

# Grawemeyer Awards.

## **Disadvantaged students pay a price to move up, says 2023 education prize winner by Denise Fitzpatrick**

Disadvantaged college students pay a heavy ethical and emotional price to become upwardly mobile, says a scholar who today was named winner of the 2023 University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Education.

Jennifer Morton, an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania, earned the prize for her ideas in “Moving Up without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility.” Princeton University Press published the [book](#) in 2019.

The dream of achieving success by attending college is deeply flawed for some, says Morton, a first-generation college student who left Peru to attend Princeton. Drawing on her own experience, philosophical and social science research and interviews with first-generation, low-income and immigrant students, she found the college experience often forces students to turn away from family and friends to achieve academic success.

For example, one student caring for an ill sister told Morton she had missed so many classes and assignment due dates she wasn’t sure she could catch up. Another student said he had cut ties with his community to be able to manage college.

“First-generation students are often putting their relationships with friends, family and their communities on the line,” Morton said. “We need to recognize their sacrifices and focus on the social, emotional and ethical aspects of their college experience, not simply on grade-point averages and graduation rates.”

[Morton](#), who is also a senior fellow at the University of Wisconsin’s Center for Ethics and Education, has worked at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, City College of New York and Swarthmore College. She holds a doctor of philosophy degree from Stanford University and has received several awards, including the American Philosophical Association’s Scheffler Prize.

“By focusing on the dilemmas first-generation and low-income students can face when pursuing a degree, Morton shed light on an important but often neglected issue,” said Jeff Valentine, education award director. “She also offers strategies that colleges, faculty and students themselves can use to navigate these challenges.”