



Creating an
INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE
Community

Bucknell
UNIVERSITY




Preparing for the Future

Ensuring equitable access prepares all graduates for successful outcomes

Recruiting students from different backgrounds is not about expanding opportunity for a select few. Creating equitable access provides a richer educational experience for all students — which leading institutions recognize as essential to their continued relevance and ability to compete in a crowded marketplace.

“Bucknell prides itself on providing an outstanding education that prepares students to be successful in any endeavor in the world — a world that is becoming more diverse,” says Kevin Mathes ’07, associate vice president & dean of admissions. “To do that, it’s important for Bucknell to be a microcosm of that world, a place where students can learn to collaborate with people from New York City and Mumbai as well as rural towns across America. By doing what is needed to best prepare our students, we are fulfilling Bucknell’s educational mission and ensuring the University’s legacy of excellence.”

Bucknell’s admissions team has been expanding its footprint and sharpening outreach efforts in order to make high-achieving students from geographically diverse areas and wide-ranging socioeconomic backgrounds more aware of Bucknell and what it has to offer. Just as critical: They are creating a cohesive network of resources to ensure that once students are here, they want to stay.



The admit rate has declined from 32% in 2023 to 28.9% in 2024. The percentage of first year students who are International Students, Students of Color, or Pell Grant-Eligible have increased from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024.



“I believe that admissions is about more than selecting students — it’s about creating pathways for those who may not have had access before. Bucknell’s dedication to fostering an inclusive environment that embraces students from all backgrounds not only inspires me but also fuels my commitment to advancing equity and access in admissions work.”

Adam Navarro-Jusino,
associate dean of admissions,
access and outreach



“I feel I have a responsibility to not only help students gain access to Bucknell, but also to help them feel seen and supported throughout their time here — and to persist to graduation. The commitment to this work needs to happen on the individual level and on the institutional level, and Bucknell embodies both.”

Becca Haupt Aldredge,
associate dean of
admissions, campus visits &
communications



How Bucknell is *expanding access, promoting equity*

We've launched the Gateway Scholars Program: Nineteen members of the incoming Class of 2028 are part of this new program, which meets 100% of demonstrated financial need by eliminating federal loans from their financial aid packages and supports high-achieving, first-generation students. Participants benefit from research opportunities, mentorship and ongoing guidance.

We've created the Center for Access & Success: The Gateway Scholars Program is just one of Bucknell's five signature and national pathway programs that fall within Bucknell's new Center for Access & Success. Launched in fall 2023, the new center provides mentorship and other forms of support to help students from underrepresented backgrounds have the best possible Bucknell experience. (Learn more about the center on P. 3).

We've built partnerships in strategic locations: Bucknell has expanded relationships with community-based organizations and charter schools in Philadelphia, Chicago, Dallas and Los Angeles, among others. Recruiters engage with educational leaders in these communities to identify outstanding students.

We've expanded recruitment areas: Bucknell is finding talent in new locations. "If we notice a strong application from a student at a school with a large percentage of first-generation students, we consider building a relationship there," Mathes says. "It has opened the door to student pools we weren't previously aware of. We expect all counselors to maintain a commitment to visiting new schools."

We're facilitating travel: To ensure students have a chance to experience Bucknell's welcoming campus, the University offers Journey to Bucknell, a program that covers travel and accommodations for a three-day visit. Bucknell recently expanded the program so that each invited student may travel with a parent or guardian.

In addition, Bucknell launched the Affirming Diverse Identities Reception as part of Admitted Students Days and provides students wishing to attend financial assistance if needed.

We're providing a taste of Bucknell life: The Bucknell Academy Summer Experience enables high school students to spend a week living on campus, interacting with faculty and experiencing hands-on learning in our world-class facilities. Bucknell actively recruits participants from diverse communities.

We're tapping technology: Bucknell admissions recruiters use data-collection and analysis tools to identify academically strong students who may face barriers to education, based on attributes such as low family income, household education levels and participation in lunch-assistance programs.

We've diversified our team: "One thing that we hear in our profession is that students want to see themselves on an admissions team," Mathes says. "As we grow our staff, we want to attract top talent while also being mindful of diversity. Having people with different backgrounds helps on-the-road recruitment and also informs how we communicate to students."



Expanding Access Drives Success

New center goes beyond opening doors

Bucknell is working to create a truly equitable community — where students feel fully part of campus life, where they have space and access to opportunities that will help them to learn and thrive. Bucknell's new Center for Access & Success is bringing the University closer to that goal by providing a cohesive system of mentoring and support to enhance students' ability to excel.

The center's programming ensures that students from first-generation, low-income and underrepresented backgrounds have mentorship, academic enrichment resources and support that will help them pursue their goals and become active, engaged members of the campus community.



Lisa Keegan, vice president
for student enrollment,
engagement & success

The center is a response to the recognition that not every high-achieving student who meets Bucknell's standards arrives on campus with the same foundation of support. The center aims to bridge that gap, says Lisa Keegan, vice president for student enrollment, engagement & success.

