

# THE CONVERSATION

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## **The Conversation Launches Ambitious Initiative to Increase Diversity in Expert Voices**

BOSTON (November 22, 2021) – The Conversation U.S. is launching an ambitious plan to ensure experts in the American media look more like the American population. Supported by many leading universities and foundations, the strategic initiative extends The Conversation’s successful efforts to unlock the knowledge of academic experts through journalism for the public. It is also designed to help other media organizations easily tap into a pool of diverse expertise for their own reporting and interviews.

This Diversity Initiative is funded by 41 colleges and universities – listed below – as well as the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Lumina Foundation.

“We’re grateful to these funders, who have recognized that a key part of rebuilding America’s trust in expertise and facts is helping people to see themselves represented among expert voices in the media,” said Bruce Wilson, Chief Innovation and Development Officer of The Conversation U.S. “Our approach will identify, cultivate, listen to and develop these academics to be public voices, enabling them to share their scholarly expertise on all the subjects researched in America’s great colleges and universities.”

Since its launch in the fall of 2014, The Conversation has become the leading forum for scholars to share their expertise with the public through a unique collaboration with experienced editors. The result is 10-12 stories a day published on [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com), distributed by The Associated Press, and republished under a free Creative Commons license by hundreds of news outlets in every state. Readership has more than doubled since before the pandemic, reaching over 20 million readers monthly, as the public searches for reliable information.

By working with scholarly experts who are more representative of the U.S. public, The Conversation aims to increase trust in expert perspectives.

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“These perspectives will provide authentic authority in the public discussion. Events of the last few years have underscored the dangers when citizens distrust researchers and the media,” said Beth Daley, Editor and General Manager of The Conversation U.S. “Our vision is for The Conversation U.S. to be recognized as the most important platform for bringing inclusive voices to diverse audiences in the U.S. and beyond.”

The effort encompasses a variety of definitions of diversity. “We aim to help Black, Latinx, AAPI and Indigenous scholars be heard and seen, but also share the knowledge of a larger number of American experts who are women, from rural areas, immigrants, identify with LGBTQ+ communities, work for minority-serving institutions or are in other ways under-represented voices,” said Daley.

As of Nov. 18, The Conversation has raised over \$250,000 to support this effort. The funding will go toward:

- Professional development for promising scholars of color to be trained in public engagement, and creating a community of these scholars for the long-term nurturing of their public scholarship efforts.
- Development of a database of scholars of color both for use by The Conversation for its journalism and to share with other news outlets looking to diversify their sources. Several leading media brands have expressed interest in using this database.
- Mentoring scholars of color with opportunities to discuss story ideas with our editors during regular “office hours.”
- Outreach to scholars of color to encourage the sharing of their knowledge with readers of The Conversation and across the media ecosystem.
- Convene events with key stakeholder groups to bring attention to this critical issue.

As of Nov. 18, 41 college and university members of The Conversation have also committed additional funding to this initiative. These institutions are:

American University  
Amherst College  
Arizona State University  
Bowdoin College  
Brandeis University  
Clarkson University

Clemson University  
Colorado State University  
Indiana University Bloomington  
Iowa State University  
Michigan State University  
The Ohio State University

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Oklahoma State University  
Penn State University  
Purdue University  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rutgers University-Newark  
Texas A&M University  
Texas A&M University San Antonio  
Texas State University  
Tufts University  
University of Arizona  
University of Colorado Boulder  
University of Connecticut  
University of Florida  
University of Maryland Baltimore  
County  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

University of Massachusetts System  
University of Memphis  
University of Miami  
University of Michigan  
University of Nebraska Omaha  
University of Richmond  
University of South Florida  
University of Southern California  
University of Tennessee Knoxville  
University of Texas at Austin, College of  
Liberal Arts  
University of Virginia  
Vanderbilt University  
Wayne State University  
West Virginia University

## **About The Conversation**

The Conversation U.S. is an independent source of news commentary and analysis from academics and researchers delivered directly to the public. A team of professional editors work with academic scholars to translate their research for the wider public. Access to trusted, independent, high-quality and authenticated explanatory journalism is critical to a functioning democracy. Our goal is to promote better understanding of current affairs and complex issues, leading to a better quality of public discourse. Visit [theconversation.com/us](https://theconversation.com/us).

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