# Summary of Equity-Centered Best and Promising Practices Memo

## List of Appendices

1. *Laying the groundwork: Concepts and Activities for Racial Equity Work.* Center for Urban Education, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, 2020.
2. *Step Up & Lead for Equity: What Higher Education Can Do to Reverse Our Deepening Divides.* Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Washington, DC, 2016.
3. *Structural Equity: Big-Picture Thinking & Partnerships That Improve Community College Student Outcomes.* The Aspen Institute, College Excellence Program, Aspen, CO, 2016.
4. Naffi, N., Davidson, A., Patino, A., Beatty, B., Gbetoglo, E. & Duponsel, N. (September 30, 2020). *Online learning during COVID-19: 8 ways universities can improve equity and access.* The Conversation (website), https://theconversation.com/online-learning-during-covid-19-8-ways-universities-can-improve-equity-and-access-145286
5. Ash, A, Hill, R., Risdon, S.N., & Jun, A. (2020). Anti-Racism in Higher Education: A Model for Change. *Race and Pedagogy Journal, vol. 4, no. 3.*

Revised Summer 2020

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

# Concepts and Activities for Racial Equity Work

CENTER for URBAN EDUCATION

USC Rossier School of Education

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The inquiry tools presented in this guide are the product of the staff who worked at the Center for Urban Education (CUE) from 1999 to 2018. The tools evolved over time, in response to what CUE staff learned from using the tools at campuses across the country, as well as from research on race, racism, and racial equity. Presented here is a collection of CUE's most impactful tools, organized and edited by Cheryl D. Ching, PhD., who served as a research assistant at CUE from 2012 to 2017 and as a post-doctoral scholar from 2017 to 2018.

**HOW TO CITE**

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**ADDITIONAL TOOLS**

For additional inquiry tools, please contact us at cue.media.communications@gmail.com.

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# **INTRODUCTION:** WHAT IS EQUITY?

The word "equity" means different things to different people. Dictionary definitions often equate "equity" with notions of fairness and justice—yet in practice, it remains open to interpretation, and within specific fields it can take on a particular definition.

In higher education, equity generally refers to creating opportunities for equal access and success among historically underserved student populations. Further distinctions are made about **which** populations should be equity's focus, **what** the goals of equity should be, and **how** equity should be achieved. At the Center for Urban Education (CUE):

- Our **who** are **racially minoritized[1] students**, including Black, Latinx[2], Native American, and Pacific Islander students.

- Our **goal** is to **achieve equity in outcomes for racially minoritized students** in areas such as retention, degree and certificate attainment, and participation in honors programs and STEM disciplines, as well as access to college-level courses and transfer to four-year institutions for community colleges specifically.

- Our **how** is for **practitioners to develop "equity-mindedness"** through an action-research process that promotes critical inquiry into existing policies and practices.

[1] Following David Gilborn (2005) and Shaun Harper (2012), we use the term "minoritized" rather than minority to underscore what Harper describes as "the social construction of underrepresentation and subordination in US social institutions" (p. 9). He continues, "Persons are not born into a minority status, nor are they minoritized in every social context (e.g., their families, racially homogenous friendship groups, or places of worship). Instead, they are rendered minorities in particular situations and institutional environments that sustain an overrepresentation of whiteness" (p. 9). "Minoritized" thus reflects the fact that with few exceptions—historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) being the most prominent example—American colleges and universities were founded and designed to serve white students. At certain points we use the terms "people of color" and "students of color" to describe populations that are traditionally labeled racial and ethnic "minorities."

[2] Similar to a growing number of researchers (e.g., Garcia, 2017; Felix, 2018), we use "Latinx" rather than "Latina/o" to respect the gender identities of students with Latin American, Mexican, Caribbean, or South American heritage.

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In this guide, we discuss the *why* of our approach. Interspersed into that discussion are tools we have developed that help higher education practitioners orient their equity work.


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The historical trajectories of racial inequity in the United States

# WHY RACE?

A question we often get in our work is why CUE focuses on race. Our rationale for racial equity rests on demographic, economic, and justice imperatives. It is also premised on the fact that socioeconomic class and income alone do not fully account for inequalities experienced by racially minoritized students.

### A DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE

For some time now, demographers have predicted that the United States will turn into a "majority-minority" nation, as each generation of Americans becomes more racially and ethnically diverse than the one before. Current U.S. Census projections note that nationally, this will occur around 2044, and from that point it is unlikely to be reversed (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Certain states such as California already have populations with a majority of people of color, with Latinx eclipsing whites as the largest racial-ethnic group in 2015. U.S. Census projections further suggest that the fastest-growing populations through 2060 will be (1) individuals of two or more races; (2) Asians; (3) Latinx; and (4) Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, in that order. The Black and Native American population will continue to grow as well, although at more modest rates. At least through 2043, Blacks and Latinx will remain the two largest groups of people of color.

These demographic trends have significant implications for educational institutions at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary level. Already, students of color outnumber white students in public K-12 public schools (Hussar & Bailey, 2014). The number of white high school graduates will continue to decrease as the number of Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander high school graduates will increase (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016) (Figure 1). After record numbers of Black high school graduates between 2010 to 2012, projections suggest a slow decline in the coming years.

Given this demographic reality, the equity question for higher education—and the question that CUE addresses—is whether colleges and universities are prepared to serve the students of color who are coming to their doors in rising numbers, and for whom many of these institutions were not intended or designed?

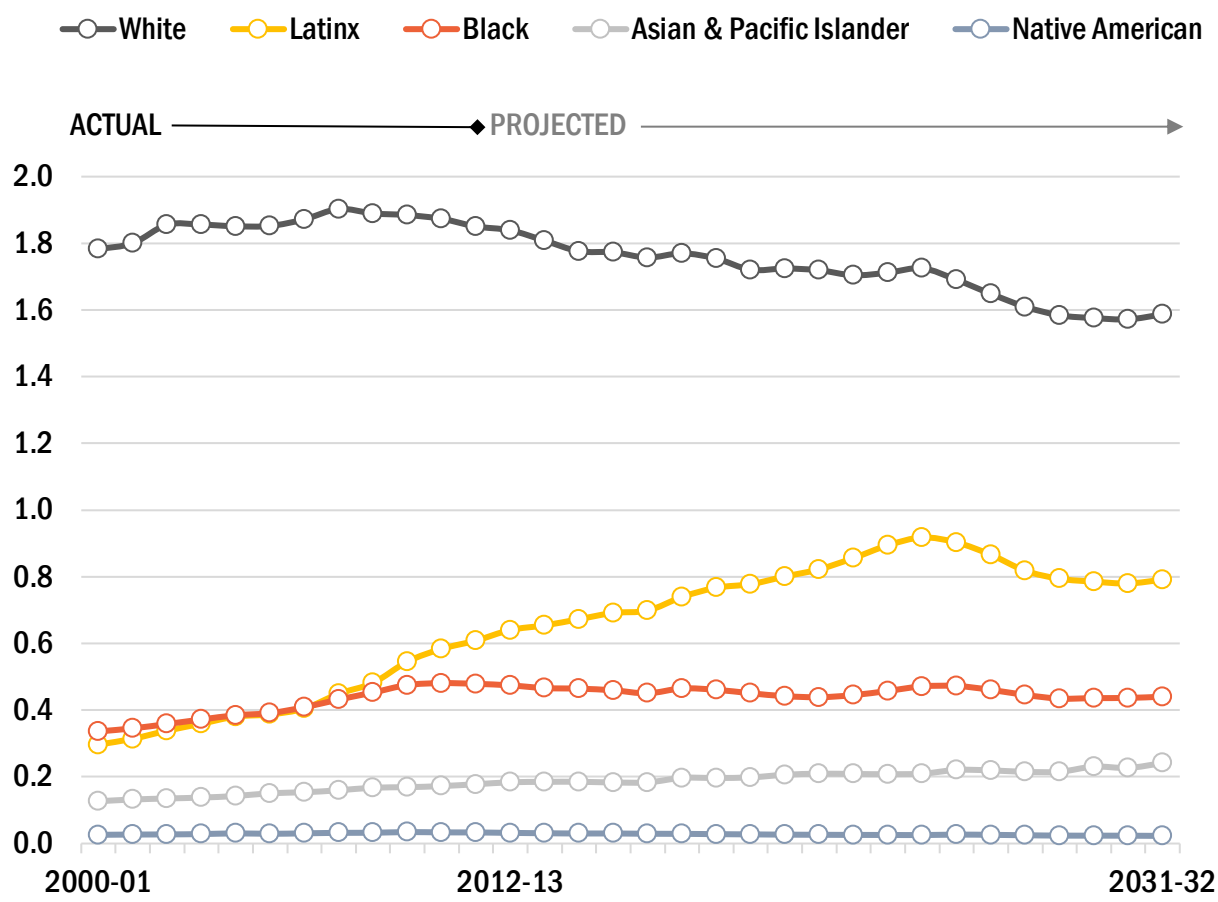



FIGURE 1. High school graduates from public and private schools by race and ethnicity, in millions (2001-01 to 2012-13 actual; 2013-14 to 2031-32 projected). Data source: Bransberger and Michelau (2016), *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*.

## AN ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

The shifting racial-ethnic makeup of American's high school graduates—and by extension, college student population—is intimately tied to the economic justification for racial equity. While not new, this call grew louder following the launch of the College Completion Agenda in 2009, when President Barack Obama announced the *American Graduation Initiative* at Macomb Community College in Michigan. Since then, state and federal policymakers, funders, and advocacy organizations have argued that equity—defined as closing gaps in access and completion—is necessary for the economic future of the country, states, communities, and individuals (see page 10).

Analyses of college completion outcomes are sobering, often showing that Black, Latinx, and Native American students attain bachelor's degrees at rates lower than white and Asian students (Figure 2). As many policymakers and researchers have pointed out, these racial/ethnic equity gaps in baccalaureate attainment risk exacerbating inequalities in other arenas that contribute to the overall economic and social well-being of the country, such as employment, voting, and healthcare.

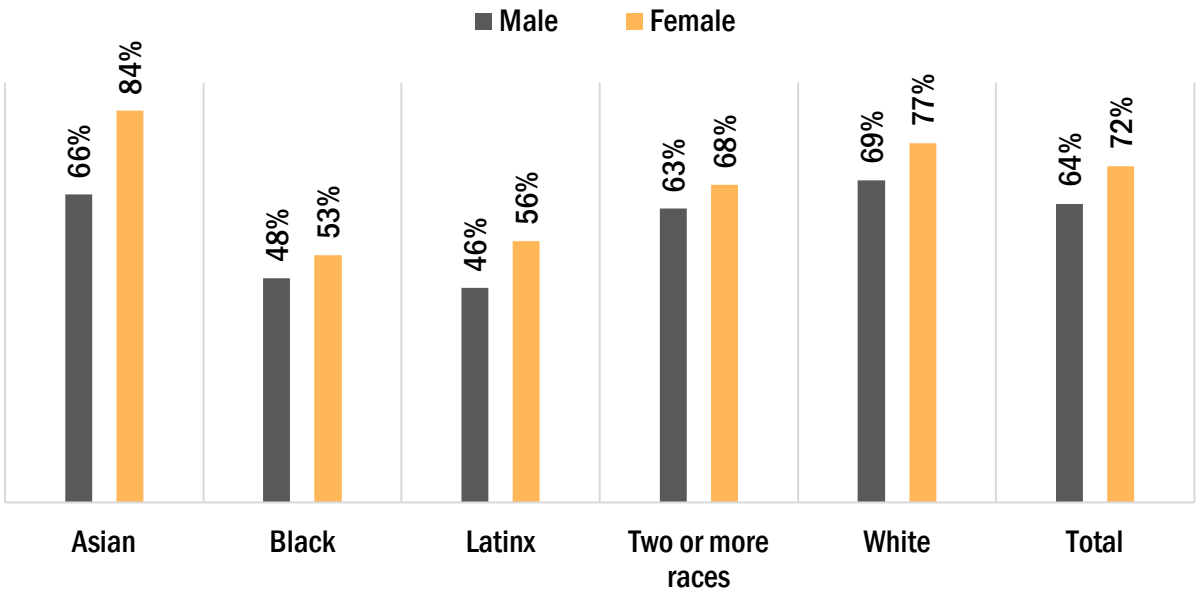



FIGURE 2. Percentage of 2003-04 full-time, beginning postsecondary students who attended a four-year institution and attained a bachelor's degree by June 2009, by race and ethnicity and sex. Reproduced with permission from Ross et al., *Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), figure 37.1.

# THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE FOR EQUITY

## STATE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION:
## COLORADO COMMISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

"If the state of Colorado is to prepare its students for changing workforce demands and maintain its high quality of life and vibrant economy, it must invest more in the educational attainment of all its citizens

Today Colorado faces a critical decision: Invest in expanded access in order to mitigate affordability and equity gap challenges or bear the weight and financial burden of an undereducated citizenry."

## FUNDER:
## LUMINA FOUNDATION

"Achieving Goal 2025 requires the acknowledgement of systemic disparities and the imperative of placing equity and excellence at the center of all work to improve postsecondary attainment."

"55 million jobs will be created by the end of this decade. 40 million jobs will require a postsecondary education—a certificate or degree that is beyond the high school degree. Goal 2025 seeks to increase the percentage of Americans with high-quality postsecondary credentials to 60% by 2023 in order to address these needs."

## ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION:
## THE CAMPAIGN FOR COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY

"The Campaign for College Opportunity's mission has been to ensure that all eligible and motivated students in California have an opportunity to go to college and succeed. The Campaign remains committed to keeping the State of California from breaking its promise of college opportunity to its next generation of young people in order to ensure a strong state for all of us."

"California must address the growing inequity in college enrollment and degree completion, across both race and gender. This is not just a problem for men, or Blacks and Latinos; this imbalance affects all Californians."

## A JUSTICE IMPERATIVE

The demographic and economic imperatives for racial equity are oriented toward the future: the projected racial-ethnic makeup of the American population and the economic prospects of the country. Racial *in*equity, however, is a problem that was born in the past and that has endured over time. It was born out of slavery and subsequent Jim Crow laws that legalized segregation and limited opportunity for Blacks. It was born out of genocide and land-grabbing that diminished the population and territories of Native Americans, as well as out of the colonization and assimilation projects that sought to "civilize" the "savage natives." It was born out of waves of Asian, Latinx, and Pacific Islander migration, some of which was sanctioned by the American government (e.g., through the *Immigration Act of 1965* and asylum seeking) and some of which was not. For all people of color, racial inequity was born from policies and practices that were designed to benefit the dominant population of whites and to directly and/or indirectly exclude, marginalize, and oppress people of color. (See the Appendix A for a discussion of the historical trajectories of communities of color in the United States.)

Addressing racial inequity is therefore an act of justice that requires explicit attention to structural inequality and institutionalized racism, and demands system-changing responses.

**LYNDON B. JOHNSON HOWARD UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS**

**JUNE 4, 1965**

"But freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the ladders you please.

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.

Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. And this is the next and the more profound stage of the battle for civil rights.

We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result."

Rights Era, beginning with the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 through the 1960s, redressed the racial inequities that preceded it. Empirical analyses, however, demonstrate that racial equity remains an unfinished project, and despite the gains of the Civil Rights Era, structural inequalities remain. Each region, state, county, city, and college has likely had an equally sobering story about racial inequity. Equity work requires practitioners to understand the history of race and race relations in their local context, as well as the forms of structural inequality and institutionalized racism that manifest in their communities.

## PRESENT-DAY MANIFESTATIONS OF RACISM

Equity work also requires practitioners to consider how race and racism manifest in their actions at an interpersonal level, and how those actions, which may seem small and inconsequential, are ultimately tied to the history of racial injustice in the United States. In this section, we present two ways racism persists today: microaggressions and implicit bias.

