



"It's hard for me to see how you have a racial objective but a nonracial means to get there..."

Supreme Court Justice - Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Dr. Edmund W. Gordon Battles to Eradicate Achievement Gap

November 8, 2012 | Category: News, Subfeature |

Like 1K

Tweet 6

Share 1

+1 0

EMAIL

Print PDF

by Donovan X. Ramsey

Before most knew what an achievement gap was, Dr. Edmund W. Gordon was working to eliminate it. He is regarded as one of the foremost scholars on divergent learning styles and championed supplemental education long before it was popular. In fact, Gordon popularized the term. He was also an architect of the nation's Head Start program in the 1960s. Today, however, at 91, Gordon is still beating the drum of education reform as loud as he did half a century ago with a historic commission to get to the bottom of assessment.

Every bit of Gordon's nine decades is present when he talks to you. A careful man, he takes slow deliberate pauses between thoughts and drags his sentences to understanding. His hawk-like eyes dart about under his bushy gray eyebrows and wisps of gray hair on his balding head to make sure you're paying attention, and in his presence, you cannot help but feel like you should be taking notes. His face exemplifies the nickname many of Gordon's former pupils have given him, "The Professor."

Gordon could retire comfortably at his home in upstate New York having established a tremendous legacy. He is the John M. Musser Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Yale University and Richard March Hoe Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Education at Columbia University's Teachers College, among many other distinctions. He's published 175 articles in scholarly journals and authored or edited at least 15 books since his first in 1966. But instead of relaxing in his golden years, for the past two, Gordon has been leading The Gordon Commission, a study group of noted scholars with the stated goal of exploring what education assessment will be, and should become, by 2050. The commission's findings will be made public next winter.

"Providing the conceptual leadership for the group has probably been the most challenging intellectual experience of my life," says Gordon. "I sometimes complain that the opportunity came to me at the second weakest point in my life, second after childhood. I'm 91 now and trying to do things I would have much rather tackled at 60."

As a nonagenarian, however, Gordon is leading the most comprehensive study of issues within assessment to date with funding from Education Testing Services, the world's largest private nonprofit educational testing body, an organization responsible for standardized tests including the GRE. Gordon has leveraged his reputation and ETS' support to gather leading minds to parse out issues that have rendered assessment in the American school system so problematic.

Members of the Gordon Commission include heavy hitters from around the worlds of education, psychology



Edmund Gordon with Dr. David Wall Rice

Diverse Jobs

Over 6,903 ed jobs [Find Jobs](#) [Post Jobs](#)

Job Seekers: [Submit Resume](#) | [Search Jobs](#)

Employers: [Register \(Web-Only\)](#) | [Print Ads](#)

Featured Employer



[View Employer Profiles](#)
www.diversejobs.net

Featured Jobs

Assistant Professor - Geography
University of Northern Iowa

The Department of Geography at the University of Northern Iowa invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor specializing in Geotechniques to begin August 2013. The successful candidate will teach intermediate/upper-level geotechniques courses, additional courses in the candidate's specialty, and one of the department's general education Geography courses.

Asst. Dir. for External Relations & Communications

University of Baltimore

Reporting to the Director of External Relations and the Director of Communications, the Assistant Director for External Relations and Communications assists advancement efforts through alumni engagement, and coordinating events and tours.

and psychometrics. Leading figures like Dr. Diane Ravitch, Dr. Lauren Resnick and Dr. Claude Steele are a few among the 33 assembled. Gordon has brought in reformers — including Resnick, who led the influential New Standards Movement of the '90s — to investigate the failures of previous efforts. The commission has even taken their inquiry to the streets, holding public forums to engage stakeholders, educators, parents and students around issues in assessment and possible solutions.

Their mission is to anticipate the future of testing. But beyond that and the commission's strategic engagement is the belief that changing what's tested for will serve to change what's taught and how — hopefully leading to better outcomes for students who fall through the cracks of the existing system. In that effort, the commission has produced studies in emerging areas of assessment science, represented in two dozen white papers.

"One of the things we've been exploring in the commission is the relationship between the affective and situative domains in relation to the cognitive domains," says Gordon, describing one study. "We're beginning to understand that, in human intellectual functions, the affective (or the emotional) and the social situations in which problems are engaged are as important as the cognitive processes on which we have been focused." He says that assessment of the future must reconcile these three "sense-making" processes and how academics deal with this dynamic reality in pedagogy and how assessment opens up years of additional study.

With the work of the commission wrapping up, however, Gordon says he's left with a sense of pride in having engaged the challenge presented in its mission, but also a deep sense of frustration in the recognition that he's raised questions he doesn't have time to answer. With some perspective he concedes, "This is too important an initiative to rest on the shoulders of such an old man." But he likely won't have to shoulder the work alone.

"It is rare that you have so many thought leaders and change agents in a room at one time," says Dr. David Wall Rice, commissioner and professor of psychology at Morehouse College. "And the people in the room are influenced by, and almost by default, are students of Professor Gordon because he's had such an incredible impact on education. We get to look back at what his thinking has been, what it is presently and work with him to predict what education will be."

Rice says that because of "The Professor's" influence and reach, the work of the Gordon Commission could be the academic community's best bet at bringing about some lasting change.

Semantic Tags: [Achievement Gap](#) ♦ [African/Afro/Black Studies](#) ♦ [Community Colleges](#) ♦ [Disabilities](#) ♦ [Ethnic Studies](#) ♦ [Graduation rates](#) ♦ [Scholarship](#) ♦ [Scholarships](#) ♦ [Social Sciences](#) ♦ [Technology](#) ♦ [Testing](#)

Related articles

[Veteran Out-of-State Tuition Row Intensifies](#)

[Edmund Gordon, Marian Wright Edelman to be Honored With John Hope Franklin Awards](#)

[The Achievement Club](#)

[Study: LSAT Alternative Reveals No Racial Gap in Achievement](#)

[Admission Counseling Commission Endorses Optional SAT/ACT Admissions Requirements](#)

[Researchers' Assessment of NCLB Shows Need for Improvement](#)

[Before You EXIT](#)

[Civil Rights Commission Takes On Diversity In K-12 Schools](#)

Chair - Department of Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences

Cornell University

We seek an individual to lead the Department in all aspects of academic activity, including stewardship of personnel and resources. In collaboration with the faculty, the Chair is expected to foster excellence in education, clinical and diagnostic service, and research for the advancement of animal and human health.

GRAPHIC DESIGN: ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Texas Christian University

Duties include teaching three undergraduate classes per semester (excluding summer), committee work, advising undergraduate majors. Maintaining an appropriate level of peer recognition for professional graphic design work.



17th ANNUAL LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM
21st Century Vision: Innovation and the New Normal
September 20-22, 2012 | Renaissance Hotel | Long Beach, CA
For more information to register online and for membership information, www.ncchc.com

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

Comment

You may use these HTML tags and attributes: <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <blockquote cite=""> <code> <del datetime=""> <i> <q cite=""> <strike>

[Home](#) | [Advertise](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Editorial Calendar](#) | [RSS](#)
[Higher Education Jobs](#) | [Higher Education Books](#) | [Post a Job](#) | [Community College Jobs](#)

[↑ Diverse](#)

Copyright 2012 © *Diverse: Issues In Higher Education*, a CMA publication.
Cox, Matthews, and Associates, Inc., 10520 Warwick Ave, Suite B-8, Fairfax, VA 22030