

# Transforms Newsletter

Advancing Faculty Equity at SF State

[transforms.sfsu.edu](http://transforms.sfsu.edu)

## Faculty Highlight

**Dr. Dawn-Elissa Fischer**

[Associate Professor of Anthropology](#)  
[www.defprofessor.com](http://www.defprofessor.com)

### What guided you to an academic career?

I have unique perspective and experience as a Black, queer, disabled woman that began political organizing in the Ozarks (Missouri) and Nagoya (Japan) as a youth activist during the 1990s. As an undergraduate at Washington University in St Louis, I was drawn to anthropology as a useful tool for my advocacy and research agenda. I was interested in connections between hip-hop, technology and media as creative means for public engagement and social justice work. As a teen, I had been teaching computer literacy to elementary and middle school students. I was a nerd who took apart computers (and put them back together) and played video games. I also brought my own culture--hip hop--into all these tech spaces because it was a useful tool for multi-racial coalition building. Eventually, I became interested in studying my own processes from an anthropological perspective. I went on to create digital archives and build websites for research at the Hip-hop Archive and Research Institute at Harvard. I also created and taught the Black Online class at SF State for 12 years.



Photo by A-lan Holt

### How would you describe your recent scholarship?

A constant theme in my scholarship is *Representing the Unseen*, which is the title of my forthcoming book. It is based on over twenty years of ethnographic research on the frontlines of social movements and Black entertainment. My goal is to reveal vicissitudes and victories untold, unseen and unknown. *Representing the Unseen* illuminates the vibrant artistic and political lives of youth in their digital worlds, weaving a tapestry from the stories of underground emcees, grassroots organizers, cosplay vloggers, gaming gurus and other digital media designers to demonstrate a unified history of sustained online revolution. I also apply "Representing the Unseen" as a framework to identify, (continued on next page)

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# Program Highlights

## by Professor Sally Pasion

On April 5, 2022, Women in Science & Engineering (WISE) and SF State Transforms hosted a discussion on an NSF ADVANCE webinar “Systemic Change in the MSIs (Minority-Serving Institutions)” from March 2021. This webinar brought together ADVANCE projects from six MSI’s (Florida A&M University, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, North Carolina A&T University, Texas Tech University, Xavier University, and Florida International University). They presented their progress on efforts to increase faculty recruitment and retention of women faculty and women faculty of color. Some of these approaches were discussed in the webinar panel: developing bystander programs, targeting chairs for training, expanding faculty evaluation to be more holistic, developing cohorts to strengthen ties, creating an “onboarding team” for each new faculty, leadership development, increasing the sense of belonging.

WISE and Transforms colleagues discussed how we can move forward in improving recruitment and retention of diversely gendered faculty of color.

The event brought **Heather Borlase**, Executive Director of Equity Programs & Compliance, and several new members of the Title IX office into our conversation.

The focus of the discussion centered on inequitable service and its impact on women faculty and faculty of color. Participants discussed the problem of cultural taxation, and the challenge of recognizing it and reward it. In the case of dealing with inequitable service workload, one issue raised was how to measure service to be able to identify that inequity. Another issue involved recognizing the importance of the chair in distributing service; the chair’s role may be intrinsic in perpetuating that service inequity. And finally, it was also discussed that during the process of hiring new faculty, evaluation of candidates should move beyond counting publications and granting success by also considering the candidate’s participation in service activities. The discussion highlights the concern that inequitable service workload could have an impact in the ability to recruit, hire, and retain women faculty and faculty of color.

(interview with Prof. Dawn-Elissa Fischer con’t from page 1)

amplify, recognize and reward the intellectual and social justice contributions of historically excluded public educators to critical pedagogy and public engagement. As an ethnographer, I have been evaluating racial equity and strategic planning in K-12 as well as postsecondary education since 1999. This is what drew me into affiliation with the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. I am currently part of the steering committee for the [Black Feminist Health Science Studies Collaboratory](#), which convenes again in May 2023. Black Feminist Health Science Studies (BFHSS) aims to highlight the necessity of incorporating social justice into medical and data sciences; BFHSS is a central tenet of my work in STEM.

### **What do you like best about SF State?**

CREATIVE AND CRITICAL STUDENT SCHOLARS! They breathe life into our community and into our collective work.

And, the color purple.

### **Who inspired you to pursue your work?**

My mother, Cheryl Glover Fischer, whose activism and international advocacy work with women photographers, writers, and other cultural workers inspires me daily. These women utilized creative arts and writing as part of a complex international Black radical agenda that I continue to narrate through an intimate scholarly lens.

My mother’s degrees were in education, literature and languages. She speaks several languages and she was my first Japanese language teacher. My mom is also very committed to math and science as were her parents, both of whom had degrees and careers in STEM education. My mom modeled and nurtured lifelong learning. As a mid-career ESL teacher, she participated in the [Ross Mathematics Program](#) studying number theory!

Another significant mentor is Faye V. Harrison (Decolonizing Anthropology, 1991), who is a Professor of African American Studies and Anthropology

at the University of Illinois, and who co-chaired my iconic Black women majority dissertation committee with Kesha Fikes (Managing African Portugal, 2009). The committee included Irma McClaurin (Black Feminist Anthropology, 2001), Michael Heckenberger (The Ecology of Power, 2004) and Mark Reid (Redefining Black Film, 1993). I also researched with foundational Black feminist theorists in linguistic anthropology (Marcyliena Morgan) and visual anthropology (marilyn thomas-houston). This dissertation was a historic collaboration of Black feminist anthropologists.