### Racial microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group. Microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered. These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous (Sue et al., 2007). Yet microaggressions are detrimental to persons of color because they impair performance in a multitude of settings by sapping the psychic and spiritual energy of recipients and by creating inequities (Franklin, 2004; Sue, 2004).

As a concept and word, "microaggression" has gained popularity in recent years such that it is often used without clear definition, routinely transformed from a noun to a verb (i.e., "microaggressed"), and widely applied to other stereotyped groups (e.g., women, LGBTQ). It's important to point out, however, that microaggression comes from the anti-racist work of psychiatrist Chester Pierce and his colleagues (1978), who framed microaggressions specifically as "'put downs' of blacks by offenders" (p. 66). Some years later, drawing on Pierce's work, the legal

scholar Peggy Davis (1989) associated race and power, asserting that microaggressions "stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority" (p. 1576). More recently, in his reflections on why the notion of microaggressions is critical to thinking about race and racism in higher education, education scholar Daniel Solórzano (2018) stated that "[r]acial microaggressions matter because they are symptoms of larger structural problems—racism and white supremacy" (p. 97).

How microaggressions manifest and how they perpetuate racism takes a number of forms, which have been identified by psychologist Derald Wing Sue (2004) as:

1. **Microinsults**, which are verbal remarks or behaviors that convey rudeness and insensitivity that demean a person's racial heritage or identity.

2. **Microinvalidations**, which are verbal remarks or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person or color.

3. **Microassaults**, which are explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim.

4. **Environmental microaggressions**, which are racial assaults, insults, and invalidations that are manifested at systemic and environmental levels.

In "Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice," Sue et al. (2007) further elaborated on the forms racial microaggressions can take. A summary is provided in the table on pages 13-14, which is adapted from Sue's article.

# EXAMPLES OF RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

| MICROAGGRESSION | REMARK/BEHAVIOR | MESSAGE |
|---|---|---|
| **Alien in own land**<br>When people of color are assumed to be foreign-born | "Where are you from?"<br>"Where were you born?"<br>"You speak good English."<br>Asking a Latinx or Asian person to teach you words in their native language. | You are not American.<br>You are a foreigner. |
| **Ascription of intelligence**<br>Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race | "You are a credit to your race."<br>"You are so articulate."<br>Asking an Asian person to help you with a math or science problem. | People of color are generally not as intelligent as whites. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.<br>All Asians are intelligent and good in math and science. |
| **Color-blindness**<br>Statements that indicate a white person doesn't want to acknowledge race. | "When I look at you, I don't see color."<br>"America is a melting pot."<br>"There is only one race, the human race." | People of color are not racial/cultural beings. People of color do not have experiences that are racialized.<br>People of color must assimilate/acculturate to the dominant culture. |
| **Criminality or assumption of criminal status**<br>Presuming that a person of color is dangerous, a criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race. | A white man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black or Latinx person approaches or passes.<br>A store owner/manager/clerk following a person of color around the store. | You are a criminal.<br>You are going to steal. You are poor. You do not belong.<br>You are dangerous. |
| **Denial of individual racism**<br>A statement made when whites deny their racial biases. | "I'm not a racist. I have Black friends."<br>"As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority." | I am immune to racism because I have friends of color.<br>Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can't be a racist. I'm like you. |

| MICROAGGRESSION | REMARK/BEHAVIOR | MESSAGE |
|---|---|---|
| **Environmental microaggressions**<br>Macro-level microaggressions that are apparent on a systemic and environmental level. | College and universities with buildings that are all named after white men.<br>Television shows and movies that feature (almost) all white people, with no representation of people of color.<br>Overcrowding and/or underfunding of public schools in communities of color. | People of color don't belong.<br>People of color won't succeed here.<br>People of color are outsiders.<br>People of color don't exist.<br>People of color are not valued as learners. |
| **Myth of meritocracy**<br>Statements that assert that race does not play a role in life successes. | "I believe the most qualified person should get the job."<br>"Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough." | People of color are given unfair benefits because of their race.<br>People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder. |
| **Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles**<br>The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/white culture are ideal. | Asking a Black person: "Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down."<br>To an Asian or Latinx person: "Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal. Speak more."<br>Dismissing an individual who brings up race/culture in work/school settings. | People of color must assimilate/acculturate to the dominant culture.<br>People of color need to leave their cultural baggage out of the classroom/workplace. |
| **Second-class citizen**<br>When a white person is given preferential treatment over a person of color. | Person of color is mistaken for a service worker.<br>A taxi driver passes a person of color to pick up a white passenger. | People of color are servants to whites. They can't possibly occupy high-status positions.<br>People of color are likely to cause trouble and/or travel to a dangerous neighborhood. |

**Implicit bias**

"Implicit biases affect behavior and are far more predictive than self-reported racial attitudes" (Godsil, Tropp, Goff, & Powell, 2014, p. 10). Implicit bias refers to the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes toward categories of people without conscious awareness. Implicit bias affects behavior because human beings process an enormous amount of stimulus by organizing the environment into categories consisting of automatic associations between concepts that share similar characteristics. The categories allow humans to effortlessly navigate the world. These categories guide how people react to objects and how people socially interact. For example, grade school children learn to categorize adults into teachers, principals, and parents. Each categorization is associated—through socialization—with characteristics. Godsil et al. (2014) use the example of children who quickly learn to respond automatically with polite attention when the person called "Principal" walks into the classroom. Such categorizations and socialization perform important social functions that allow the school to function smoothly.

People also associate attitudes with categories. For example, people may generally share the association of characteristics with the category of teachers. But each individual will associate different feelings toward teachers. However, some emotional associations may be laden with stereotypical characteristics about categories. Latinx people are often associated with images of being "illegal" immigrants, or Black men as big and intimidating criminals. These stereotypical and emotional associations toward Latinx and Blacks perpetuate implicit racial biases. Although many people do not consciously believe in defining groups with stereotypes, regular exposure to such representations in media and social environments prompts people to unconsciously respond with implicit biases that can be detrimental to stigmatized social groups.

The following information defines key words associated with implicit bias:

- **Implicit:** A thought or feeling about which individuals are unaware or mistaken.

- **Bias:** When individuals have a preference or an aversion toward a person or a category of person as opposed to being neutral

- **Stereotype:** A specific trait or attribute that is associated with a category of person.

- **Attitude:** An evaluative feeling toward a category of people or objects—either positive or negative—indicating what individuals like or dislike.

Jerry Kang, professor of law and vice chancellor for equity, diversity and inclusion at the University of California at Los Angeles, offers a compelling illustration of implicit bias in this TED Talk: http://jerrykang.net/2011/03/13/getting-up-to-speed-on-implicit-bias/.

Research on implicit bias has identified and proposed various interventions to challenge implicit biases. The table below illustrates different interventions that can be practiced at the individual level.

| INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS AND REDUCE IMPLICIT BIAS | |
|---|---|
| DOUBT YOUR OBJECTIVITY | Recognize and accept that you are susceptible to the influence of bias and assumptions. |
| STEREOTYPE REPLACEMENT | Replace stereotypical responses with non-stereotypical responses. To use this strategy, one must recognize that their perceptions of a person are based on stereotypes. |
| COUNTER-STEREOTYPING | Visualize abstract images of non-stereotypical people. |
| INDIVIDUATION | Obtain specific information about group members to make evaluations at the individual level and not by group. |
| PERSPECTIVE-TAKING | View the world from the eyes of a member of a stereotyped group. |
| INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTACT | Seek opportunities to engage in positive interactions with stereotyped groups. |
| IMPROVE DECISION-MAKING CONDITIONS | Slow down thinking by engaging in mindful and deliberate processing. |
| USE DATA | Collect empirical data and evidence to investigate racial disparities and inequities. |

## SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OR INCOME CANNOT FULLY EXPLAIN INEQUALITIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

The question of "why race?" is implicitly a question about why CUE does not focus on socioeconomic status (SES)/income, gender, ability, or other group categorizations for which issues of equity also exist. We are sensitive to inequities associated with these groups, as well as to how inequities can compound for people who belong to or identify with more than one category.[3] For instance, Black students who are low-income face greater inequities than those who are high-income.[4] At the same time, empirical analyses show that income or class alone cannot account for the inequities experienced by Blacks. As Anthony Carnevale and Jeff Strohl (2013) explain in *Separate and unequal: How higher education reinforces the intergenerational reproduction of white racial privilege*:

> ***Class and race overlap and are most virulent in combination.*** Along with many other researchers, we find that the reason for persistent racial inequality begins with the fact that Blacks and Hispanics seem to face barriers not faced by whites. Unequal educational and career outcomes for economically disadvantaged whites can be explained with variables like family income, parental education, and peer expectations. These same variables ***do not fully*** explain African American and Hispanic educational and economic outcomes. Earlier research shows income effects are more fully explained by observable things, like peer group and tutoring, while differences by race are not so easy to pin down. (p. 36)

In another analysis focused on college completion, Carnevale and Strohl (2010) demonstrate that white students and high-SES students who begin higher education in community college earn certificates, associate degrees, and baccalaureate degrees at rates between 40% and 46%, as compared to

[3] The idea that inequities, along with discrimination and marginalization, compound draws on Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) seminal work on "intersectionality." Using the case of Black women, Crenshaw argues that the "multidimensionality" of experience must be acknowledged and as such, treating race and gender—for example—as "mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis" is highly problematic (p. 139).

[4] For in-depth analyses of the particular and cumulative effects of race and socioeconomic status on educational opportunity in higher education, see *America's unmet promise: The imperative for equity in higher education* (Witham, Malcom-Piqueux, Dowd, & Bensimon, 2015) and *Separate and unequal: How higher education reinforces the intergenerational reproduction of white privilege* (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013).

39% for low-SES students and below 30% for racially minoritized students. This finding suggests that there is at least a 9-percentage-point gap between students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and racially minoritized students, meaning that the gap cannot be explained by SES alone.

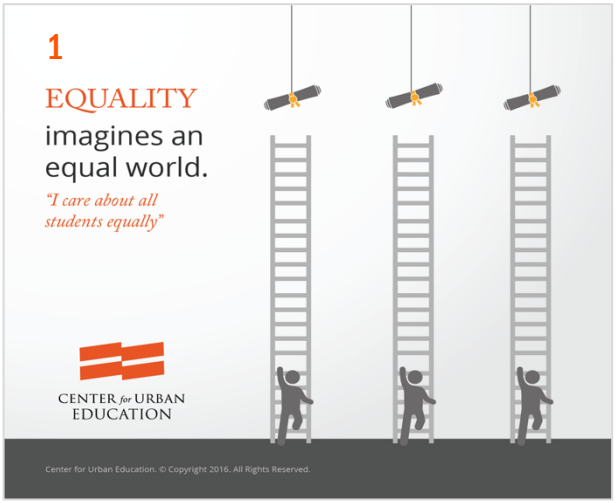
Using National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88)[5] data, Carnevale and Strohl (2010) empirically investigated the relationship between race, SES, and college admission test scores, seeking to explain "whether the effects of race can be replaced by the effects of other observable [SES] factors, most notably income" (p. 169). The answer to this question is "no." In their full regression model, being in the lowest-income tier is associated with a negative-13-point differential relative to being in the highest-income tier; being Black is associated with a negative-56-point differential relative to being white. They also find that low-SES Blacks pay a greater penalty in terms of SAT/ACT scores, compared to low-SES whites, a pattern that persists even with middle- and upper-middle-class Blacks. As the authors conclude: "[S]ocioeconomic status itself is not race-blind" (p. 167).

The imperative for racial equity is clear on demographic, economic, and justice grounds. For far too long, racial *in*equity has been the norm in the United States, with policies and practices that were designed and/or that work to limit the opportunity of people of color.

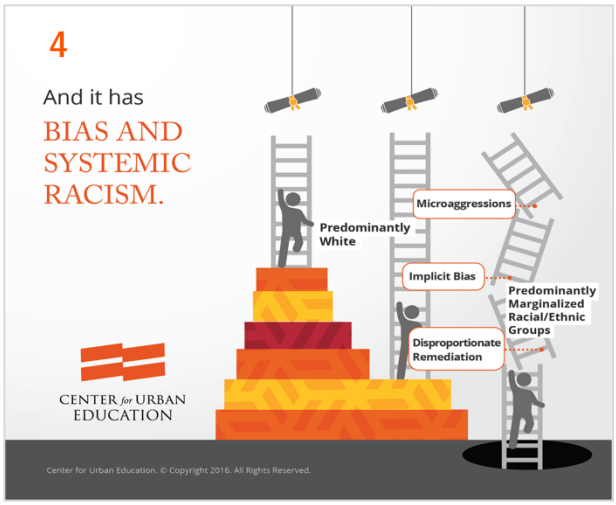
For more on the imperative to focus race over socioeconomic status or income when it comes to equity, see *Why race? Understanding the importance of foregrounding race and ethnicity in achieving equity on college campuses* (Ching, 2013), which is available at https://cue.usc.edu/files/2016/01/CUE_WhyRace_2013.pdf.

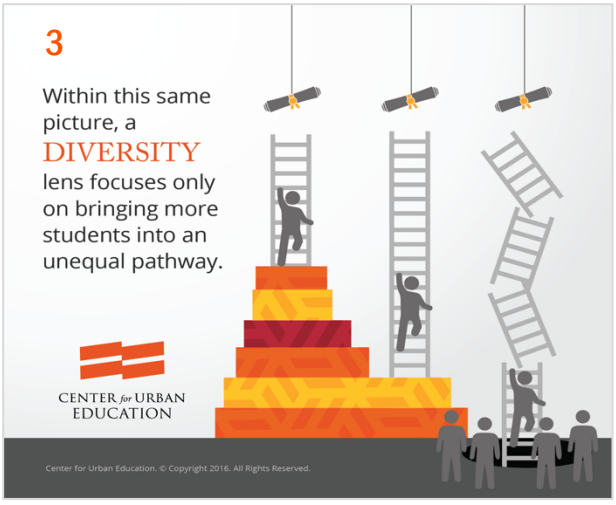
[5] NELS:88 is a well-used and oft-cited data set that followed a nationally representative sample of eighth-graders from 1988 to 2000 (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/). The purpose of NELS:88 was to examine important educational and life transitions (e.g., middle to high school, high school to college, college to workforce).

## SUMMARY: THE RACIAL EQUITY IMPERATIVE




Racial equity requires policies and practices directed where they're needed to fix barriers to achievement and provide the necessary support. When colleges focus solely on diversity, they bring more students into systems that put too many students on predictable paths toward failure.



## WHY EQUITY IN OUTCOMES?

When CUE says equity, we're talking about not just equal *access*, but equal *outcomes* for racially minoritized students in higher education. Our goal is to see equal outcomes in measures such as (but not limited to):

- Persistence through developmental and basic skills education
- Transfer from 2- to 4-year institutions
- Degree and certificate attainment
- Participation in honors programs
- Participation and completion in key majors

The terms "Equity" and "Diversity" are often treated interchangeably, but they refer to different measures. Diversity (as well as "equal opportunity") generally refers to *access* to the institution. Many educational institutions have been successful in granting access to racially minoritized students and are thus proud of efforts that have resulted in creating a diverse student body. While access is important, focusing *only* on creating a diverse student body allows other inequitable outcomes to remain invisible. Problems such as unequal graduation and transfer rates cannot be fixed so long as they go unnoticed.

