



Dr. Gauri A. Pitale

*Vice President for Diversity,
Equity and Inclusion*

Community skill-building

Fostering uncomfortable conversations and self-reflection can assist community members in forming greater social connection and exchange.

A collaborative approach to supporting students

The work of helping historically excluded students is slow and challenging, but the key is faculty, coaches and other adults joining students and DEI staff in seeking solutions.

History as a guidepost for the future

The trained social scientist and applied anthropologist offers insight informed through the lens of today's problems stemming from historical cultural patterns.

Dr. Gauri A. Pitale no longer spends her days studying postcranial remains from Sanjan, a town in her native India, but she still proudly claims the title of 'social scientist.' Today she applies the lessons she's learned from archaeology digs and the study of ancient Indian culture to serving Augustana College students, faculty and staff as vice president of the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

When Dr. Pitale joined Augustana in January 2024, she saw the opportunity for 'momentum keeping' at an institution committed to prioritizing equity and belonging with the national recognition to prove it – including five Higher Education Excellence in Diversity awards from INSIGHT Into Diversity. At Augustana, she said, it's about continued skill-building and programmatic diversity initiatives that seek to reduce barriers for the college's vibrant and increasingly diverse student body, which today includes 24% domestic students of color and 20% international students.

Seeing some institutions shuttering their DEI offices or defunding initiatives bring heartache, Dr. Pitale said, but they are also evidence of change.

"Social change is not easy," she said. "Those headlines are indicative of the impact our work is having. History is an excellent teacher filled with amazing figures who fought for change. We're living through historical change and it results in positive change – there are days when it's exhausting, but it can also be exhilarating."

Dr. Pitale said she feels this era of resistance to DEI initiatives will pass, resulting in individuals feeling empowered to be their authentic selves in every facet of life. She seeks to instill a sense of agency in all individuals with a focus on self-reflection and a willingness to wade into uncomfortable conversations for the higher purpose of cultural humility and understanding.

Dr. Gauri A. Pitale

Available for commentary on

- The importance of integrating DEI at the highest organizational level and in all institutional initiatives
- Policymaking to reduce systematic barriers for historically excluded individuals
- Interpersonal skill-building to facilitate belonging and a culture of question-seeking
- The value of multilingualism to foster cultural exchange
- Setting DEI goals as part of a performance-based review process
- DEI controversy as a sign of positive social change and progress

Professional experience

- Associate Dean of Students, Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Va.
- Diversity Lead, Ivy Tech Community College, Kokomo, Ind.
- Assistant professor of life sciences, Ivy Tech Community College, Kokomo, Ind.
- Assistant professor of practice of anthropology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.
- Assistant professor of practice in Saluki Success Program, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.

Education

- Ph.D. anthropology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
- M.A., anthropology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
- M.A., ancient Indian culture, history and archaeology, Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute
- B.A., ancient Indian culture, St. Xavier's College

Professional organizations

- National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education
- The Asiatic Society of Mumbai
- Society of South Asian Archaeology

Trainings facilitated

- What is implicit bias and why does it matter
- Inclusive leadership
- Understanding differences
- LGBTQ+ Awareness
- The model minority myth

LinkedIn



[linkedin.com/in/gauri-a-pitale-ph-d-183740123/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gauri-a-pitale-ph-d-183740123/)