

An Interview with **STEPHANIE BELL-ROSE**
President, Goldman Sachs Foundation

Building a Diverse Student Body from the Ground Up

EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE is a tenet of educators across the globe, but a lack of resources—both of the financial and social capital varieties—can be a major obstacle for potential students. So how do disadvantaged youth get the education they need? Once they do get access, is the curriculum properly preparing them for the world they will inherit? And what effect does the rapidly diversifying K-12 student-age population have on the future of U.S. higher education? *International Educator* discussed these issues and more with Stephanie Bell-Rose, founding president of the Goldman Sachs Foundation, a \$200 million international foundation whose mission is to promote excellence and innovation in education and to improve academic performance and lifelong productivity of young people across the globe. Created and funded in 1999 by financial giant Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., the foundation has awarded grants totaling more than \$54 million since its inception. Bell-Rose, who earned an A.B. with honors from Harvard College, a J.D. from Harvard Law School, and an M.P.A. from the Kennedy School of Government, specializes in high-impact social investments designed to prepare today's youth to become global leaders.

IE: The Goldman Sachs Foundation has an impressive track record of increasing access to education for students who otherwise would not have had the chance. Unfortunately, the fact that there are such opportunities for philanthropic groups to make a difference means that there are too many barriers to education. In your assessment, what are those barriers and how are they surmountable?

SBR: The lack of access to social capital and other kind of resources that students from more advantaged backgrounds have at their disposal is really a big part of the problem. When we talk about social capital, we're talking about the nexus that exists between the right kinds of friends and supporters and relationships and people who can invest in expos-

ing the children to good experiences in the cultural and social arena and also providing advice to kids as they experience life and try to navigate the educational landscape and each community challenge and friendship. So we're really talking about the framework for social development that crosses all of those different areas and the capital that is necessary. Kids from middle-class backgrounds, obviously, have a lot of access to such social capital. Helping kids figure out values and stay that course. We're hoping that by identifying bright students from disadvantaged backgrounds that we can help put together the resources to support their development, make sure they get the right kind of course work and access to more-demanding classes, get them involved in the



right kind of peer networks, and help them navigate the college preparation process. And, at the same time, be attentive to their parents and in the ways in which those parents become more supportive and involved in getting their kids through the educational pipeline. These are all elements of what we are trying to address through our Next Generation Venture Fund, which is an initiative we launched last year in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth and Duke University's Talent Identification Program.

IE: Your foundation, through a variety of programs, helps put young people from disadvantaged groups in a position to become global leaders. Is there any concern that the education curriculum is not fully preparing students to be leaders in the twenty-first century? Do higher education institutions need to do more to in the way of providing cross-cultural learning opportunities and education to students?

SBR: Absolutely. The educational framework consists of rigorous study of some of the historical, cultural, economic, and geopolitical issues and events that help children become informed about the world and about other peoples and cultures. Unfortunately, in terms of the curriculum in the United States, is not rich in these areas of content and tends to be very shallow. Some of the biggest innovations that we've seen have been those that take advantage of the language and culture of our own diverse population to incorporate that into the day-to-day school experience, rather than "erasing" that and asking kids to abandon those elements of diversity to fit in. And so were seeing the beginning and certainly some sustained

efforts to take advantage of the perspectives, cultures, and languages that newcomers bring with them to optimize the educational experience for a larger number of children in the local schools and communities.

IE: Numerous U.S. higher education institutions are engaged in efforts to internationalize their campuses, and those efforts include increasing the number of non-U.S. students that attend those campuses. But historically, this pool of international students has been described as predominantly the "elite" of their respective societies, and arguably not diverse enough from a socio-economic and cultural standpoint to allow U.S. campuses to be as culturally and internationally represented as they could be. How can this be overcome?

SBR: One way that this is being affected is by the new wave of immigration around the world that is causing significant demographic shifts. At the pre-collegiate level in the United States and in much of Western society there is a huge influx of immigrants from many countries, and quite often from the less-developed countries. This population growth and diversification, which is entering into the education systems, is a trend that is likely to continue and will feed into the higher education system from the ground up. The new immigrants are not, by and large, the elites, and are really diversifying K-12 overnight. In the United States, for example, it's happening in places where we wouldn't necessarily expect it, such as in rural communities in North Carolina and Iowa. It gives us an opportunity to understand and appreciate the cultural perspectives and experiences, as well as other opportunities that exist across countries. And if we're wise about this, it could really make a difference in the education and leadership preparation of young people around the world.

IE: While there is much that can be done by organizations and corporations to help increase access to education, how can individuals in the field of international education and exchange create meaningful change that translates to increased access to education for disadvantaged groups?

SBR: Well, there are big issues systemically that have to be addressed. When we're talking about so many young people and such a great dispersion of them, I think that fundamentally it is a systemic issue for the United States as a nation. In respect to individual educators and school leaders, there are a lot of examples of innovative programs. A part of the benefit of the Goldman Sachs Foundation's partnership with the Asia Society—specifically where we recognize, with our Goldman Sachs Foundation Prizes for Excellence in International Education, a number of U.S. schools for their excellence—is the mechanism for identifying and rewarding the most successful programs. Educators and local school leaders can now

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take advantage of the learning that comes from exposure to best practices in the field and perhaps help to build community motivation and enthusiasm for implementing those programs in their local environment. It's going to take global leadership of motivated people to make that happen, and who better than educators who are well equipped to assess the real benefit to the children of doing this kind of thing.