For example, if the entering class on a campus is 56% white and 32% Latinx, we would expect that the graduating class would also be 56% white and 32% Latinx, even if the total number of students has decreased (Figure 3). *When the representation of graduating students mirrors their representation in the entering student body, we have achieved equity.*

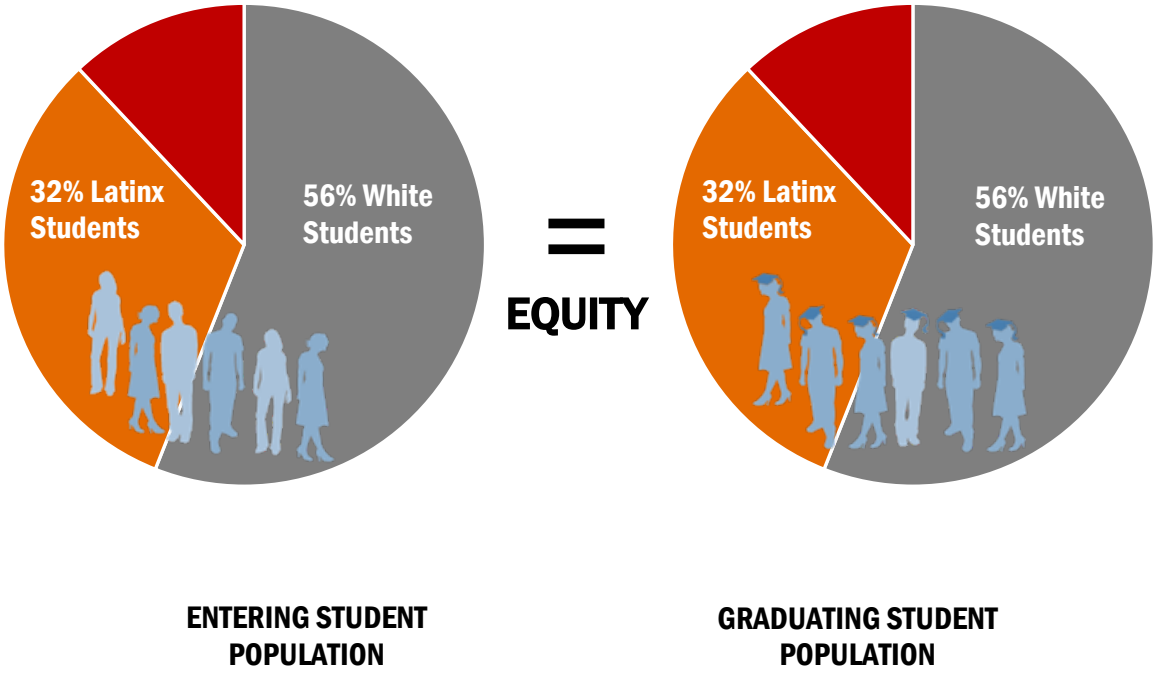



FIGURE 3. Example of equity in outcomes

There are several advantages to focusing on outcomes when it comes to racial equity.

1. Outcomes are measurable.

2. Colleges and universities already collect huge amounts of data that can be used to define these outcomes.

3. Outcomes data allow practitioners to see how students from different racial and ethnic groups fare overall, and relative to each other, as they progress through college milestones.

The latter, which is captured in what CUE calls the **equity gap**, is an especially important piece of racial equity work. An equity gap refers to the underrepresentation of racially minoritized students in a given measure, such as graduation or matriculation. Equity gaps are determined by comparing a student group's outcome data to a set baseline and benchmark, as well as the baseline and benchmark data of other student groups for the same measure. Colleges can decide to set the benchmark at

the **average success rate** for that measure, or at the success rate for the **highest-performing group**. The elimination of an equity gap for a particular outcome (e.g., equity gap for Pacific Islander students in degree attainment) is one marker of racial equity. See CUE's Data Tools Guide for more information.

### THE TWO DIMENSIONS OF RACIAL EQUITY

These advantages highlight the **accountability** dimension of equity in outcomes, which enables colleges to:

- Define the problem of racial inequity in a tangible way;
- Identify areas where colleges and universities are underserving racially minoritized students; and
- Account for progress (or lack thereof) toward racial equity.

The accountability dimension of equity in outcomes has particular importance for the economic imperative for racial equity. Inequality in higher education is detrimental to everyone. It negatively impacts the entire country, economically and socially, in such matters as

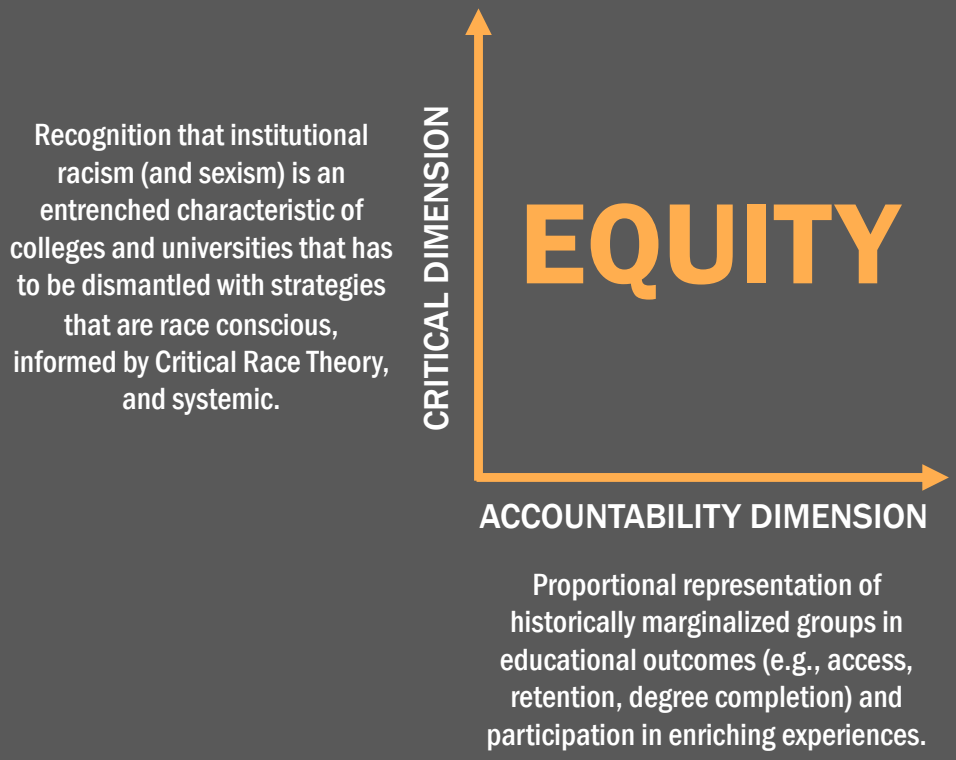



FIGURE 4.
The two dimensions of racial equity

unemployment rates, welfare costs, voter turnout, income, and healthcare. Outcomes data can be used to define indicators that could help call attention to and prioritize racial equity issues at the policy level.

Alongside the accountability dimension, equity in outcomes allows colleges to bring a **critical** dimension to racial equity work, which emphasizes equity's justice imperative. Identifying equity gaps not only defines the equity problem at a college and points to areas for change, but also helps shine a light on longstanding, institutionalized campus- and practitioner-level policies and practices that are producing racial inequities.

# WHY EQUITY-MINDEDNESS?

Indeed, equity requires the provision of resources to students who face the greatest barriers and continually face inequities in their educational experiences and outcomes. At CUE, however, we believe that (re)distributing resources and repairing broken structures are insufficient unless those actions and other efforts to equalize opportunity and outcomes are implemented with "equity-mindedness." Developed by Dr. Estela Bensimon (2005), equity-mindedness is a type of "cognitive frame," a mental map of attitudes and beliefs a person maintains to make sense of the world. A cognitive frame determines which questions are asked, what information is collected, what is noticed, how problems are defined, and what course of action should be taken. Three cognitive frames that govern how we understand racial equity are **diversity-**, **deficit-**, and **equity-mindedness**.

At CUE we have studied practitioners' conversations about race and equity to understand which cognitive frames are commonly relied upon to understand inequities in outcomes. We have learned that cognitive frames are developed through everyday practices and transmitted through social conversations and institutional cultures. They are also developed through dominant models of student success and student development (Bensimon, 2007).

### DIVERSITY-MINDEDNESS

Ensuring students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds have access to college is a longstanding focal area of higher education policy and practice. Success from a diversity-minded perspective is judged by whether a college campus has a student body that exhibits a wide range of demographic differences. Missing from this cognitive frame, however, is that the very students who make a campus "diverse" may experience inequities in retention, graduation, participation in high-impact practices, etc. Diversity-mindedness could result in access *without* success, in terms of outcomes.

## DEFICIT-MINDEDNESS

In our work with college practitioners, we have observed that the dominant cognitive frame is one of deficit-mindedness. Practitioners often recognize that diversity is insufficient to produce equity in outcomes; however, explanations for inequities are typically grounded in what racially minoritized students lack or how they don't exhibit the qualities of "successful" college students who are self-motivated, goal-oriented, efficacious, and academically prepared. Furthermore, a deficit-minded orientation encourages practitioners to see the perceived shortcomings of Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Native American students as the product of their attending poorly resourced schools, growing up in low-income communities, being raised by single-parent households, coming from families that do not value education, and the like. That is, these shortcomings are a "natural" outcome of these students' backgrounds, and addressing attendant inequities requires compensatory programs that "fix" students and teach them how to assimilate into the dominant college culture. Focusing on student characteristics can make it seem as if higher education's policies and practices have played no role in producing racial inequities.

Important to acknowledge is that while students do play a role in realizing their educational outcomes, engaging in deficit-minded thinking places the responsibility for action and change *solely* on students. Reframing the discussion empowers the institution and allows practitioners to focus on how they can improve their policies and practices to improve student outcomes.

## EQUITY-MINDEDNESS

Advancing equity through higher education policy and practice requires a cognitive shift, not only away from thinking in terms of targeted programs, but also away from deficit-minded assumptions about students. **Equitable policies and practices must target educational institutions and systems, not the students those institutions and systems have not served well.** We describe this cognitive reframing as "equity-mindedness," which involves taking stock of the contradiction between the ideals of inclusive and democratic education on the one hand, and the policies and practices that contribute to disparities in educational outcomes for racially minoritized

students on the other hand. Equity-mindedness reflects an awareness of the sociohistorical context of exclusionary practices and racism in higher education, and the effect of power asymmetries on opportunities and outcomes for racially minoritized students. Equity-mindedness is a way of understanding and addressing social inequities that challenges the rhetorical and enacted blame of inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes on students' social, cultural, and educational backgrounds; rather, equity-mindedness frames racial inequity as a dysfunction of higher education's policies and practices.

| EQUITY-MINDED COMPETENCE | LACK OF EQUITY-MINDED COMPETENCE |
|---|---|
| Aware of their racial identity | Claims to not see race |
| Uses quantitative and qualitative data to identify racialized patterns of practice and outcomes | Does not see value in using data disaggregated by race/ethnicity to better understand the experience of racially minoritized students |
| Reflects on racial consequences of taken-for-granted practices | Resists noticing racialized consequences or rationalizes them as being something else |
| Exercises agency to produce racial equity | Does not view racial equity as a personal responsibility |
| Views the campus as a racialized space and actively self-monitors interactions with racially minoritized students | Views the classroom as a utilitarian physical space |

FIGURE 5. Summary of equity-minded competencies

Equity-minded practitioners are aware of their **racial identity,** as well as their **racialized beliefs, expectations, and practices.** That is, they understand that who they are is influenced by the racial/ethnic group to which they belong, and that the way they think and act could have a racial character, even in the absence of underlying intent.

They take a **data- and evidence-oriented approach to racial inequity**. They define the cause of unequal outcomes in ways that make them observable, manageable, and measurable. They monitor outcomes by race and ethnicity, as well as their progress in meeting set goals and benchmarks.

Practitioners who take an equity-minded approach **reflect on the racial consequences of institutionalized practices**, question patterns of racial inequity in outcomes, and contextualize these inequities in light of historical exclusion, discrimination, and oppression. They resist the temptation to base their interpretation of inequities on racial stereotypes; for example, "Higher education is not a priority for Black students," or "Latinas only go to schools close to their families."

Finally, equity-mindedness requires that practitioners **exercise their agency** and assume responsibility for eliminating racial inequities in outcomes. Rather than viewing inequalities as unfortunate but expected outcomes, practitioners allow for the possibility that inequalities might be created or exacerbated by taken-for-granted practices and policies, inadequate knowledge, a lack of cultural know-how, or the absence of institutional support. Practitioner responsibility for racial equity means asking questions such as: "Why are our practices failing to assist racially minoritized students?" "In what ways might the policies of our institution contribute to the formation of unequal racial outcomes?" "How can I use the power of my position, my knowledge, my social networks, and other resources at my disposal to work on behalf of these students?" It also means **attending to relationships and interactions with students**, ensuring that racial microaggressions, implicit bias, and other forms of racism are minimized, and then addressed when they occur.

## EQUITY-MINDEDNESS IN ACTION

Across higher education, policy and practice solutions to equity gaps generally take the form of small-scale compensatory programs or broad-scale redesigns of existing structures and/or curricula. For example, opportunity programs offer services that help students who experience economic and academic barriers to education—many of them racially minoritized students—navigate and adjust to college. Redesigns of developmental education seek to compress the remedial sequence and

reduce the time college students—again, many of whom are racially minoritized—spend in pre-college work.

These are solutions that can potentially improve success and persistence rates, as well as increase the number of students who complete college in less time. At the Community College of Aurora, a CUE partner campus, redesigning the developmental math sequence resulted in a 21-percentage-point increase in the overall student success rate over a two-year period. However, when these data were disaggregated by race and ethnicity, white students emerged as the chief beneficiaries of this reform; equity gaps for Black and Latinx students actually increased (Figure 5).

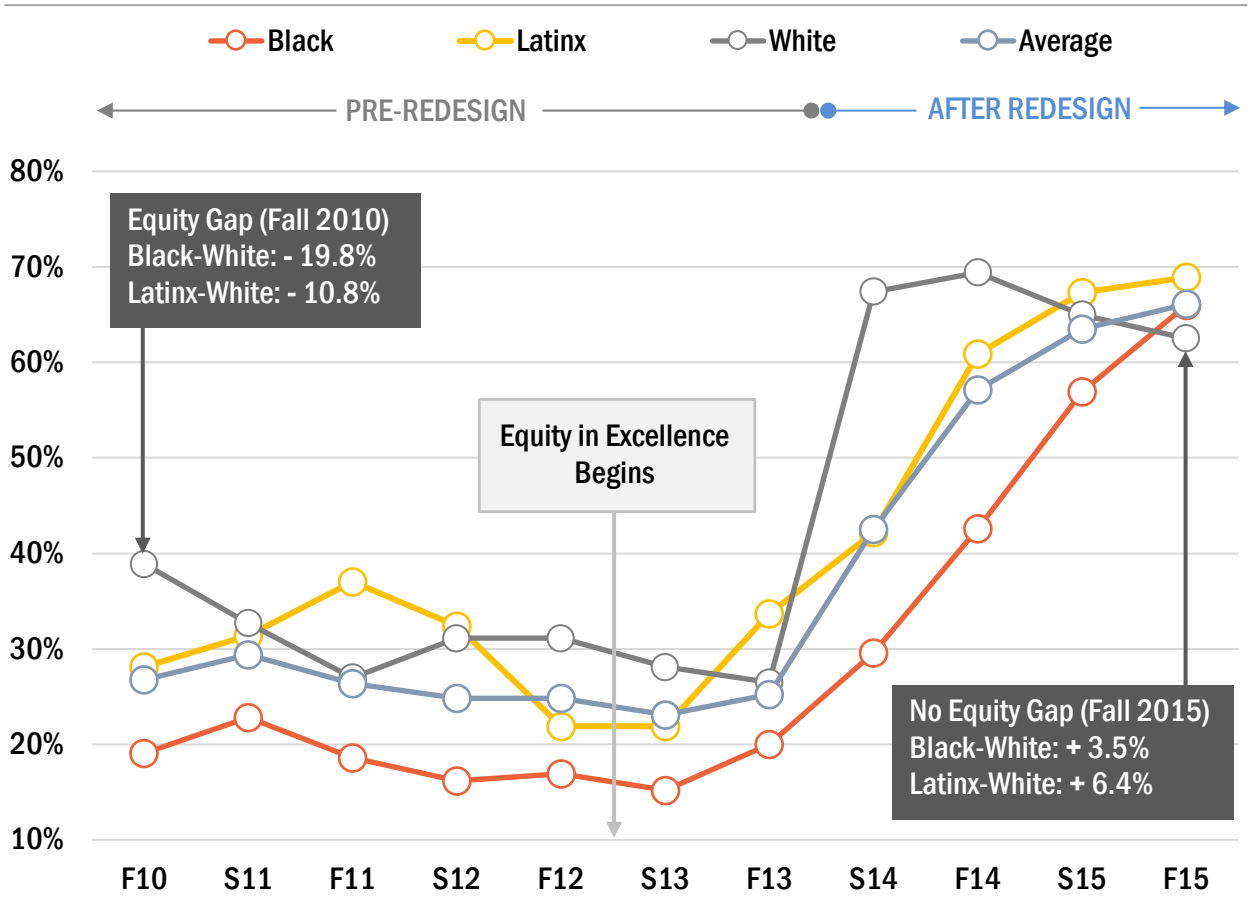



FIGURE 6. Success rates for students placed in lowest-level developmental math, by race and ethnicity, before curriculum redesign (Fall 2013 and prior), after redesign (Spring 2014), and after professional development on inquiry and equity-mindedness (Fall 2014 onward). Data source: CUE (http://cue.usc.edu/equity/impact/).

