

Stop skipping class!

A heart to heart talk with IUPUI students about why and how social class is the hidden discriminator on campus and what to do about it

Developing awareness of class by raising consciousness on issues affecting students and their peers, helping students understand their own class privilege or acts of class discrimination, and developing cultural understanding of the impact of the intersectionality of class with such factors as color, gender, ability, religion, ethnicity, age or veteran status

“What drew Shepard’s ire is the sense of elitism and entitlement among a certain group of students strutting across his campus green. According to a growing body of scholarly literature, class stratification on college campuses may well be an immutable barrier that increasingly divides affluent students from their less well-off classmates, threatening the long-cherished ideal that a college education is the great equalizer of society.”

~ Sam Fulwood III, *Income differences divide the college campus in America*

“The same walling off those raced and gendered spaces create, the same prevention from contact with social capital-vested individuals, is present when someone doesn’t have enough money.”

~ Rick Mask for his book *Social Capital 2.0*

“...unequal access to higher education has contributed to the creation of distinct subgroups such as students, faculty, administrative staff, and blue-collar workers on college campuses. [My work] seeks to question, and ultimately dismantle, a privilege of power that is based upon ascribed characteristics such as race, gender, and social class.”

-- Jeremy Reed, ‘Mutually beneficial interactions: Campus custodian-college student relationships

“As someone who comes from a working class background, I can assure you that classism is alive and well in the academy.”

~ Sonja Ardoin

“Is a university really inclusive that doesn’t validate custodians or food service dish washers as members of the campus community?”

-- paraphrased from Peter M. Magolda in *The Lives of Campus Custodians*

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**The 2019 [college admissions bribery scandal](#)** has brought out the issue of social class on college campuses. Consequently, comes discussions of wealth and privilege on campus, and indirectly, everyday campus issues experienced by students of the working class. Now these questions arise:

- Does bribery/privilege happen at various levels and in various ways on the campuses around the nation?
- And, have the wealthy been buying admission to prestigious institutions for decades using perfectly legal means?
- Do poor students have extra hoops to jump through to get admitted?

One guarantee is that once the intersectionality of common factors such as gender, race, or nationality mix with the hidden element of class (socioeconomic status [SES]), a whole new world of campus discrimination appears.

In the case of the IUPUI Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DDEI), this “whole new world” implies developing awareness by raising campus consciousness on issues of SES affecting students and their peers, helping certain students understand their own privilege/s, and developing cultural understanding and the impact of the intersectionality of class and color, gender, ability, etc.

This then also compels discussions and actions around SES and those non-students on IUPUI campus such as staff/secretaries, maintenance/custodial, or even food service workers--and SES with respect to class backgrounds/current status of faculty and administrators which influence instances of hidden privilege, discrimination, biases, prejudice, or stereotyping.

Does this intersectionality of class and other factors affect campus administration, faculty, staff, maintenance workers, or the employees of outsourced dining services such as Citizen Commons Food Court workers, or campus event food servers?

Matters around social class start with who gets to attend the university and issues with entrance exams (SAT, PSAT, ACT), and admissions requirements and procedures.

How IUPUI is presented to students or the public and its daily campus life gives certain students hints as to whether they belong or not.

Developing consciousness of possible class discrimination then spreads to the Aramark campus food court service workers, custodial staff, maintenance, and office staff. Even faculty have a sorted and ranked pecking order where class (past and/or present) is a factor.

Along with such factors as dress, language, friends, music, diet/cuisine, course levels, or transportation (how you get to and from campus), class discrimination or class privilege can spread to campus clubs/organizations.

Below is the list of categories DDEI uses now in surveys:

- Men
- Women
- Non-binary/other
- African American/Black
- Asian/Asian American
- Latinx/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern
- Two or more races
- White
- Other
- Born in the us
- Born outside us
- LGBTQ+
- Non-LGBTQ+
- With disability
- No disability
- Christian
- Non-Christian religious
- No religious affiliation
- Conservative
- Moderate
- Liberal
- Current military/veteran

**As stated in “Assessing Classism in Academic Settings” by Langhout, Rosselli, & Feinstein:**

Classism is a type of discrimination, much like sexism or racism. In the case of classism, people occupying lower social class levels are treated in ways that exclude, devalue, discount, and separate them.

- An emphasis on assessing classism fits well with a critical psychology that can investigate, among other things, social class as it relates to experiences of discrimination.
- Although gaining more attention recently, classism is an area that has historically lacked consideration by academics researching life on college campuses.
- Examining classism in college is particularly important because college represents an important developmental phase where young people are figuring out who they are and what they value as the transition into adulthood. This transition often results in a more integrated identity. If colleges take classism seriously, then this emphasis can translate into students also taking classism

seriously and subsequently entering their adult years with the value that classism should not be practiced or tolerated.