"Bucknell has a long tradition of recruiting students from diverse backgrounds, but their success requires a commitment to support their entire Bucknell experience," Keegan says. "This center allows the University to better serve underrepresented students through a more robust, cohesive and strategic approach."

The center serves students enrolled in Bucknell's five national and signature pathway scholarship programs: the Gateway Scholars Program, the Charles T. Bauer Scholars Program, the Posse Scholars Program, the Langone and Langone-Walling Scholarship Program and the Bucknell Community College Scholars Program.

"I was a first-generation student and relate to the imposter syndrome some of these students feel," says Access & Success Student Experience Director Caro Mercado, who has overseen the Bucknell Community College Scholars and Posse Scholars programs since 2016. "They arrive with so much talent and promise. They often need reassurance that they belong here — and they do. I receive feedback from faculty members that students from these programs are intellectually curious and bring perspectives that add value to their classrooms. So our goal is to foster an environment of belonging so they can be successful."

Bucknell Community College Scholars: How a six-week program transforms lives

Bangyan Li '22 says two pivotal moments shaped who she is today.

The first: Enrolling in Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC) in 2018, shortly after she moved to the U.S. from China.

The second: Applying for the Bucknell Community College Scholars Program (BCCSP) in 2019.

BCCSP was launched to help high-achieving, low- to moderate-income community college students who want to take their education beyond an associate's degree. What sets BCCSP apart is that it is more than a pipeline program. BCCSP provides the opportunity for 20 to 25 community college students to immerse themselves in life at a residential university by staying and studying on campus for six weeks each summer.

Bucknell recruits from six schools: HACC, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Montgomery County Community College, Philadelphia Community College, and Reading Area Community College.

Participants are paired with a faculty mentor and take two summer classes, which enable them to earn credits that can be applied to their home institution — or toward a four-year degree. After successfully completing the summer program, they may apply to Bucknell for transfer admission and financial aid.

"It's about giving students, many of whom come from nontraditional backgrounds, an opportunity to see what might be possible," says



Caro Mercado,

*director, access & success
student experience*

Caro Mercado. "The message isn't necessarily 'attend Bucknell' — although about 90% do — it's really about helping them realize their potential. They come eager to learn. They recognize the value of the education they are receiving."

As Li experienced, that value extends beyond academics. "Before Bucknell, I was very introverted and quiet," she says. "At Bucknell, people wanted to talk to me. They asked me what I needed and what they could do to make my experience better. I learned that people cared about me and were invested in me."

Li returned to HACC with newfound confidence — and a voice. She became outspoken and pursued leadership positions on campus. At Bucknell, as an education major, Li applied to be an admissions diversity intern, which gave her the opportunity to interact with prospective students and share her experience as a first-generation, international transfer student. When a full-time admissions job opened up at Bucknell just as she was graduating in 2022, she says it felt karmic. Li served as an admissions counselor at Bucknell for the 2022-23 academic year before pursuing her PhD.

"Yes, students want to make a difference in society and contribute to the world," she says. "But I think what makes this program special is that it awakens people's inner, true self and helps them see their value and potential."



Prioritizing a Talented, Diverse Workforce

Student success relies on a fully inclusive campus

Efforts to promote inclusive excellence need to stretch into faculty and staff recruitment and retention strategies. Having representation campuswide helps students feel a greater sense of belonging, provides opportunities for meaningful mentorships, and enhances retention and graduation rates.

Targeted programming, professional development and affinity groups help. But those efforts will only be effective if diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is at the heart of an institution's programs, operations and ethos, according to Nicole Whitehead, vice president for talent, culture & human resources, and Angèle Kingué, associate provost, faculty engagement & inclusion.

"It's well established that having diversity at all levels of an institution fosters student success," Whitehead says. "In

my role, I need to ensure that every individual we hire best supports our students — that is the reason we are all here. I don't see DEI as something you accomplish with a single hire or a training session. I see it as a collective experience, part of the University's infrastructure. DEI isn't something we do. It's who we are."

Kingué, a professor of French & Francophone studies, understands the challenges faculty of color experience as they navigate a predominantly white university. Over the past four years, her role at Bucknell has expanded to focus on promoting faculty engagement, particularly the recruitment and retention of faculty from underrepresented backgrounds.

Kingué meets with prospective faculty during the hiring process and continues working with them throughout their

Impact in Action

Bucknellians take meaningful steps to support social change

The Role Model » Vernese Edghill-Walden '87

Edghill-Walden arrived in July 2023 as the University's inaugural vice president of equity & inclusive excellence. Leading diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts across campus is an opportunity for her to continue what she started as a student. Her efforts as a student organizer led to the establishment of the Multi-Culture Center (now called Multicultural Student Services) in 1986. Nearly 40 years later, Bucknell students from all backgrounds — including gender identities, international cultures and religious faiths — are benefiting from its robust network of events, programming, affinity groups, leadership development and learning opportunities — all of which trace back to Edghill-Walden's initiative. "I'm thrilled that I've returned to Bucknell, the place that shaped who I am," she says. "I hope students will be able to see themselves in me and know that they can help transform a culture."