Through the *Equity in Excellence* project, we worked with math faculty at the Community College of Aurora to conduct inquiry into their practices and reconfigure them in an equity-minded way. (For an overview of the initiative, see Felix, Bensimon, Hanson, Gray, & Klingsmith, 2015.) In particular, CUE helped the faculty inquire into the culture of their classrooms through their course syllabi, how they structure the first day of class, and how they communicate expectations to their students.

The inquiry process exposed the faculty's assumptions, biases, and motivations. For example, one instructor stated:

> I came to see that many of my behaviors were white middle-class woman behaviors. While another person who looked like me might be able to understand that my suggestions voiced to the class as a whole were really individual mandates, those black and Hispanic males from 18 to 25 were hearing that it was fine with me if they chose to fail. As with T-shirts, one size does not fit all.

In fall 2014, the success rates for all students in developmental math increased again, but especially for Black and Latinx students. By fall 2015, the equity gaps between Black and white and Latinx and white students disappeared.

# **ACTIVITY:** FINDING YOUR EQUITY STANCE

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this activity is for practitioners to interrogate their beliefs about their college's role in addressing equity. Important to note is that this activity is *not* asking for beliefs about goals, but beliefs about actions. This activity is adapted from a protocol developed by the School Reform Initiative (http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org).

**WHO**

This activity is for a small group of practitioners (minimum 2), such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department.

**TIME COMMITMENT**

Up to one (1) hour

**MATERIALS**

Printed copies of "Equity Stances A" and "Equity Stances B," on separate sheets.

**STEP ONE: READ "EQUITY STANCES A"**

On your own, read Equity Stances A and determine which stance most closely matches your own. Feel free to jot down initial reactions and questions.

**STEP TWO: READ "EQUITY STANCES B"**

On your own, read Equity Stances B. Feel free to jot down reactions and questions.

**STEP THREE: PAIR-SHARE**

With a partner, share the stance you chose and discuss how you would negotiate the tough questions for your stance.

# EQUITY STANCES A

### STANCE A: EQUALITY OF INITIAL OPPORTUNITY

Colleges should guarantee that each student has the same chance to avail of, or compete for, a particular opportunity.

### STANCE B: EQUALIZATION OF OPPORTUNITY

Colleges should guarantee that each student deserves an academic program that allows her/him "to demonstrate performance that meets or exceeds a common high level within a reasonable length of time."

### STANCE C: CARE

Colleges should foster:

- Awareness of the communities from which students come, and concern for their overall welfare;
- Education as a relational practice; and
- The creation of non-discriminatory and non-oppressive educational settings that validate students' cultural experiences, convey their value to the campus community, and cultivate their personal and social development.

### STANCE D: EQUITY-MINDEDNESS

Colleges should:

- Use evidence (disaggregated outcomes data and/or inquiry findings);
- Attend to whether or not students from historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups are participating, feeling welcome, and succeeding;
- Focus on changing institutional policies, practices, and mindsets, not just those of students;
- Recognize and counteract structural racism; and
- Take action to eliminate inequities in outcomes.

# EQUITY STANCES B

**STANCE A: EQUALITY OF INITIAL OPPORTUNITY**

Colleges should guarantee that each student has the same chance to avail of, or compete for, a particular opportunity.

**EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE***:* Student grades or assessment scores are used as gatekeepers for access to certain academic programs or courses.

**TOUGH QUESTIONS FOR THOSE WHO TAKE THIS STANCE:**

- Doesn't this approach to equity help preserve the status quo, with some students being denied access to academic programs or courses in which they might perform well, based on their past performance and/or someone else's estimation of their future performance?
- Shouldn't access to academic programs and courses be open to all students who have a genuine interest in them, regardless of their past performance?

**STANCE B: EQUALIZATION OF OPPORTUNITY**

Colleges should guarantee that each student deserves an academic program that allows her/him "to demonstrate performance that meets or exceeds a common high level within a reasonable length of time."

**EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE:** College practices and resources are heavily weighted in favor of providing different and more programs and support for lower-performing students.

**TOUGH QUESTIONS FOR THOSE WHO TAKE THIS STANCE:**

- Doesn't heavily weighting practices and resources in favor of lower-performing students create an attitude of dependency within those students?
- Shouldn't practices and resource allocations be evenly weighted on what each and every student needs, rather than just on what each lower-performing student needs?
- Shouldn't students have access to these programs for an unlimited length of time?

**STANCE C: CARE**

Colleges should foster:

- Awareness of the communities from which students come and concern for their overall welfare;
- Education as a relational practice; and
- The creation of non-discriminatory and non-oppressive educational settings that validate students' cultural experiences, convey their value to the campus community, and cultivate their personal and social development.

**EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE:** Campus spaces physically reflect the culture and heritage of students of color. Practitioners proactively reach out to students of color and affirm their belonging on campus.

**TOUGH QUESTIONS FOR THOSE WHO TAKE THIS STANCE:**

- Doesn't this approach to equity focus too much on students' psycho-social development, and less on their academic performance and outcomes?
- Doesn't this approach to equity overtax college practitioners, potentially leading to burnout?

**STANCE D: EQUITY-MINDEDNESS**

Colleges should:

- Use evidence (disaggregated outcomes data and/or inquiry findings);
- Attend to whether or not students from historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups are participating, feeling welcome, and succeeding;
- Focus on changing institutional policies, practices, and mindsets, not just those of students;
- Recognize and counteract structural racism; and
- Take action to eliminate inequities in outcomes.

**EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE:** Colleges use data disaggregated by race and ethnicity to identify equity gaps and polices/practices that may be contributing to those gaps. Based on this evidence, colleges change their policies/practices and monitor the impact of these changes on closing racial/ethnic equity gaps.

**TOUGH QUESTIONS FOR THOSE WHO TAKE THIS STANCE:**

- Doesn't this approach to equity require colleges to remediate racial/ethnic inequities that stem from broader societal conditions?
- Does this approach to equity exclude white and most Asian students in favor of Black and Latinx students?

# **ACTIVITY:** CREATING YOUR EDUCTIONAL HISTORY MAP

**PURPOSE**

As a practitioner, it is important to reflect on your own educational journey in order to think critically about assumptions you've made, and to understand how your own experiences impact your teaching philosophy and practice. To accomplish this goal, there is a need to reflect on your educational trajectory during primary, secondary, and higher education, using the questions below as a guide. The goal of this activity is to allow you to think about your personal experiences and shed light on possible hardships, dilemmas, and opportunities that made a significant impact on who you are today.

**WHO**

This activity is for a small group of practitioners (minimum 2), such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department.

**TIME COMMITMENT**

Up to two (2) hours

**MATERIALS**

Educational history worksheet

**STEP ONE: BRAINSTORM**

Here are some questions to consider as you think about your educational history. Feel free to jot notes in the educational history worksheet provided.

Challenges

1. What difficulties did you face in primary, secondary, and higher education? How did you overcome these difficulties? Were they different as you progressed?
2. What obstacles and/or hardships did you experience/overcome in your life, your neighborhood, and/or your community?

Opportunities

1. In school, which key people helped facilitate your success? Why?
2. What activities, groups, or resources were available to you through your family, community, school, or other institutions?
3. What motivated you to take advantage of these opportunities?
4. How did you decide which educational opportunities to pursue?

Goals

1. What circumstances in your life helped you set an educational goal and objective for yourself?
2. What hopes, aspirations, dreams, or achievements did you strive for? Were you successful?

Support networks

1. What significant events in your home and on your job impacted your educational journey?
2. Who was your biggest supporter, and why? What did your supporter do that was the most beneficial to you?
3. Can you identify people or organizations that helped you along your educational path? What role did your family play?

**STEP TWO: PRESENTATION**

After you complete your brainstorm, please be prepared to present about your educational journey. Everyone will be presenting their narrative. The goal is to have a dialogue and discussion about the learning environment at your campus, and how you can better serve students and close the equity gap for Latinx and Black student populations.

Consider how to engage your peers when telling your story, without distracting the audience from your central message. Good luck, and we look forward to learning about your educational journey.

**STEP THREE: DEBRIEF**

Following the presentations, discuss the following questions:

1. In what ways—if any—has this activity helped develop your understanding of how your educational history influences the work you currently do?
2. What are the strengths of this activity?
3. What are the weaknesses of this activity?
4. How might you change this activity to suit different settings at your campus?
5. How might you use this activity with colleagues at your campus?

# WORKSHEET

## EDUCATIONAL HISTORY MAP

| | ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL | HIGH SCHOOL | HIGHER EDUCATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| OPPORTUNITIES | | | |
| CHALLENGES | | | |
| GOALS | | | |
| SUPPORT NETWORKS | | | |

# **ACTIVITY:** DEFINING CAMPUS EQUITY

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this activity is to identify how equity is defined on your campus by seeking *which* populations are focused on, *what* the goals of equity are, and *how* equity is approached in key institutional "artifacts"—documents that signal campus priorities and values (e.g., strategic plans, equity plans, information about campus support programs, faculty job descriptions, and more).

### WHO

This activity is for a small group of practitioners, such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department.

### TIME COMMITMENT

Up to three (3) hours

### MATERIALS

Selection of institutional artifacts

### STEP ONE: IDENTIFY KEY INSTITUTIONAL ARTIFACTS

Consider the following questions to help with the selection process:

1. Which artifacts on your campus communicate campus goals and priorities (e.g., strategic plans, equity plans)?
2. Which artifacts on your campus communicate leadership vision (e.g., presidential addresses, newsletters)?
3. Which artifacts on your campus communicate job responsibilities (e.g., job descriptions, department by-laws)?
4. Which artifacts on your campus communicate direct support for racially minoritized students (e.g., TRIO program brochures, student services plans)?

### STEP TWO: ASSIGN INSTITUTIONAL ARTIFACTS

Assign the selected institutional artifacts to participating practitioners. Consider whether individual practitioners will review one or two documents each, or whether practitioners will review all documents so findings can be compared.

**STEP THREE: REVIEW THE ARTIFACTS**

This activity includes two rounds of review. The first round of review asks you to identify **who** are named as recipients of institutional support or resources, **what** equity gaps or goals are targeted, and **how** the support or resources will be used to address the gaps or goals. The second round of review asks you to identify whether the who, what, and how are associated with a deficit-, diversity-, or equity-cognitive frame. Examples and worksheets to guide these rounds of review are provided below.

**STEP FOUR: DISCUSSION**

Once the review of artifacts is complete, consider the following discussion questions:

1. Think about the frames provided in this protocol (deficit, diversity, and equity). Which frame(s) is/are generally present in the artifact(s) you reviewed?

2. Now, think about the document(s) you reviewed from the point of view of students. Reading these artifacts, how would you feel about the campus and the practitioners who created them?

3. Stepping back: Do you feel the artifact(s) reviewed reflect what you believe the campus' approach to equity is? What are some issues that should be raised for campus discussions?

4. How can these artifacts (and the campus' focus in general) be modified? Identify possible changes that could be made to the documents that could further support equity for racially minoritized students.

# WORKSHEET

## DEFINING CAMPUS EQUITY

This worksheet supports the review of your institutional artifacts.

FIRST ROUND OF REVIEW

As you go through the artifacts, take note of the following:

(A) WHO: Which groups (racial/ethnic, gender, or other disproportionately served groups) are named to receive specific support or resources? Write the names of these groups in the first column. Be sure to note if no groups are named, as well (for example, if "all students" is used).

(B) COUNT: How many times is each student group named?

(C) WHAT: For the group(s) named (the "Who"), what does the document name as the "gap" to be addressed and/or "goal" that be achieved, if any?

(D) HOW: What support and/or resources will be used to achieve the "gap" and/or the "goal"?

Use the table on the next page to write down your findings.

# WORKSHEET

## DEFINING CAMPUS EQUITY

| A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|
| WHO | COUNT | WHAT | HOW |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

# WORKSHEET

## DEFINING CAMPUS EQUITY

SECOND ROUND OF REVIEW

To orient yourself to the second round of review, read pages 23-26 of CUE's Guide on Concepts and Tools for Racial Equity, which describes deficit-, diversity-, and equity-mindedness. Also review the table, "Identifying a deficit, diversity, or equity frame," which follows this worksheet.

Based on the findings from your first round of review, identify whether your campus has a deficit, diversity, or equity frame for the WHO, WHAT, and HOW. Note your responses below, and explain why you chose each frame.

1. The **WHO** named in your campus document has a _____ frame.

   ***What led you to select this frame?***

2. The **WHAT** listed in your campus document has a _____ frame.

   ***What led you to select this frame?***

3. The **HOW** listed in your campus document has a _____ frame.

   ***What led you to select this frame?***

# IDENTIFYING A DEFICIT, DIVERSITY OR EQUITY FRAME

| | Deficit-Minded | Diversity-Minded | Equity-Minded |
|---|---|---|---|
| **WHO** | Students are described as deficient and race/ethnicity is alluded to, but not named:<br>• Unprepared<br>• Developmental<br>• Urban<br>• Minorities | Diverse and equal representation is emphasized without any one group being specifically or intentionally targeted:<br>• All students<br>• Inclusive<br>• Diverse<br>• Multicultural | Specific racial/ethnic groups experiencing gaps in access or outcomes are specifically named and focused on:<br>• Latinx students<br>• Black students<br>• Native American students<br>• Pacific Islander students |
| **WHAT** | The "gap" pertains to the student (under-preparation and lack of motivation, for example), and the "goal" is to fix the student:<br>• Prepare<br>• Develop<br>• Remediate | The focus is solely on increasing access and representation, without mention of outcomes:<br>• Represent<br>• Equal<br>• Include<br>• Celebrate | The "gap" is found in the institution's preparation and response to historically underserved racial/ethnic groups' educational needs. The goal is to use disaggregated data to find gaps and fix the policies, practices, and mindsets that haven't been sufficient to ensure equity. |
| **HOW** | Support services that are an "add-on" to existing campus practices, are the primary intervention, and are intended to fix the student:<br>• Tutoring<br>• Summer programs<br>• Remediation<br>• Basic skills | Cultural traditions and important leaders from racially minoritized groups are celebrated, but are an "add-on" to existing campus practices:<br>• Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Dia de los Reyes Magos are listed on the campus calendar, but are absent from course curricula<br>• Black and Latinx student unions exist, but are under-resourced | The institution is the focus:<br>• All institutional data is disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and any gaps are named and targeted<br>• Faculty and staff are trained on culturally inclusive practices<br>• Faculty and staff are expected to critically examine their practices to determine if historically underserved racial/ethnic groups are equitably served |

# **ACTIVITY:** CREATING A CAMPUS EQUITY HISTORY MAP

### PURPOSE

It's important when embarking on a new racial equity effort to account for what was previously done to further equity, as well as the related matters of diversity and inclusion on your campus. It's equally important to understand how past and present efforts sit within the broader racial context of your campus, city, region, state, and country. To accomplish these goals, CUE recommends creating a history map using the worksheet provided.