IE: One of the concerns NAFSA and others have had over the years is the lack of a national consensus about the urgency of the international education agenda. There is a dearth of it at the policy level in our society. While there have been hints of it since September 11, 2001, there hasn't been anything sustained since the Fulbright program was established nearly 60 years ago. What can organizations, such as the Goldman Sachs Foundation, do to help policymakers realize that the government must take this on and make it a part of the national agenda?

SBR: In respect to influencing policy, what we've tried to do is invite those policymakers into the conversation with us about some of the best practices in international education. For example, in 2003, during our first international education awards with the Asia Society, Secretary of Education Paige was invited to speak and a high-ranking State Department official also was involved. We've also been working with governors and former governors; people who know the policy networks very well and who can work those networks. We've also had states and departments of educa-

tion at the state level recognize us as part of the competitive pool, for the programming that were doing, so that their practices can be examined and compared to one another and then appropriately recognized. I think we've had a fairly aggressive strategy of outreach to policymakers and I hope that it will have the commensurate payoff since policymakers are on the front lines: they have command of the most substantial resources in education and really have the most at stake at demonstrating the kinds of gains we all want to see for international understanding. We're hoping that through our careful targeting and integration of policymakers into programming, we'll see some serious gains there.

IE: Do you foresee a point at which corporate executives will stand up and say to young people—much in the same way they did 30 years ago when preaching the advantages of having an MBA when trying to land a job—“if you are going to be competitive in the twenty-first century, you must be culturally competent and know other languages”?

SBR: Yes, at some level it is happening. It's happening because corporate leaders are leading by example in their hiring practices. People who demonstrate these kinds of competencies are more valued and that is an important part of the equation. At the very minimum you see that taking place in the hiring practices. I also think that when a very visible company, like ours, gets behind a certain issue or program of this kind, it helps to share that information with other corporate colleagues, to get them on board.

IE: Are there specific regions or countries where there is exemplary progress being made to provide greater access to education for disadvantaged groups?

SBR: It's tough to identify those programs in some parts of the world because there are a lot of places where there are so many students that are disadvantaged that you can't easily differentiate between those who are or are not disadvantaged. That's the case in much of the developing world. Those countries are just struggling to provide primary education to as many students as possible. But, in developed countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, there have been a number of successful models, such as those involving early intervention, working with disadvantaged children, constructing peer networks, leveraging different types of sources of capital, and so on. In the United Kingdom, for instance, there is much being done by the corporate community in the way of contributions for the construction of new, smaller schools. That corporate involvement includes the obvious form of financial resources but also includes support for the building process and placing corporate leaders on the public school boards. It's being done very aggressively to help provide education to those who are not in a position to attend existing schools. And at the higher education level, there is a real stock-taking in France, for example, to increase access to the more selective institutions. Likewise in Brazil and the United Kingdom. We've seen new programs working to identify children from less-represented communities in helping them prepare for college.

IE: Surely unique approaches will be required for each country or region, but are there any general blueprints or best practices that others can follow?

SBR: It does have a lot to do with customizing the outreach to each community of disadvantaged children. Colleges and universities have a whole range of programming in place that takes advantage of their own knowledge of education and their students' own interest in working with younger students to create a better pipeline to education. There is no panacea, as much as there is a need. One very important element that seems to be common among best practices is mentoring: by students, adults, or educa-

tors. A key part is also to provide challenging content. Often disadvantaged students need more challenging material than is currently being offered to become engaged.

IE: As one who studied abroad, in your case on a Rockefeller Fellowship from Harvard, what did you come away with from those experiences that helped you become the person you are today?

SBR: It was very influential for me. I spent a year in Latin America (in Caracas and Mexico City) and during the course of that year I became entrenched in the people, languages, and cultures. I was able to put those interests into practice when I started

my career. I became a program officer and one of my areas of responsibility was Latin American public policy issues. Absent that education abroad experience, I would not have been well positioned to take on that kind of responsibility. And as I built my career in global philanthropy, that education abroad experience continues to be the door-opener for me. It exposed me to life outside the United States; the challenges and wonder of it all. And it gave me the incentive to continue to build out my understanding of other people and cultures. It's a hugely important experience. We definitely want as many young people as possible to have those experiences. **IE**

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JANE DUNHAM & SANFORD JAMESON

JANE DUNHAM

University of Texas—San Antonio

NAFSA Member since: 1980

Favorite place to visit: The Netherlands

Favorite NAFSA conference site: Snowmass—an incredibly beautiful setting for a conference.

Other than international education, what is your fantasy career? Photographer for *National Geographic*.

Why did you pledge to the New Century Circle: I believe strongly in what we can accomplish in world relations by forming friendships with international students and scholars and providing support services to them. NAFSA gives us essential training to do this work and we need to ensure the association's future.

SANFORD JAMESON

The College Board (Retired)

NAFSA Member since: 1958

Favorite place to visit: Visited most countries of the world and all are special in their own way.

Favorite NAFSA conference site: Del Coronado in San Diego

Other than international education, what is your fantasy career? My career in education has been totally fulfilling.

Why did you pledge to the New Century Circle: I want to help insure that NAFSA survives and prospers in the future.



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