Bucknell careers. She wants them to be aware of the support systems and mentoring resources available. But these conversations do more: They convey that Kingué — and Bucknell — care about them as people. That can be a differentiating factor for a professor considering multiple job offers. Kingué takes an active role in the trajectory of their professional lives as soon as they arrive on campus and works with them to map out individualized plans for success. Her goal is to deliver two messages: I am on this journey with you, and we're going the distance.

“It’s a human-centered approach that lets candidates and newly hired faculty know that they belong here. It’s a way of saying, ‘I see you, and you matter.’ ”

Angèle Kingué, associate provost, faculty engagement & inclusion



The Community Builder » Marissa Calhoun '10

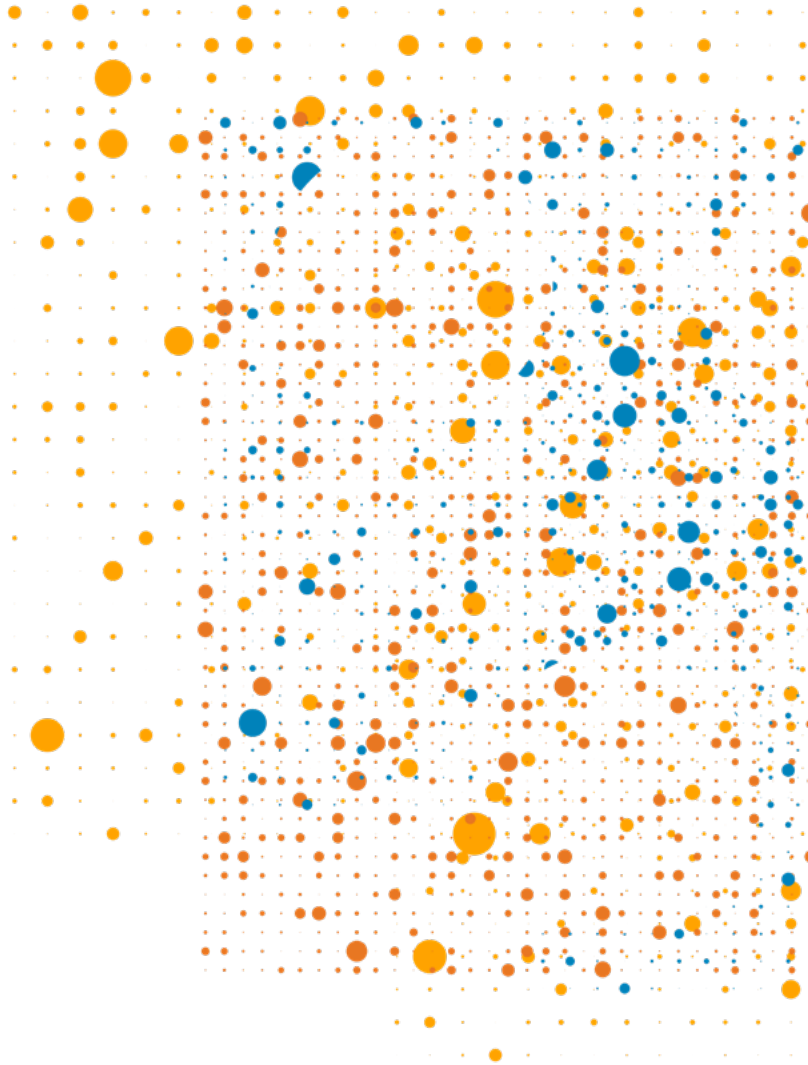
In 2010, Calhoun and a “small but mighty group” founded Bucknell’s Black Student Union (BSU). BSUs had been forming at predominantly white institutions since the 1960s to help Black students connect with peers with shared cultural identities. Calhoun, a Posse scholar, was elected the group’s inaugural president. Under her leadership, the BSU had a “groundbreaking first year,” organizing programming to benefit the entire campus. “We revived the Black Arts Festival, created community and dissolved the separateness between organizations of the Black Diaspora at Bucknell,” says Calhoun, who now works in global creative marketing at Netflix. “It’s crucial to create an environment where students are exposed to diverse perspectives of the world.”



The Nurturer » Reece Pauling '24

In 2022, Pauling, an environmental studies and critical Black studies double-major, began researching horticultural therapy — how green initiatives, such as gardening, can improve well-being and help people develop vocational skills. Her work led to the creation of the Prison Garden Project. Through this program, incarcerated individuals at the State Correctional Institute in nearby Coal Township grow flowers that are then donated to local nursing home residents. For her efforts, Pauling, a Posse scholar, was recognized as a 2023 Campus Sustainability Champion by the Pennsylvania Environmental Resource Consortium. “My personal experience working at Bucknell’s farm shaped my passion,” she says. “I hope to use my education to address injustices seen in environmentalism.”





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