### WHO

This activity is for a small group of practitioners, such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department, who can work together to co-construct the history map.

### TIME COMMITMENT

Up to two (2) hours

### MATERIALS

Equity history map questions; equity history map poster; sticky notes

### STEP ONE: GUIDING QUESTIONS

For this activity, consider the following questions about your college's past and current equity efforts, as well as the campus, city/region/state, and national racial context in which these efforts unfolded or are presently unfolding.

Answer these questions on your own, and record your answers on individual sticky notes. For example, each racial equity, diversity, and/or inclusion effort should be noted on one sticky note.

1. What racial equity, diversity, and/or inclusion efforts is your campus currently undertaking? What efforts has your campus undertaken in the past?

2. For each effort, consider:
   a. Which campus committees, groups, and/or individual practitioners have been/are instrumental to implementing these efforts? Write this answer on the same sticky note.

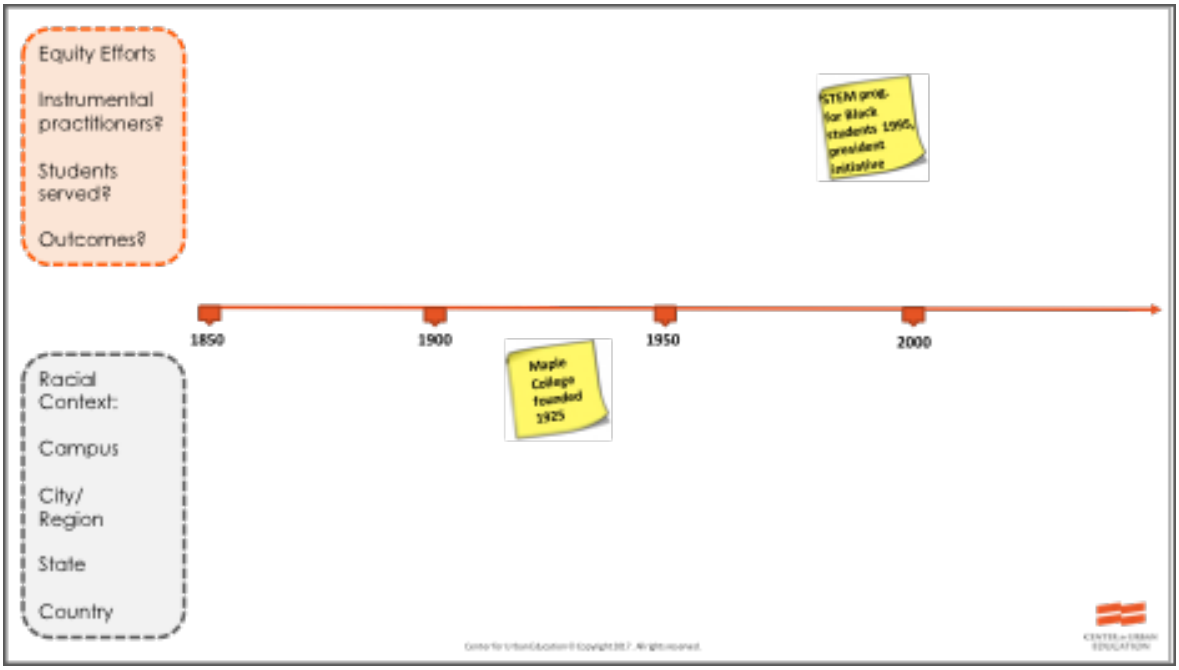
   b. Who was served by these efforts? Write this answer on the same sticky note.

3. What significant events have impacted equity, diversity, and race-related efforts on your campus? For each event, note whether it occurred at the campus, city/region, state, or national level. Write this answer on a separate sticky note.

**STEP TWO: COMPLETING THE POSTER**

Once everyone has completed Step One, turn to the poster. On a sticky note, write down when your college was founded and place it along the timeline.

Each person should then place their sticky notes on the poster. The equity-efforts sticky notes should be placed on the top half of the poster, while the racial-context sticky notes should be placed in the bottom half (see below). Don't worry about duplication—it helps illustrate where there is shared knowledge and consensus.




**STEP THREE: GROUP REFLECTION**

Once all the sticky notes have been placed on the poster, step back and consider the information presented. As a group, discuss the following questions:

1. To the best of our knowledge, does this poster fully reflect our college's equity story with respect to efforts undertaken and the contexts in which those efforts were introduced? What does this poster say about our college's approach to addressing racial equity?

2. What have been the outcomes and impacts of these efforts? In what ways are the impacts of these efforts consequential today? How have these efforts advanced racial equity on our campus overall?

3. Are there missed opportunities—that is, equity efforts that should have been undertaken but were not?

4. What is the "next frontier" for racial equity work on our campus?

# EQUITY HISTORY POSTER

Equity Efforts

Instrumental practitioners?

Students served?

Outcomes?

Racial Context:

Campus

City/ Region

State

Country

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CENTER for URBAN EDUCATION

# **ACTIVITY:** IDENTIFYING DEFICIT- AND EQUITY-MINDED STATEMENTS

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this activity is to enhance practitioner understanding of deficit- and equity-mindedness. Specifically, participants will identify statements as either deficit- or equity-minded, and reframe deficit-minded statements into equity-minded statements.

### WHO

This activity is for a small group of practitioners, such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department.

### TIME COMMITMENT

Up to one (1) hour

### MATERIALS

Sample deficit- and equity-minded statements; answer sheet

### STEP ONE: REVIEW THE STATEMENTS

Distribute the statements to participants, an equal number each. Review each statement and determine whether it is a deficit- or equity-minded statement.

### STEP TWO: GROUP DISCUSSION

Participants take turns reading one of their statements to the group and saying whether it is deficit- or equity-minded, and why. As a group, work together to reframe deficit-minded statements into equity-minded statements.

**STEP THREE: DEBRIEF**

Once all the statements have been discussed, consider the following questions:

1. In what ways—if any—has this activity helped develop your understanding of deficit-mindedness and equity-mindedness?
2. What are the strengths of this activity? What are the weaknesses of this activity?
3. How might you change this activity to suit different settings at your campus?
4. How might you use this activity with colleagues at your campus?

# STATEMENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. "You can teach students all you want, but if they're going to choose not to learn, not to show up for class, or not to follow the rules, they aren't going to succeed no matter what the teacher does." | 2. "There are fewer Black students who graduate after five years because they aren't educationally prepared in the same way others are. There is very little we can do." |
| 3. "Students of color oftentimes find themselves needing to quickly adapt not only to the culture of our institution but also to the expectations required of our courses, so it's important that we take them seriously." | 4. "We have to be more aware of how we talk to our students and make them feel inept, inferior, or stigmatized. Individuals have the capacity to learn at any time, but we tend to see students of color as underprepared." |
| 5. "I can lead a horse to water, but I can't make it drink." | 6. "They're just not prepared. There's nothing I can do about that." |
| 7. "What if we experimented with some new ways to do things based on what seems to be working—and then see if the gaps close?" | 8. "Shouldn't we really be talking about our teaching pedagogy rather than what students don't know?" |
| 9. "If we look at the data together, we'll be able to see specifically where students are struggling and where we can take specific steps to help them succeed." | 10. "We're all doing peer observations this term so we can better understand our classes—do you want to join us?" |
| 11. "Because we want to be well-informed about what's happening with our students, it's important to investigate any questions with data. We need to find out what's happening with this student group, no matter the size." | 12. "Why don't we look at our department data so we can better understand our students based on race and ethnicity?" |
| 13. "I can't help the Black students in my courses, because they just don't ask for help." | 14. "Students receive limited support about career options in their first and second semesters. This may impact their retention." |
| 15. "Students are not focused, and lack motivation." | 16. "Information on student support services is poorly disseminated in the classroom." |

# ANSWER SHEET

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. "You can teach students all you want, but if they're going to choose not to learn, not to show up for class, or not to follow the rules, they aren't going to succeed no matter what the teacher does."<br>DEFICIT | 2. "There are fewer Black students who graduate after five years because they aren't educationally prepared in the same way others are. There is very little that we can do."<br>DEFICIT |
| 3. "Students of color oftentimes find themselves needing to quickly adapt not only to the culture of our institution but also to the expectations required of our courses, so it's important that we take them seriously."<br>DEFICIT | 4. "We have to be more aware of how we talk to our students and make them feel inept, inferior, or stigmatized. Individuals have the capacity to learn at any time, but we tend to see students of color as underprepared."<br>DEFICIT |
| 5. "I can lead a horse to water, but I can't make it drink."<br>DEFICIT | 6. "They're just not prepared. There's nothing I can do about that."<br>DEFICIT |
| 7. "What if we experimented with some new ways to do things based on what seems to be working—and then see if the gaps close?"<br>EQUITY | 8. "Shouldn't we really be talking about our teaching pedagogy rather than what students don't know?"<br>EQUITY |
| 9. "If we look at the data together, we'll be able to see specifically where students are struggling, and where we can take specific steps to help them succeed."<br>EQUITY | 10. "We're all doing peer observations this term so we can better understand our classes—do you want to join us?"<br>EQUITY |
| 11. "Because we want to be well-informed about what's happening with our students, it's important to investigate any questions with data. We need to find out what's happening with this student group, no matter the size."<br>EQUITY | 12. "Why don't we look at our department data so we can better understand our students based on race and ethnicity?"<br>EQUITY |
| 13. "I can't help the Black students in my courses, because they just don't ask for help."<br>DEFICIT | 14. "Students receive limited support about career options in their first and second semesters. This may impact their retention."<br>EQUITY |
| 15. "Students are not focused, and lack motivation."<br>DEFICIT | 16. "Information on student support services is poorly disseminated in the classroom."<br>EQUITY |

# **ACTIVITY:** EQUITY QUADRANT

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this activity is to enhance practitioner understanding of equity-mindedness—in particular, the characteristics of race consciousness and practitioner/institutional responsibility. Practitioners are asked to categorize a set of statements in one of the four quadrants in CUE's Equity Quadrant Poster. These statements capture sentiments expressed by practitioners in racial equity work CUE has facilitated.

### WHO

This activity is for a small group of practitioners, such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department.

### TIME COMMITMENT

Up to one (1) hour

### MATERIALS

One sample statement sheet, cut where indicated; copies of sample statement sheet, one per participant; one equity quadrant poster

### STEP ONE: REVIEW THE SAMPLE STATEMENTS AND CREATE ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

On your own, review the sample statements and decide in which quadrant each statement belongs. Feel free to use sticky notes to jot down additional statements that come out of experiences on your campus.

### STEP TWO: COMPLETING THE POSTER

Once everyone has completed Step One, turn to the poster. As a group, consider each sample statement and discuss in which quadrant it should be placed. In cases of full agreement, place the sticky label with the statement in the appropriate quadrant; in cases of disagreement, discuss the options and, if possible, come to a consensus as to where the statement belongs.

For participants who created additional statements, present each statement to the group and determine which quadrant aligns best.

**STEP THREE: DEBRIEF**

Once all the sticky labels and additional statements have been placed on the poster, discuss the following questions:

1. In what ways—if any—has this activity helped develop your understanding of being race-conscious and being responsible for racial equity?
2. What are the strengths of this activity?
3. What are the weaknesses of this activity?
4. How might you change this activity to suit different settings at your campus?
5. How might you use this activity with colleagues at your campus?

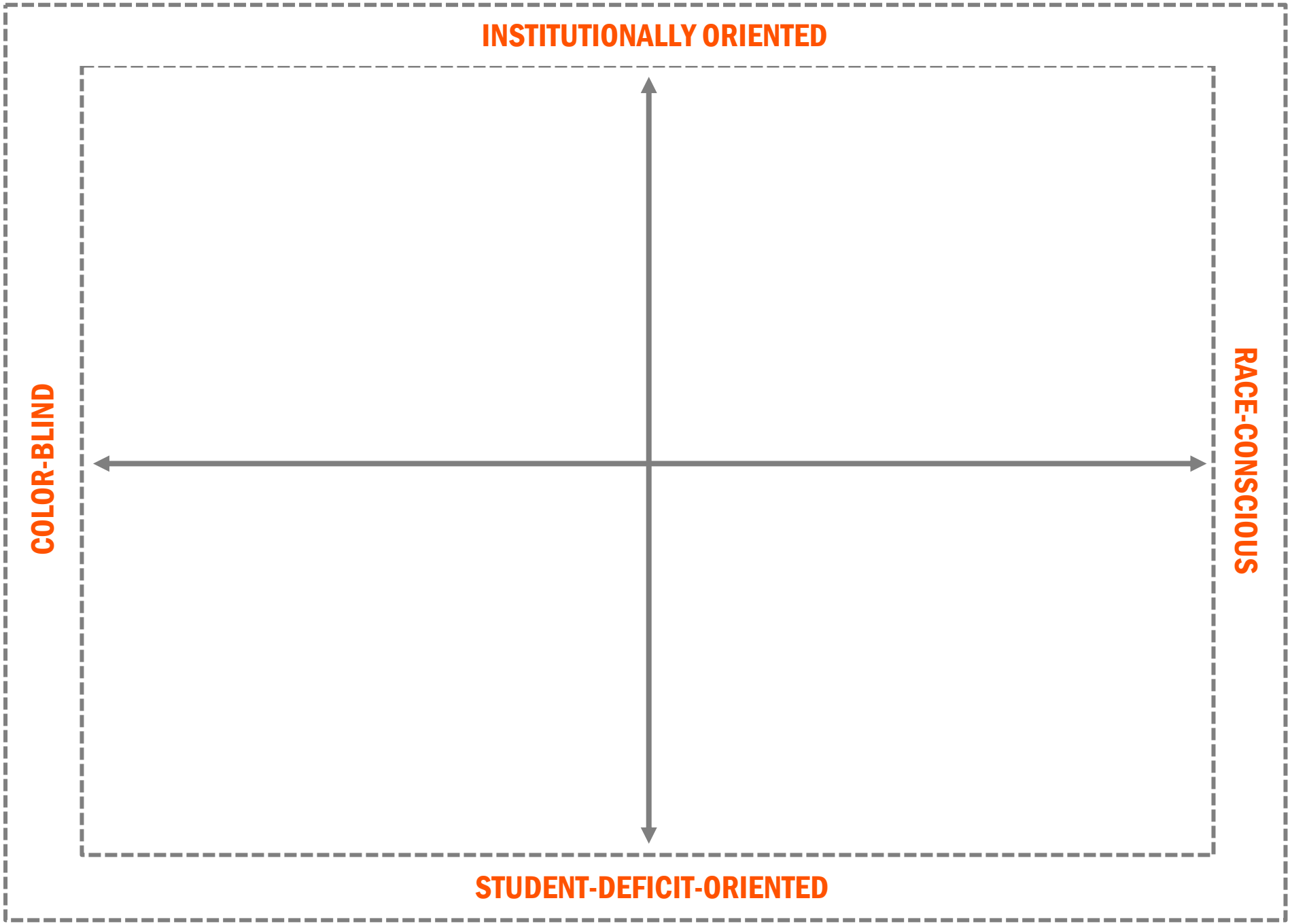
# SAMPLE STATEMENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| "You can teach students all you want, but if they're going to choose not to learn, not to show up for class, or not to follow the rules, they aren't going to succeed no matter what the teacher does." | "What if we experimented with some new ways to do things based on what seems to be working—and then see if the gaps close?" |
| "There are fewer Black students who graduate after five years because they aren't educationally prepared in the same way others are. There's very little that we can do." | "It's really an issue of pedagogy. If we improve our quality of instruction, all students will benefit." |
| "Students of color oftentimes find themselves needing to quickly adapt not only to the culture of our institution but also to the expectations required of our courses, so it's important that we take them seriously." | "If we look at the data together, we'll be able to see specifically where our Latinx students are struggling, and where we can take specific steps to help them succeed." |
| "We have to be more aware of how we talk to our students and make them feel inept, inferior, or stigmatized. Individuals have the capacity to learn at any time, but we tend to see students of color as underprepared." | "We're all doing peer observations this term so we can better understand our classes and how Black and Latinx students might be experiencing them—do you want to join us?" |
| "I can lead a horse to water, but I can't make it drink." | "They're just not prepared. There's nothing I can do about that." |
| "Why don't we look at our department data so we can better understand our students based on race and ethnicity?" | "I can't help the Black students in my courses, because they just don't ask for help." |
| "Because we want to be well-informed about what's happening with our students, it's important to investigate any questions with data. We need to find out what's happening with this student group, no matter the size." | "If you ask me, all students are unfocused and lack motivation. Race doesn't matter—it's just that our students are young and have a sense of entitlement. They think they should pass just for showing up. And they don't even show up all the time." |