### Where do you get mentoring now?

I get mentorship from my colleagues in Anthropology, and from networks of women and nonbinary faculty across campus. Co-developing the JEDI PIE Institute in Summer 2020 with Drs. Wei Ming Darios, Rama Kased, and Brigitte Davila was a special highlight--I'm so glad that over 300 faculty and GTAs have now completed it! I also conceptualized and co-wrote the [Equity Research Fellowship](#) for BIWOC associate professors with Drs. Juliette Hua and Laura Mamo (2021).

I continue to participate as a mentor and a mentee with my networks through the Career Enhancement Fellowship Program, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, and [Social Science Research Council-Mellon Mays Graduate Initiatives Program](#). I'm celebrating my 25th year (Silver Anniversary) of connection to phenomenal women through [Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority](#), Incorporated (Beta Delta Chapter, St. Louis) and as a current member of Rho Delta Omega Chapter (Silicon Valley).

I would also like to recognize the significant African-American women who have mentored me at SF State: Drs. Diane Harris, Johnetta Richards, and the late Laura Head.

### What is your work as a mentor?

As part of my rich mentoring lineage, I continue to mentor and facilitate pathways for Black feminist and decolonizing ethnography projects for both students and colleagues. I have supervised hundreds of undergraduate research projects and served

over forty thesis and dissertation committees. A particular highlight has been working with dynamic feminist scholars that have made significant contributions in social justice and STEM. For example, it's been deeply meaningful to chair the MA thesis of [STS Hub](#) Fellow, Michelle Tran, and now serve on her dissertation committee. I chaired the dissertation of Dr. Iris Phillips, another STS Hub Fellow. I served as MA Thesis reader for [SEPAL Research](#) Alumna, Analisa Brown. I chaired Black Lives Matter and [Black Futures Lab](#) co-founder Alicia Garza's MA thesis. Students I mentor often become colleagues, and so continuing this mentoring relationship for colleagues seems natural.

As the Faculty Coordinator for [our campus National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development](#), a resource for writing and career development for faculty and graduate students, I have worked to support BIWOC and BIPOC faculty across our campus.



Interview Q and A  
with professors Grace Yoo  
and Wei Ming Darios

## Looking Ahead

The next application cycle for **Faculty Scholarship Hubs** will be open early in Fall semester 2022.

The **PERC** ([Promoting Equity and Relationships Among Colleagues](#)) fellows will launch restorative justice efforts in Fall 2022. Follow the launch here.

# Campus Connections

by Professor Colleen Hoff

Faculty service is being addressed by campus administration with the intent to make work loads more equitable across campus. The Academic Senate Subcommittee, Faculty Work Assignment Equity Taskforce recently reported on the current status of service at SF State. They found that most departments have work assignments of nine WTUs for teaching, three for Professional Advancement and Growth and three for Service. There was substantial inequity found with regard to teaching assignments and a lack of standardization around supervision and advising. Faculty rank, gender, sexuality, race, age and religion were reported to contribute to inequitable service assignments and access to leadership opportunities. The committee reported the need for departments to have mechanisms to account for and make transparent service work assignments for faculty. These types of inequities in service were expanded upon by a recent NSF Advance Transforms guest speaker, Joya Misra, Professor of Sociology and Public Policy and Director of the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR), University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Professor Misra's research confirmed substantial inequality in faculty work distributions:

- Women spend more time on teaching and service activities, and less time on research (particularly Associate Professors)
- Faculty of color report more mentoring and diversity related work
- Women and faculty of color are asked more often to do non-promotable tasks
- Women of color are less likely to see their work as "counted" in rewards systems

Although the data presented by Professor Misra is not a surprise, it does confirm work conducted on this campus by the ADVANCE research teams and the work of our TRANSFORMS team, as well as others on campus, that persistent workload inequities exist and have only increased since COVID.

## SF State Sexual Violence Prevention Collaborative

The Sexual Violence Prevention Collaborative (SVPC) is a multidisciplinary team dedicated to increasing the capacity of our campus community to prevent sexual violence. As a collaborative, it is dedicated to preventing sexual violence, supporting survivors, and communicating that violence is unacceptable. Through four interrelated workgroups, members are committed to create a campus that has the resources and skills to effectively address the root causes of sexual violence such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism. Workgroups include:

- Multi-level Prevention Strategies
- Campuswide Mobilization
- Policy, Data, Assessment, & Transparency
- Trauma-Informed Practices

Go to [wellness.sfsu.edu/SVPC](https://wellness.sfsu.edu/SVPC) to learn more about SVPC, workgroups, past achievements, or to join the work as a member or ally.

## Gratitude

We thank the members of the inaugural Scholarship hubs for making this year a campus success for new programs to support faculty scholarship guided by commitments to gender and racial equity. The cohorts – facilitated by **Drs Diane Harris** and **Colleen Hoff** are invited to continue with transforms as we refine and institutionalize these programs.

Many people have contributed to the development of the Promoting Equity and Relations among Faculty (PERC) program. We thank the trainers, speakers, and partners this Spring who provided training in collaboration with the cohort of PERC fellows. We are grateful to the following people: **Teaster Baird; Christina Sabee; Fred Smith; Christian Lozano Cuellar; Wei Ming Dariotis; Carleen Mandolfo; Heather Borlase; Komoia Johnson; Sharon Tom.**

**This year the Professional Development Council sought input on campus and professional service. We will follow their work closely!**

## Team Announcements

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### **Colleen Hoff, Ph.D.**

Dr. Colleen Hoff (Professor of Sociology and Sexuality Studies and Director of the Center for Education and Research on Gender and Sexuality) has announced her retirement from SF State to commence August 2022. Colleen has been a brilliant and steady presence directing the design and implementation of this project.



### **Katie Sellergren**

(MA candidate in Anthropology) has joined our team as communications lead. In their thesis, Katie is investigating the vulnerabilities at the intersection of transgender and autistic identities. They also enjoy illustration, watercolor painting, and hiking.



**Have a  
great  
summer!**