populations.

Possibilities that come with

- A **goal** of equity (vs. diversity)
- A **strategy** of organizational learning

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**SYSTEMIC SHOCKS
PRODUCE**

PRESSURES

UNCERTAINTIES

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- Imposed upon us
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**SYSTEMIC CHANGE
INVOLVES**

INNOVATIONS

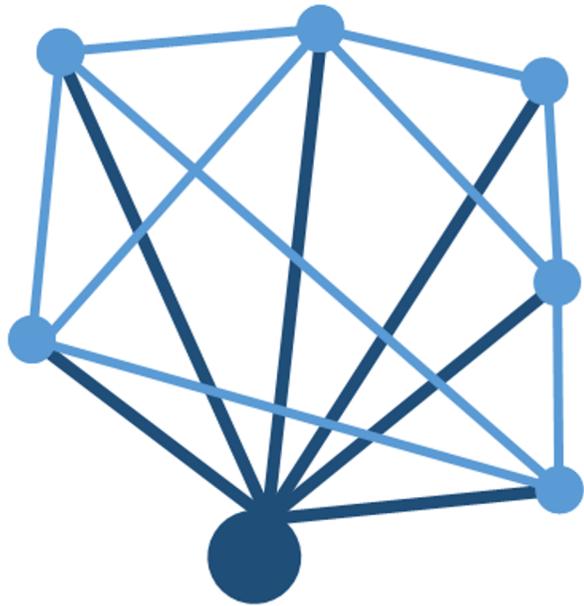
COLLABORATIONS

- The “how” of this moment
- Chosen responses
- Agency
- Source of hope

The California Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Education (C-CIDE) is a research-practice partnership of faculty and administrators in major research universities that aims to reduce inequalities in graduate education by developing and advancing equitable admissions, recruitment, mentoring, and training practices.

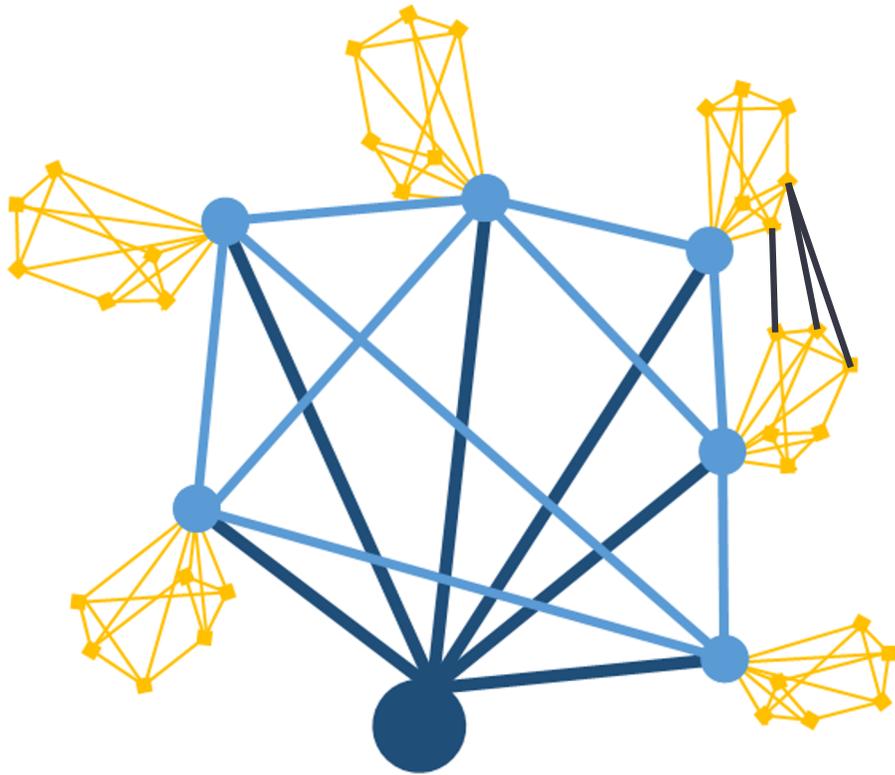
The Consortium supports change-ready graduate programs that are rethinking policy and practice, and it supports graduate schools who want to develop a sustainable infrastructure for faculty learning opportunities.

C-CIDE 
California Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Education



Administration

Campus Liaisons



Administration

Campus Liaisons

PhD Programs

Membership Types and Tracks for 2022



MEMBERSHIP TYPES:

PARTNER: Workshop series + Facilitation Training
+ Learning Community

COLLABORATOR: Workshop Series + Facilitation
Training

AFFILIATE: Workshop Series

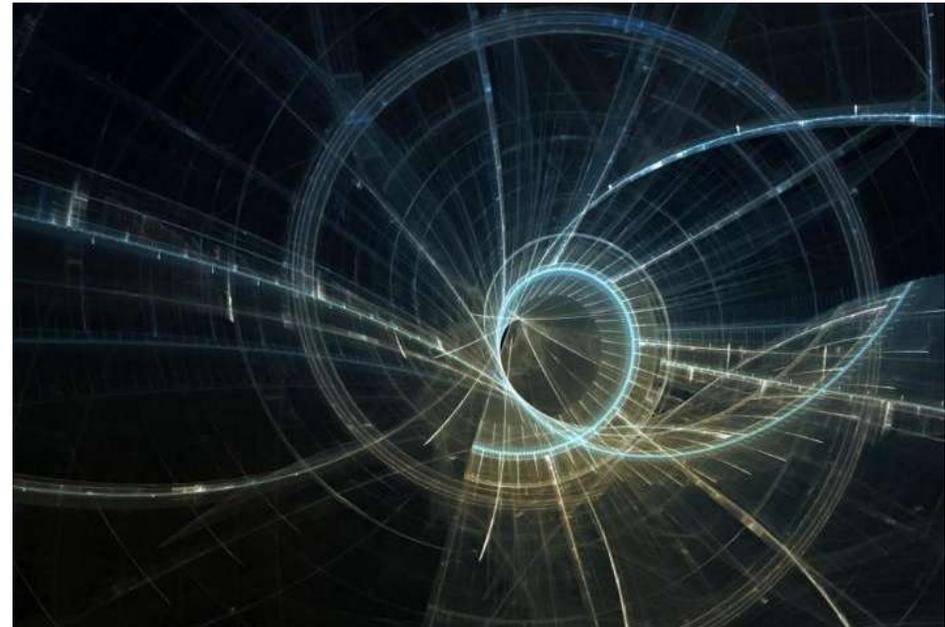
TRACKS:

- Admissions & Recruitment
- Mentoring & Wellbeing

Interested? Connect with us at
bit.ly/GradEdEquity
equity@usc.edu

WHAT CAN GRAD ED LEADERS DO TO LEVERAGE SYSTEM SHOCKS INTO SYSTEMIC CHANGE?

- Acknowledge pandemic fatigue (in yourself, students, colleagues)
- Resist the tyranny of the urgent
- Resist the back-to-normal impulse
- Take care with communications
- Build collaborations across offices (eg, IR, counseling center, DEI)
- Create spaces for leaders to gather and learn– from outsiders and from one another
- Let your office be the system hub that it is meant to be



Thank you!
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