# SAMPLE STATEMENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| "I understand the importance of data and the culture of evidence the dean wants to build, but I think we should be helping all students." | "I honestly don't look at my students—their heritage [is not] in my head, like 'Here's everybody. What can I do to keep you interested in what I'm doing or what I'm trying to teach?'" |
| "Many of our Latinx and Black students need remediation due to inadequate academic preparation, but they're not willing to put in the work necessary to be able to transfer. Some of them may need two or three years of remediation even to begin taking courses that are transferable, and this discourages many students." | "The transfer rates for Latinx students are lower because they have different goals from other students. They want to go out and work and make money to help their families, so they stop after a certificate. But Asian students are expected to get a degree, so they're more likely to transfer to a four-year institution." |
| "Well, we're surrounded by five military bases, and when you enter the military you—any racism that you've brought with you gets literally beaten out of you by the time you've gotten through Basic Training, and by the time you have a lot of people of other colors and ethnicity to save your life and depend on you, you stop noticing what color people are … so it just—people don't notice as much what color anybody else is, and it's a very multi-racial society here…" | |

# EQUITY QUADRANT



# **ACTIVITY:** THE "BOB" CARTOON: UNPACKING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

**PURPOSE**

When doing racial equity work, it's important to consider how institutionalized forms of racism are embedded in policies and practices that can lead to and perpetuate outcome inequities. Institutionalized racism, however, can be difficult to discern, particularly for those who benefit from its persistence. The "Bob" cartoon by Barry Deutsch (http://leftycartoons.com/) provocatively introduces some of the ways institutional racism works to disadvantage racially minoritized people in the United States. As such, it offers a platform for practitioners to discuss how institutional racism may be playing out on their campus.

**WHO**

This activity is for a small group of practitioners, such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department.

**TIME COMMITMENT**

Up to one (1) hour

**MATERIALS**

The Bob cartoon

**STEP ONE: READ THE BOB CARTOON**

**STEP TWO: GROUP DISCUSSION**

Consider the following questions:

1. According to the cartoon, how has racism benefited Bob?
2. What enables Bob to **not** see the privileges granted to him and his family?
3. What do you agree with in the cartoon? What do you disagree with?
4. What assumptions does the author of the cartoon hold?
5. Imagine a panel focused on education with the title, "How Bob fared in college." What would you draw? How does racism benefit Bob as a college student?

6. As a practitioner seeking to bring about racial equity, what steps would you take to address the benefits Bob accrues as a college student and, conversely, the penalties paid by racially minoritized students?

**STEP THREE: DEBRIEF**

Consider the following questions:

1. What are the strengths of this activity?
2. What are the weaknesses of this activity?
3. How might you change this activity to suit different settings at your campus?
4. How might you use this activity with colleagues at your campus?

# **ACTIVITY:** FACILITATING EQUITY-MINDED CONVERSATIONS AND NAVIGATING RESISTANCE TO RACE

### PURPOSE

When doing racial equity work, it's likely that deficit-minded explanations will be proposed for equity gaps, that the focus on race will be questioned, and/or that conversations will veer toward equity for all students. The purpose of this activity is to build the capacity of practitioners to facilitate race-conscious and equity-minded conversations, as well as to respond to resistance to focusing on race in equity work.

### WHO

This activity is for individual practitioners or a small group of practitioners, such as your campus' equity committee or an academic department.

### TIME COMMITMENT

Up to one (1) hour

### MATERIALS

Handouts on common responses to racial equity work and strategies for facilitation and navigating resistance; practice worksheet

### STEP ONE: REVIEW THE HANDOUTS ON COMMON RESPONSES TO RACIAL EQUITY WORK AND STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE EQUITY-MINDED CONVERSATIONS AND NAVIGATE RESISTANCE

### STEP TWO: PRACTICE THE STRATEGIES

Following the example provided on the worksheet, apply one strategy to one of the responses provided in the handout, or an example from your own experience.

**STEP THREE: GROUP DISCUSSION (IF ACTIVITY IS DONE IN A SMALL GROUP)**

Consider the following questions:

1. Can these strategies realistically be deployed on your campus? Why or why not? If not, what support would you need to implement these strategies?
2. What additional strategies could you employ to either facilitate equity-minded conversations or navigate resistance to race?
3. As practitioners seeking to bring about racial equity, what reading or resources will you need to consult to effectively respond to colleagues who on the fence, skeptical, or opposed to the focus on race?

**STEP FOUR: DEBRIEF**

Consider the following questions:

1. What are the strengths of this activity?
2. What are the weaknesses of this activity?
3. How might you change this activity to suit different settings at your campus?
4. How might you use this activity with colleagues at your campus?

## COMMON RESPONSES TO RACIAL EQUITY WORK

In CUE's work with college and universities, we routinely confront comments that at their heart question the racial focus of our approach to equity. Below, we present a few of the most common responses we and practitioners who advocate for racial equity have heard.

1. **Practitioners interpret suggestions about focusing on racial equity as accusations of racism.**
   "I actually had a colleague send an email to me when he read something I had said about equity-mindedness, and I assume, took it kind of personally to mean that he might be doing something discriminatory in his class, and he basically said, 'Well, I treat everybody the same, and that is my inclusive pedagogy.'"

2. **Practitioners prefer to examine other forms of diversity.**
   "We had our retreat in the summer and I presented on the [Equity] Scorecard, and there was a wide range of resistance to it. It went from, 'Shouldn't we really be talking about class rather than race,' to 'Shouldn't we be talking about diversity of thought rather than diversity of people?'"

3. **Practitioners blame students for poor outcomes.**
   "They're just not prepared. There's nothing I can do about that."
   "If only they try harder."
   "I can lead a horse to water, but I can't make it drink."

4. **Practitioners assume a focus on equity would result in lower standards.**
   "Some chairs had the reaction that, 'Well, you know, it's important to maintain standards, and we see ourselves as the best undergrad institution in the state and we need to uphold that tradition.'"

## STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE EQUITY-MINDED CONVERSATIONS AND NAVIGATE RESISTANCE

1. **Act as a mirror.**
   Reflect back to the speaker what you heard them say, and ask if this is what they intended to communicate.

2. **Address the needs of the practitioner who made the comment.**
   Consider what might be motivating the speaker's comment, and focus the conversation on that underlying factor.

3. **Ask, "Who benefits"?**
   Ask the speaker to think critically about who—in regard to race/ethnicity and educational opportunity—are being best served by a particular way of thinking, policy, practice, etc.

4. **Re-center race-consciousness.**
   Call attention to the importance of being race-conscious in equity work, especially when conversations become race-neutral and when equity does not seem to be central to practitioners' actions and decision-making.

5. **Name practices that undermine equity.**
   Explicitly point out race- or equity-blind approaches and concepts that, if left unchallenged, will lead to inequitable outcomes.

6. **Use data to demonstrate that racial inequity must be addressed.**
   Reference course-, department-, and/or campus-level data showing inequities in outcomes for racially minoritized students.

7. **Agree to hold each other accountable.**
   Ask practitioners to speak up and name potential equity issues as they arise, and to find alternatives.

# WORKSHEET

## FACILITATING EQUITY-MINDED CONVERSATIONS AND NAVIGATING RESISTANCE TO RACE

| COMMENT | STRATEGY | POSSIBLE RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| EXAMPLE: "Well, you know, it's important to maintain standards, and we see ourselves as the best undergrad institution in the state and we need to uphold that tradition." | Ask, "Who benefits?" | "I agree with you that we need to maintain high standards. But we also need to ask ourselves what those standards are, what we mean by 'the best,' and whether these uninterrogated notions serve our white students while undermining the success of our Black and Latinx students." |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

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# **APPENDIX A:** THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES OF RACIAL INEQUITY IN THE UNITED STATES

BY CHERYL D. CHING & ROMÁN LIERA, CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION

In CUE's work we encounter tensions about the relevance of societal-level forms of racism in student experiences at the local level. For example, some educational practitioners ask, "How do historical events inform the improvement of classroom practices?" Educational practitioners' questions about the interdependence of national and local levels seem to be connected to their perceptions about the relationship between present and past forms of racism. Neoliberal ideals that race no longer plays a role in student experiences propel educational practitioners to talk about race without racism (Harper, 2012; Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015). That is, without considering the diverse yet similar historical trajectories of communities of color in the U.S., educational practitioners run the risk of engaging in race talk without considering the role of their own racial biases that maintain racial inequities in student outcomes.

## THE TRAJECTORY OF INEQUITY FOR AFRICAN BLACKS

Unlike the stories of other communities of color, the stories of most Blacks in the U.S. are rooted in slavery. Similar to other communities of color, the familial legacies and cultural knowledge of Blacks were erased. After slavery was legally abolished, Blacks continued to experience systemic forms of racism that excluded them from academic opportunities (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). From racially segregated schools to mass incarceration, Blacks continue to experience societal barriers that negatively impact their participation in higher education.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the 2014-2015 academic year, Blacks made up 13.9% of total enrollments in higher education (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2016). In particular, they made up 10.5% of all students who earned degrees from four-year institutions, and 14.4% of all students who earned degrees from two-year institutions (Ginder et al., 2016).

**College-educated Blacks continue to face discrimination.** According to a Pew Research Center survey, Blacks who have attended college are more likely than those without any college experience to report being racially discriminated against (Anderson, 2016) (Figure 1).

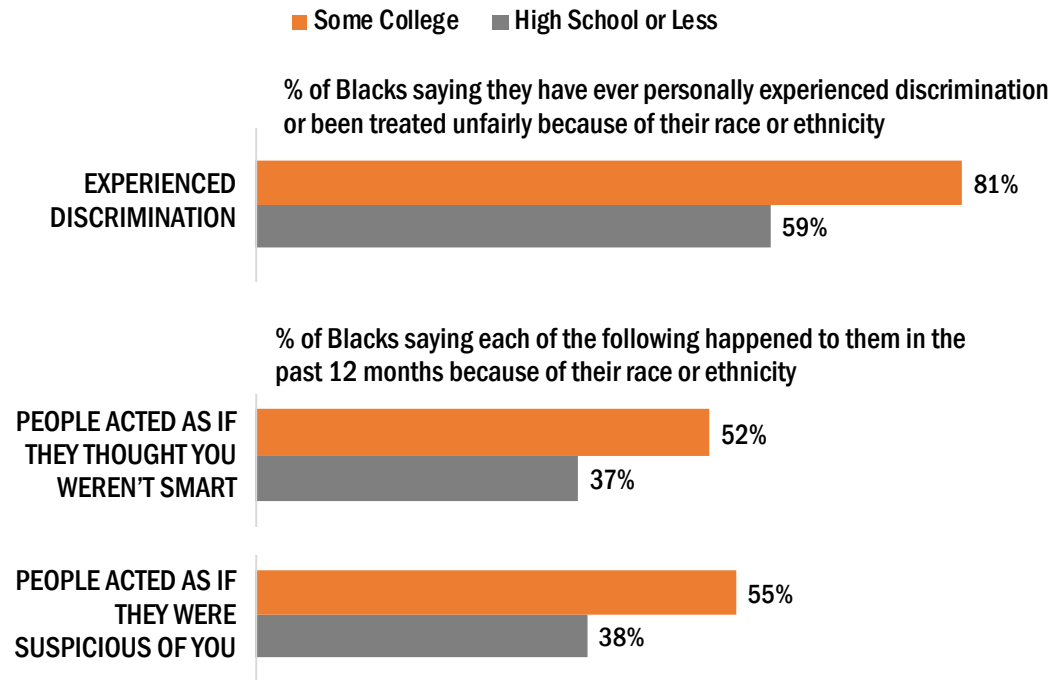


FIGURE 1. College-educated Blacks who report facing acts of racial discrimination. Note: Blacks includes only non-Latinx. Adapted from Anderson (2016). Data source: Pew Research Center Survey of American adults conducted between February 29 and May 8, 2016.

These findings support literature that report Black students experience college campuses as more racially hostile than white students (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008). Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) collected data from 36 Black students through focus groups. They found that this group of students were stereotyped and placed under increased surveillance by community and local policing tactics, on and off campus. Black students are at higher risk of experiencing racial discrimination in academic, social, and public spaces on campus (Smith et al., 2007). For example, one student said he was racially profiled when studying for an exam in the physics lab on a Sunday:

> "One summer I was taking a physics course—I used to be in engineering. I went to the physics lab on Sunday to study on the computers. Our assignments were on a Plato program. A university officer came into the computer lab and asked for my ID. I asked him why. He stated that someone called and reported a suspicious-looking person entering the building... I laughed and said, 'Oh really?' I told him that I'm a student studying for an exam and I wouldn't even be able to log onto the computer if I wasn't enrolled in the class. He [the campus police officer] again asked for my ID. At this point I handed him my student ID. Wait... there's more. The officer then asked, 'Do you have another piece of ID?'" (Smith et al., 2007, p. 563)

These everyday experiences with racial discrimination are psychologically, emotionally, and physiologically detrimental to Black students' well-being (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Anderson, 2016). For educators to implement practices and policies that could improve the educational experiences of Black students, they need to come to a conclusion about the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992) in U.S. institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Godsil et al., 2014) that continue to have adverse impact on students of color.

## THE TRAJECTORY OF INEQUITY FOR ASIANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

As a group, Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students occupy an interesting position in higher education generally, and in equity work specifically. Given that the AAPI population is projected to grow rapidly in the coming decades, AAPIs cannot be ignored in research, policy, and practice. AAPIs currently make up 5.6% of the American population, and are projected to grow by 134% over the next four decades, making them the fastest-growing racial/ethnic group in the country (Nguyen, Nguyen, Teranishi, & Hune, 2015; Nguyen, Nguyen, Chan, & Teranishi, 2016). In California, the AAPI population is even higher at 13.4%; they were the fastest-growing group between 2000 and 2010 (Nguyen, Nguyen, Chan, & Teranishi, 2016) and are projected to be the second-fastest growing population behind Latinx over the next five decades (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2015).

**The "model minority" stereotype masks educational inequities among AAPI students.** "Asian Americans" have been stereotypically construed as a "model minority," comprised of academically high-achieving and motivated students who come from homes where education is valued and prioritized. This image, however positive it may seem, is problematic. Based on generalizations about certain East Asian and South Asian students, it masks the challenges the 48 ethnic groups that are considered "AAPI" face (Museus, 2014; Nguyen, Nguyen, Teranishi, & Hune, 2015; Teranishi, 2007).