- Additionally, if students are experiencing classism in college, then their psychosocial and academic outcomes may be compromised; these outcomes counter the expectations of what college should provide for students.
- Colleges and universities should also be aware that experiences of classism may not be limited to students, but may be prevalent among faculty and staff as well.

This is particularly true on urban campuses like IUPUI which are close to neighborhoods like Riverside, Haughville, Stringtown and the Valley, and where there is a mix of past and present social classes among students, staff, faculty, administration, and campus maintenance/custodial, and food workers—***all in a city historically segregated by both race and class***--divided geographically by Indy's Mason-Dixon line, East and West Washington St. See map of Indy according to the 2010 census: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/walkingsf/5560477952/in/album-72157626354149574/>

**In the 2014 IUPUI Campus Diversity Report**, then Chancellor Bepko gave an overview of the history and mission of the campus diversity initiatives in his State of Diversity 2014 Chancellor's Message. Diversity categories such as gender, race, and nationality were mentioned; social-economic class was not. See [The history and mission of the IUPUI Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).

**In 2016**, writing in her initial report, then newly appointed campus Division of Diversity Director Dr. Karen Dace noted, "For some time we have wanted to include statistics on socio-economic status." To do this, the 2016 diversity report includes statistical information about the number of Pell Grant recipients, 21st Century Scholars and First Generation students. See the 2016 report [https://diversity.iupui.edu/publications/Diversity\\_Report\\_2016.pdf](https://diversity.iupui.edu/publications/Diversity_Report_2016.pdf)

**Both the 2016 and 2018 reports** had these categories which did not mention SES:

- Black / African American,
- Asian American
- Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino(x)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Two or more races
- International
- White
- Unknown/Underrepresented Students,
- All students of color
- Women

And, like the 2016, the 2018 Diversity Report has the same "economic indicators" with info on the Pell Grant recipients, 21st Century Scholars, and First Generation students.

<file:///C:/Users/John/Downloads/diversity-report-2018%20.pdf>

See archives of diversity reports 2009-2018 here: <https://archives.iupui.edu/handle/2450/4453>

**Climate Surveys** are taken and reported every 4-5 years. In an explanation of the campus survey [Institutional Research & Decision Support](#) reports:

"The IUPUI Climate Survey is collected every 4-5 years from all full-time faculty and staff and all students. The survey, administered in collaboration with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), is designed to better understand the experiences of all individuals on campus. The survey employs a broad definition of diversity, focusing on race/ethnicity, gender, ability status, religion, political ideology, sexual orientation, gender identity, and veteran status. The data is used by various units on campus as well as DEI for diversity planning and decision making. For further information, please contact Caleb Keith at [cakeith@iupui.edu](mailto:cakeith@iupui.edu) or (317) 278-2724."

*Note there is no mention of class in the above climate survey's "broad definition of diversity."*

To conclude this section, in contrast to the points made in the previous “Assessing Classism Academic Settings,” “include[ing] statistics on socio-economic status” by emphasizing Pell Grant recipients, 21st Century Scholars, and First Generation students *is just not enough*. It implies only the poor get aid.

This is not the case. See: [What College Factual says about economic diversity on the IUPUI campus: How is IUPUI doing at attracting students from all economic backgrounds](#). The College Factual study shows IUPUI students with income levels over \$110K getting aid. It’s not what poor students get, but it is aid. This provides an example of the value of a more in-depth view of how class can be understood on the IUPUI campus.

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IUPUI’s Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion needs an awareness and data on the now relevant specifics and ramifications of the effects of class on policy, events and relationships. To do so:

First, let’s have [Social Class Defined](#).

Then, let’s look at [The history and mission of the IUPUI Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).

This is vital: [The real reason working class students are dropping out and what universities can do about it](#).

Let’s review [Examples of social class discrimination on a campus](#).

Let’s ponder the subtle language, innuendoes and other dog whistles around socio-economic status (SES). The following questions provide some suggestions about what to listen and/or look for during interactions on the IUPUI campus. Read: [Addressing classism in academic settings: Questionnaire](#)

As well, let’s study [Social class as a variable in the intersectionality of IUPUI campus life](#).

Don’t forget references <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/References-2020-Social-Justice-Symposium.pdf>

Next, let’s appreciate the part campus blue-collar workers such as custodians:

- [Mutually beneficial interactions: Campus custodian-college student relationships](#)
- [The lives of campus custodians: Insights into corporatization and civic disengagement in the academy](#)

Also, what about solutions? Let’s consider having a [National First Generation Celebration Day](#) on campus.

Finally, lets look at the IUPUI Board of Advisor through critical lens: [Membership IUPUI Board of Advisors: Questions and commentary about diversity and inclusion](#)

In summary, a new responsibility of the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is to:

- develop awareness of class by raising campus consciousness on issues affecting students and their peers,
- help students understand their own class privilege or acts of class discrimination, and
- actualize the cultural understanding of the impact of the intersectionality of class with such diversity factors as color, gender, ability, religion, ethnicity, age or veteran status.

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