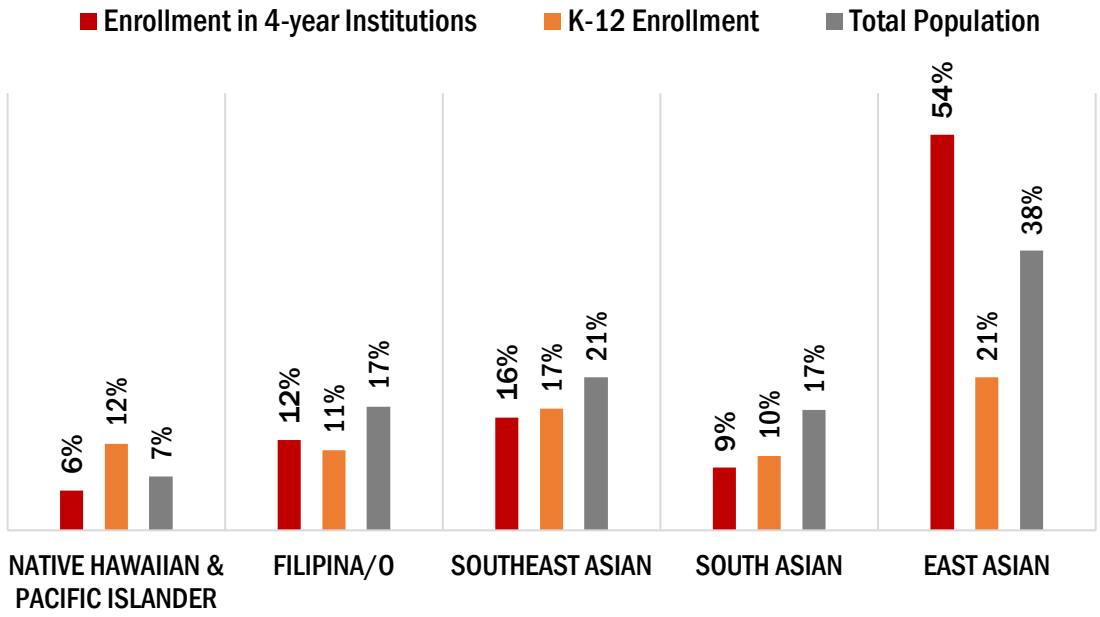


FIGURE 2. Proportional representation in enrollment in K-12 schools and four-year postsecondary institutions in Washington state (2013). Adapted from Nguyen, Nguyen, Teranishi, & Hune (2015). Data source: U.S. Census American Community Survey one-year estimates, 2013; ERDC postsecondary enrollment data, 2013.

Consequently, AAPIs are "highly visible" as a "successful" racial/ethnic group, but "invisible" and overlooked in educational research and policy despite inequities within the group (Teranishi, 2007, Museus & Kiang, 2009). AAPIs are rarely considered a "minority" population that needs attention, support, and resources, when considered alongside Black and Latinx populations (although recent efforts are shifting this perception). Using the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS), Museus, Ledesma,

and Parker (2015) show wide disparities in (K-12) educational attainment by ethnicity on the whole. Over 95% of AAPIs have earned a high school diploma; however, when disaggregated the data show that 71% of Bhutanese, 53% of Burmese, 36% of Tibetan, 35.5% of Cambodian, and 29% of Laotian students do not have a high school diploma.

Using data from Washington state, Nguyen, Nguyen, Teranishi, and Hune (2015) show disparities in college enrollment by major AAPI groups (Figure 2). The same goes for baccalaureate degree attainment (Figure 3).

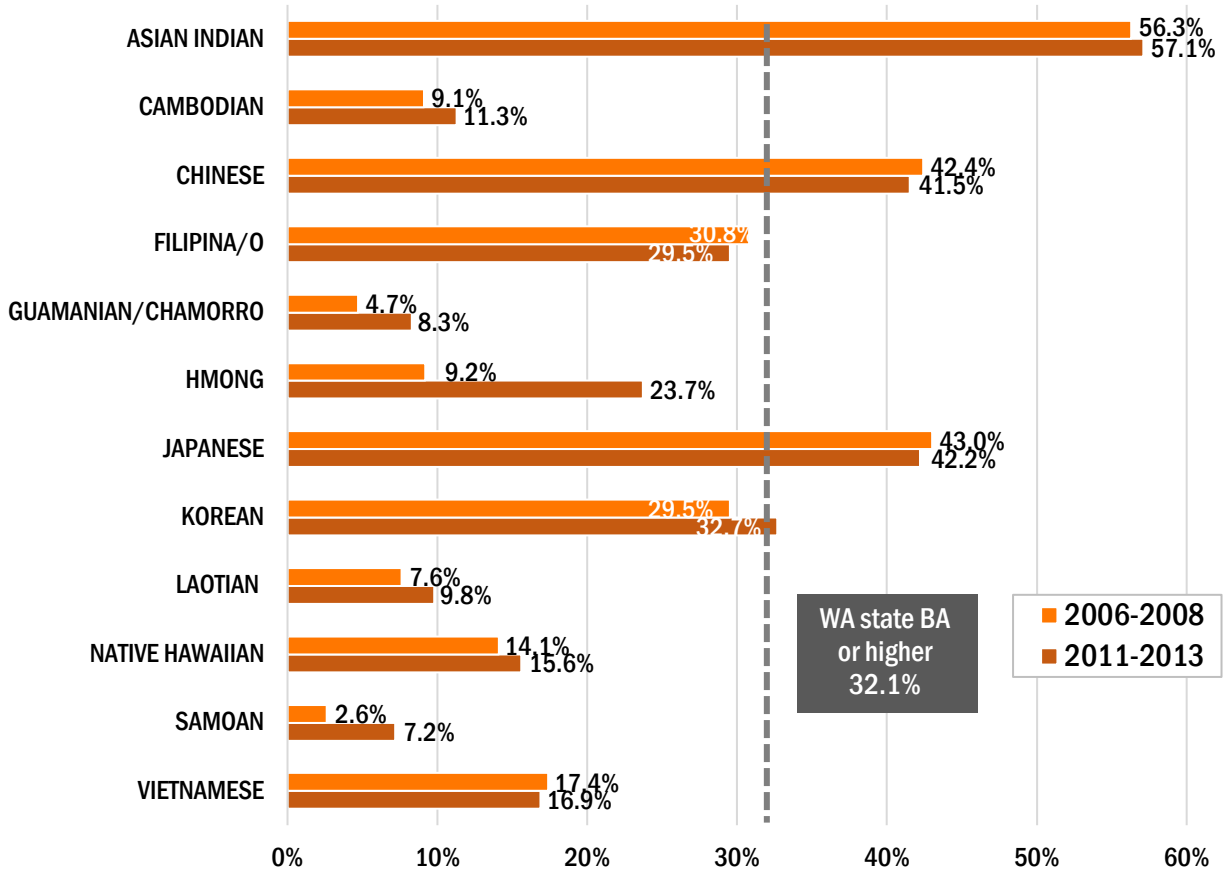


FIGURE 3. Bachelor's degree attainment for Asian and Pacific Islander students by ethnicity, 2006-2008 and 2011-2013. Institutions in Washington state. Adapted from Nguyen, Nguyen, Teranishi, & Hune (2015). Data source: U.S. Census American Community Survey three-year estimates, 2006-2008 and 2011-2013.

In the California Community Colleges, six-year completion rates vary greatly by ethnicity, with a more than 40-percentage-point gap between Chinese students (73%) and Samoans (29%) (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2015).

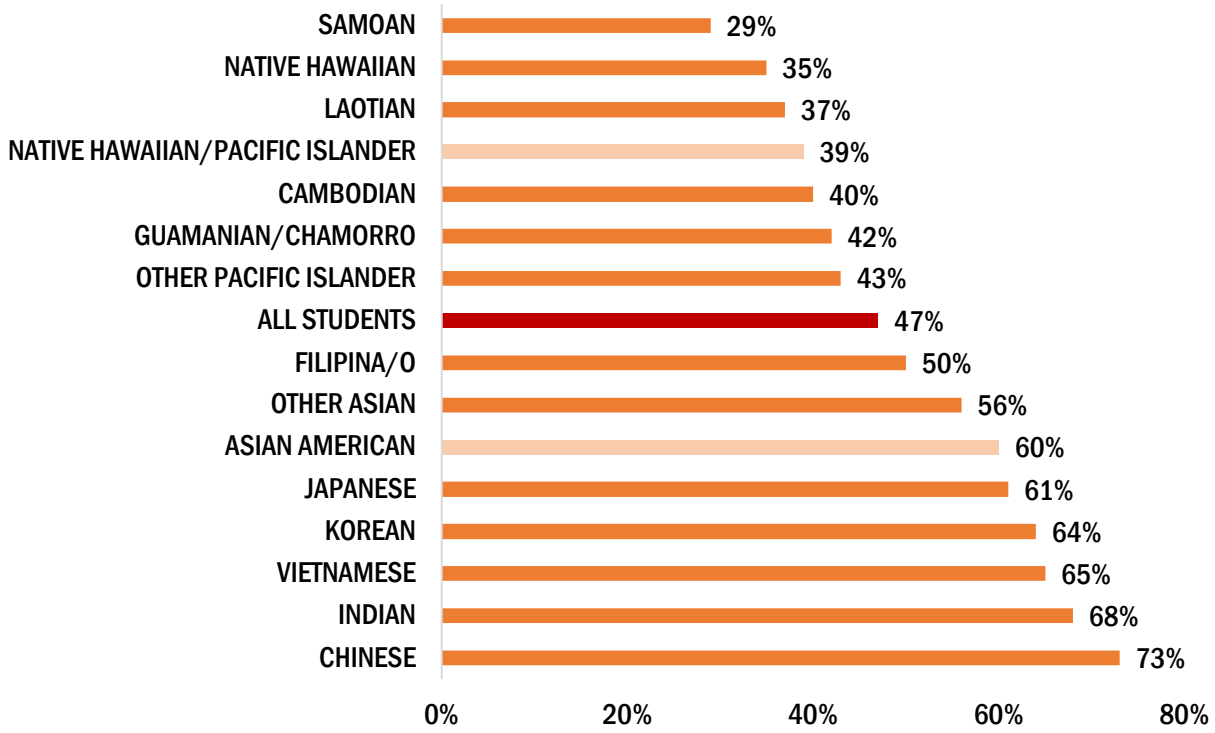


FIGURE 4. Six-year completion rates for Asian and Pacific Islander students by ethnicity; cohort entering in 2007-08. Adapted from The Campaign for College Opportunity (2015). Note: Completion refers to students who attained a certificate or associate's degree, or who met transfer requirements. Cohort is defined as first-time students with a minimum of six units and who attempted a math or English course during the first three years of enrollment. Data source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

**Inequities within the AAPI population stem partly from a history of migration.** Historians often characterize the Asian American story as one of immigration to the United States (e.g., Takaki, 1989). They generally agree that Asians arrived in two waves, the first from the late-1800s to the mid-1900s, and the second after 1965. The first wave was composed mostly of Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans, and South Asian Indians. The

second wave started with the Immigration Act of 1965, which opened the United States to a more heterogeneous immigrant population in terms of ethnicity, class, education level, language, culture, religion, and homeland. For the most part, those who came in the first wave and through the Immigration Act were economic migrants seeking work and a better life in America. Within the second wave, however, also came refugees fleeing politically unstable and repressive regimes, particularly in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

This history has implications for AAPI students' educational opportunities and outcomes. *Who* AAPIs are, and *when* and *why* they came to the United States, have implications for their educational opportunities and likelihood of enrolling in and completing college, particularly for those who arrived during the second wave (Teranishi, 2004). Some came out of poverty, some from the middle class, some from wealthy families. Some left as students or professionals (e.g., teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, accountants) from relatively stable countries, others from places of war and violence where staying was not an option. Some have come more recently and are foreign-born; others arrived earlier and are second-generation Americans. Some have integrated and assimilated into the United States; others have established so-called "enclave" communities that contribute to the pattern of residential segregation across many American communities. Research tells us that economic, language, and generational status are associated with educational outcomes.

Teranishi (2004) suggests that the issue of residential segregation is an especially important factor to consider as it affects "the social contexts of family, community, and school," "compounding [the] economic, educational, and cultural barriers" for students. His study of Vietnamese and Hmong students highlights this point. Although both are more recent in their arrival, both are from politically unstable areas, and both are more likely to come from and continue to live in poverty, focus groups with Vietnamese and Hmong high school students in California nonetheless brought into high relief distinct differences in their college aspirations. Vietnamese students were more likely to be encouraged to attend selective institutions, Hmong students community college. Vietnamese students were also more likely to have siblings and other relatives already in college, Hmong students not. Vietnamese students were more likely to have

college-educated parents, relative to Hmong students. Experiencing more poverty, Hmong students were more likely to attend college closer to home so they could still contribute financially to their families.

### THE TRAJECTORY OF INEQUITY FOR LATINX

Latinx make up 17% of the U.S. population, and are projected to represent more than one-third of the U.S. population under the age of 5 by 2050 (Santiago, 2015). Forty-five percent of Latinx undergraduate students attend community colleges, in comparison to 34% of all undergraduates (HACU, 2016). In particular, Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) enroll 62% of Latinx undergraduates. However, only 23% of Latinx over the age of 25 have earned an associate's degree or higher, and they have the lowest completion rates among any racial and ethnic group (Valle, 2016). Fifty-four percent of Latinx undergraduate students are the first in their families to attend college, and 41% receive Pell Grants. Moreover, 62% of Latinx undergraduates work while enrolled as full-time students (Valle, 2016). Given that Latinx are projected to represent a high proportion of the U.S. population in the coming years, it is imperative to address the equity gaps Latinx students experience in higher education success indicators.

**Latinx represents a growing but diverse ethnic group.** The history of Latinx in the U.S. is as diverse as their cultures, language dialects, and phenotypes. For different reasons, some groups of Latinx are afforded more educational opportunities and are more academically successful than other Latinx groups. Although differences exist among the diverse subgroups of Latinx, the majority of this ethnic group's members have a history with European colonialization; in particular, most of the pan-ethnic group shares a common culture that is rooted in the Spanish language and Catholic religion (Almaguer, 2012). However, as a group Latinx are racially diverse, with African, Indigenous, and European ancestry. Unlike other racially oppressed groups, the U.S. federal government has over time both classified and declassified Latinx as whites (Almaguer, 2012).

The largest subgroup of Latinx is of Mexican origin. Before the U.S.-Mexico war, the Southwest was populated by Mexicans and Indigenous groups (Glenn, 2002). After the war, Mexicans in the Southwest were granted U.S. citizenship and deemed an honorary white population

(Almaguer, 2012). Although Mexicans in the Southwest were granted U.S. citizenship, they lost their land and most of their rights to white settlers. In contrast, Mexican immigrants are not considered white and oftentimes do not have citizenship, which shapes their own and their children's educational opportunities. Similarly, for political reasons Cuban immigrants who fled Cuba once Fulgencio Batista's regime ended academically benefited from the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act that put them on a fast track for U.S. citizenship (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rusin, Zong, & Batalova, 2015). Unlike their Cuban counterparts in the 1960s, Guatemalan immigrants fleeing Guatemala's civil war did not receive the same citizenship opportunities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

For these reasons, it is imperative to consider the type of Latinx students attending a specific campus, and that the experiences of Mexican students might not be the same as the experiences of Guatemalan students. The figure below shows that in 2013 25% of Cubans over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to only 10% of Mexicans over the age of 25. Considering the diverse historical and political experiences of Latinx, it is imperative to understand the differences in educational outcomes among Latinx groups.

**For Latinx students, "educacion" means more than academic learning.**
In her seminal book *Subtractive Schooling*, Angela Valenzuela defined *educacion* as a shared cultural understanding of how one should live. That is, for Latinx communities education also means respect, responsibility, and solidarity (Valenzuela, 1999). Rooted in relationships, *educacion* is the foundation for all forms of learning. Latinx students who do not feel educators authentically care for their well-being are less likely to form trusting relationships with educators. Although Latinx have diverse cultural norms and beliefs, educators cognizant that most Latinx value caring and trusting relationships could academically engage Latinx students at higher levels.

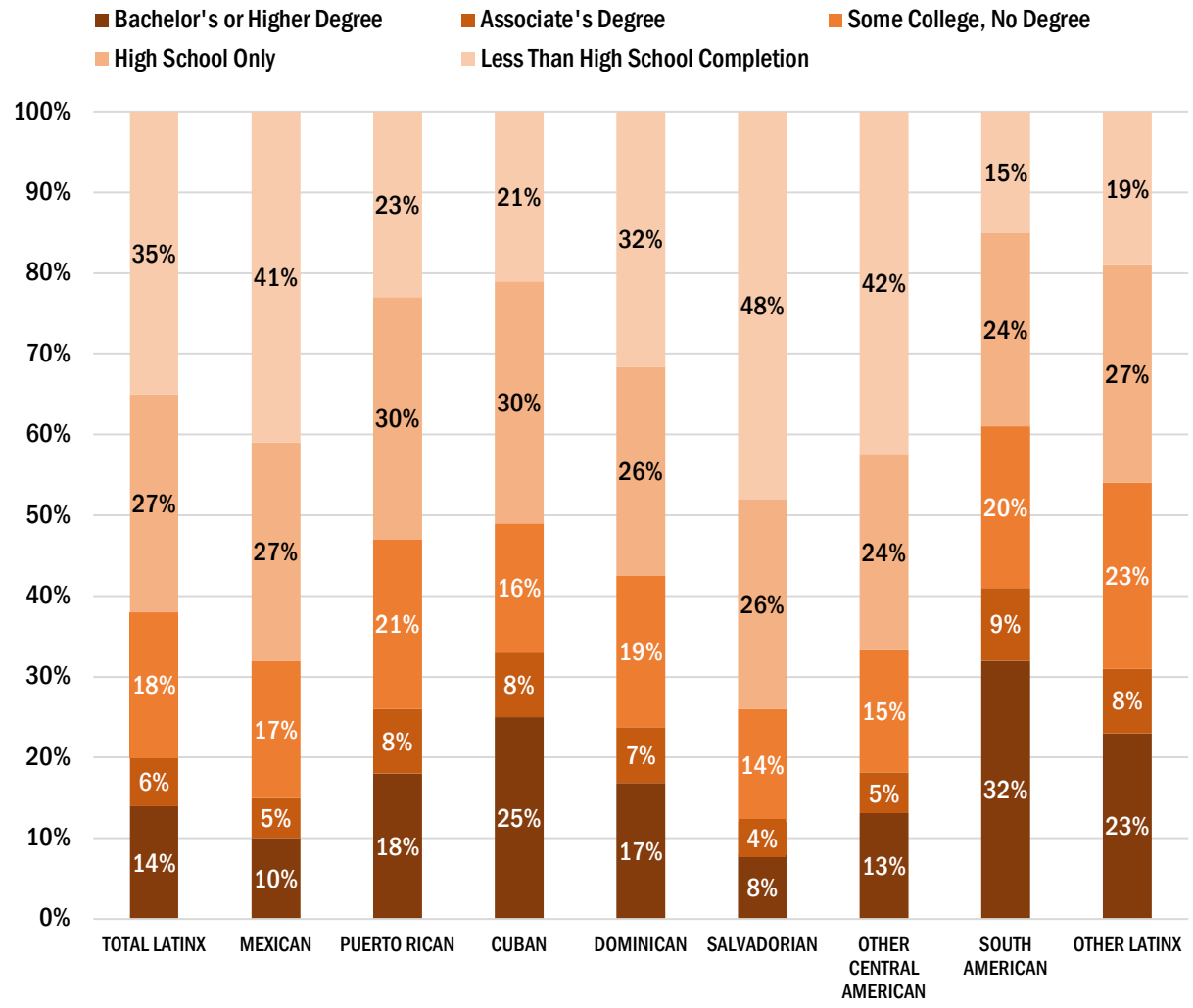


FIGURE 5. Percentage distribution of the educational attainment of Latinx age 25 or older by subgroup, 2013. Note: High school completion includes diploma recipients and alternative credentials (e.g., GED). Adapted from NCES *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*. Data source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, and American Community Survey 2013.

## THE TRAJECTORY OF INEQUITY FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

Native Americans comprise the smallest racial/ethnic student group in higher education, accounting for roughly 1% of the entire college population (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). For this reason, it is perhaps no surprise that when confronted with equity gaps for Native American students, they are not often prioritized because of their relatively small numbers. Native Americans, however, face some of the greatest

inequities in access, persistence, and completion outcomes. Only 26% of 18- to 24-year-old Native Americans enroll in college, as compared to a 37% all-student average. Close to 46% attend two-year schools (mostly tribal colleges), a higher proportion than the all-student average of 41%, thus making them overrepresented in open-access institutions. Their six-year graduation rates are the lowest at 37%; white students graduate at a rate of 57%, and AAPIs at a rate of 63%.

In California, 75% of Native American students do not complete the entrance requirements for the UC and CSU systems, and data from fall 2011 to fall 2012 shows that their enrollment is declining at the community colleges (by 16%) and CSUs (by 61%), while increasing at the UCs (by 67%) (Proudfit & Gregor, 2014).

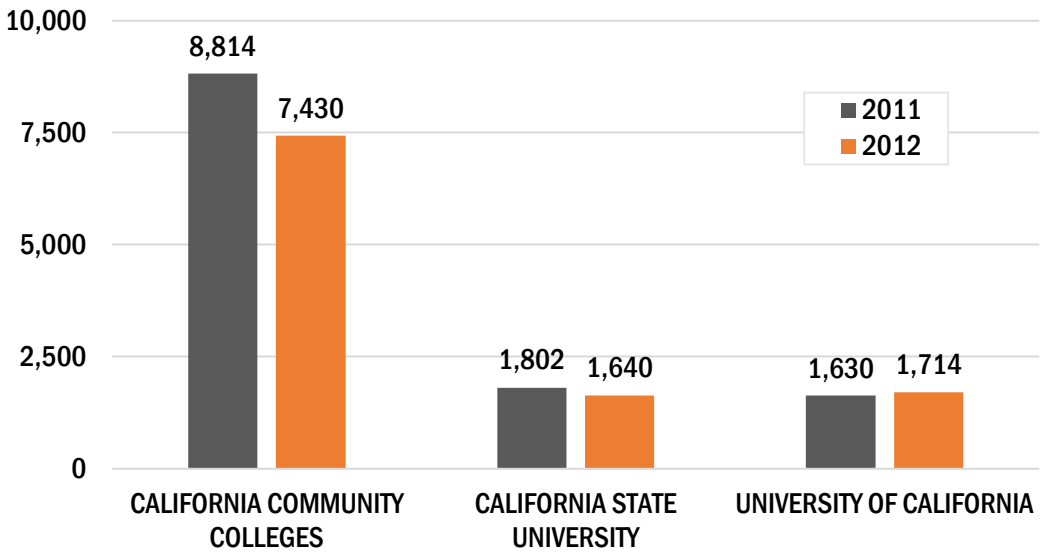


FIGURE 6. Native American and Alaskan Native enrollment in public higher education in California, by system (2011-2012). Adapted from Proudfit and Gregor (2014). Data source: University of California, California State University, and California Community Colleges.

**A colonization and missionary project.** The history of Native Americans in higher education is one of colonization, a "civilizing" project undertaken by white European Americans to Christianize and assimilate "savage"

natives (Wright & Tierney, 1991). In the mid-1600s, newly established colleges and universities (e.g., Harvard, Dartmouth, The College of William and Mary, The College of New Jersey—now Princeton) used charitable money from England and Scotland to house and educate Native American students. These colonizing experiments were largely unsuccessful: Parents declined to send their children to places with customs that differed from their own; for some who enrolled, monies ran out and forced their departure; others died from diseases to which they had no immunity.

**Assimilation into white America and rejection of tribal culture contributes to academic success (at a price) and failure, then and now.** The federal government's involvement in educating Native American students increased in the 19th century. The government supported the construction of off-reservation boarding schools, which took students away from their tribes and enforced strict disciplinary tactics and a Protestant work ethic (Wright & Tierney, 1991). (This coincided with tribes such as the Cherokee and Choctaw establishing and running boarding schools on their reservations.) Wright and Tierney (1991) observe that these boarding schools "were designed to remake their Indian charges in the image of the white man," one who was vocationally trained in "agricultural, industrial, and domestic arts—*not* higher academic study" (p. 14; italics in original). In contrast to the missionary-funded Native American students who had access to the same curriculum as white students, those attending the federal boarding schools were destined for occupations as farmers, mechanics, or housewives.

The few Native American students who continued to higher education institutions understood that they had to exchange tribal culture for "civilization." Of one such student who graduated from Dartmouth and continued to Boston University for a medical degree in the early 1900s, Wright and Tierney (1991) write:

> Eastman was keenly aware that his academic success depended on his acceptance of American civilization and the rejection of his own traditional culture. "I renounced finally my bow and arrow for the spade and the pen," he wrote in his memoirs. "I took off my soft moccasins and put on the heavy and clumsy but durable shoes. Every

> day of my life I put into use every English word that I knew, and for the first time permitted myself to think and act as a white man." (p. 14-17)

As the federal government got out of the boarding school business, it shifted resources toward scholarships for Native American students to attend postsecondary institutions, particularly in the post-World War II era (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). Notable as the increases in enrollment in the 1950s and 1960s were, they accounted for only 1% of the entire indigenous population in the country. Furthermore, even while more Native American students were enrolling in college, "little had changed with regard to the assimilationist aspect of mainstream, white-dominated American education" as "they were still expected to leave their tribal cultures at home, because schools, after all, were designed to 'kill the Indian and save the man'" (p. 8).

Research suggests that this longstanding push for assimilation into white culture has resulted in schisms that negatively impact the outcomes of Native American students. Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, and Solyom's (2012) review of literature shows how these incompatibilities occur in different areas, from the stark differences between students' home culture (e.g., focus on community, family, and cooperation) and that of predominately white institutions (e.g., focus on individuals and competition), to ontological and epistemological differences in what worldviews and knowledge are considered valid. These incongruities contribute to the "cultural dissonance" (p. 62) that Native American students can feel in college and that, in turn, can contribute to their departure.

Guillory and Wolverton's (2008) interviews with Native American students at three predominantly white research universities reveals how these schisms also appear in what students identify as keys to their persistence (family, tribal community support) versus what the institutions believe are needed to ensure students' success (financial factors, appealing academic programs). This suggests that predominantly white colleges and universities continue to have very little grasp of what is needed to achieve equitable outcomes for Native American students.

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CENTER for URBAN EDUCATION

USC Rossier School of Education

# STEP UP & LEAD FOR *Equity*

## What Higher Education Can Do to Reverse Our Deepening Divides

AAC&U
SINCE 1915

"Given our union in a democracy committed to liberty, opportunity, and justice for all, the equity divides that deface our educational system raise questions both at home and abroad about the meaning and integrity of America's democratic promise . . . . The deep educational divides that reflect and perpetuate inequality will take concerted, systemic, transforming action to overcome."

— Carol Geary Schneider

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# Land of Opportunity . . . for Whom?

For generations, the United States has promised universal access to opportunity. It is part of our history and the engine of our economic and civic prosperity. But opportunity in America continues to be disproportionately distributed.

The effects of this imbalance are evident. We have persistent gaps in education, income, and wealth, and these gaps are widening as our nation becomes more diverse. As a result, the middle class is shrinking, and the fastest-growing segments of our population are the least likely to have the opportunities they need to succeed.

Expanding access to quality education is key to making opportunity real for all. It is key to closing America's deepening divides, strengthening the middle class, and ensuring our nation's vitality. Yet at all levels of U.S. education, there are entrenched practices that reinforce inequities—and that lead to vastly different outcomes for low-income students and for students of color. We are failing the very students who must become our future leaders.

Higher education can no longer leave this issue unattended. It is our responsibility to the students we serve as well as to our democracy and the nation's economy. It is time for higher education to step up and lead for equity.

## Economic Vitality Depends on Expanding Educational Opportunity

The United States cannot thrive unless all Americans are fully enfranchised—prepared to contribute to our economy and engage effectively in our democracy. And that means restoring the American middle class even as the profile of the U.S. workforce is changing.

Today, well-paying, low-skill jobs are disappearing, and in turn, America's economic polarization is increasing. The American middle class, once among the most affluent in the world, has both shrunk and become poorer relative to the middle classes in other developed nations.[1]

The decline of the middle class coincides with decreased economic mobility because educational and economic opportunity are so closely intertwined. In 1970, for example, 65 percent of Americans lived in a middle-class neighborhood, and today that figure has dropped to 42 percent. This change "limits access to quality schools and jobs for struggling people of all races."[2]

At the same time, America's demographic diversity is growing—and the fastest-growing populations are the ones who typically have the least educational and economic opportunity.

The only path to economic success—for both individuals and the nation—is to be more intentional and equitable in our efforts to provide quality learning opportunities. We must expand access to high-quality postsecondary education, particularly to the kind of broad, integrative, and applied liberal learning needed for success in today's workplace. Higher education cannot close the educational gaps by itself. But it can take a leadership role, on campus and in our communities, in addressing the issue honestly, constructively, and aggressively.

## Democratic Ideals Depend on Expanding Educational Opportunity

Deep, persistent, and unacceptable inequities in education begin in pre-K and continue through higher education. The results of these systemic barriers to educational success are evident, for both low-income students and students of color, in uneven higher education enrollment rates, dissimilar college experiences, and lower levels of degree attainment.

Higher education has a special role to play in addressing the historically entrenched inequities that affect low-income students and students of color. These inequities directly contradict our democratic ideals, yet persist at institutions across the country.

Challenging this status quo requires being conscious of the ways higher education currently mirrors, rather than remedies, inequity. It involves providing leadership that guides colleges through frank, sometimes uncomfortable, conversations. It involves partnerships with our communities as well as actions on campuses. And it demands a deep commitment to making changes that ensure that *all* students have access to quality learning opportunities.

"Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental."

— W.E.B. Du Bois

# Taking the Lead on Equity and Opportunity

*Equality* is about sameness; it focuses on making sure everyone gets the same thing. *Equity* is about fairness; it ensures that each person gets what he or she needs.

This distinction is especially important in education, where there are visible gaps in opportunities and outcomes for large numbers of students. Historically, low-income students and students of color have been excluded from too many opportunities in higher education, and today's policies, expectations, and unspoken rules perpetuate the problem.

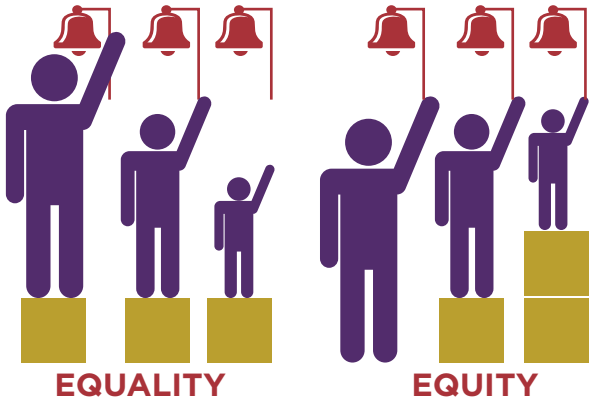
To effectively educate today's students, higher education must focus on both equity and quality—to make the most empowering forms of college learning available to *all* students. Such an approach begins with *equity-minded leaders* who make it a priority to build new opportunities for low-income students and students of color.

## Equity-Mindedness[3]

Equity-minded leaders are aware of the historical context of exclusionary practices in higher education and recognize the impact of this history. They recognize the contradiction between the ideals of democratic education and the social, institutional, and individual practices that contribute to persistent inequities in college outcomes.

Equity-minded leaders also reject the ingrained habit of blaming inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes on students' own social, cultural, and educational backgrounds.

Most important, equity-minded leaders use this mindset to act for change. They recognize the need for systemic transformation, starting in school and continuing in higher education, to make quality learning for the nation's underserved students a shared priority. They invest their time, effort, and political capital into discussing these issues and mobilizing institution-wide efforts and community partnerships to address them.




### What Does It Mean to Be Equity-Minded?[4]

Equity-minded practices are created through

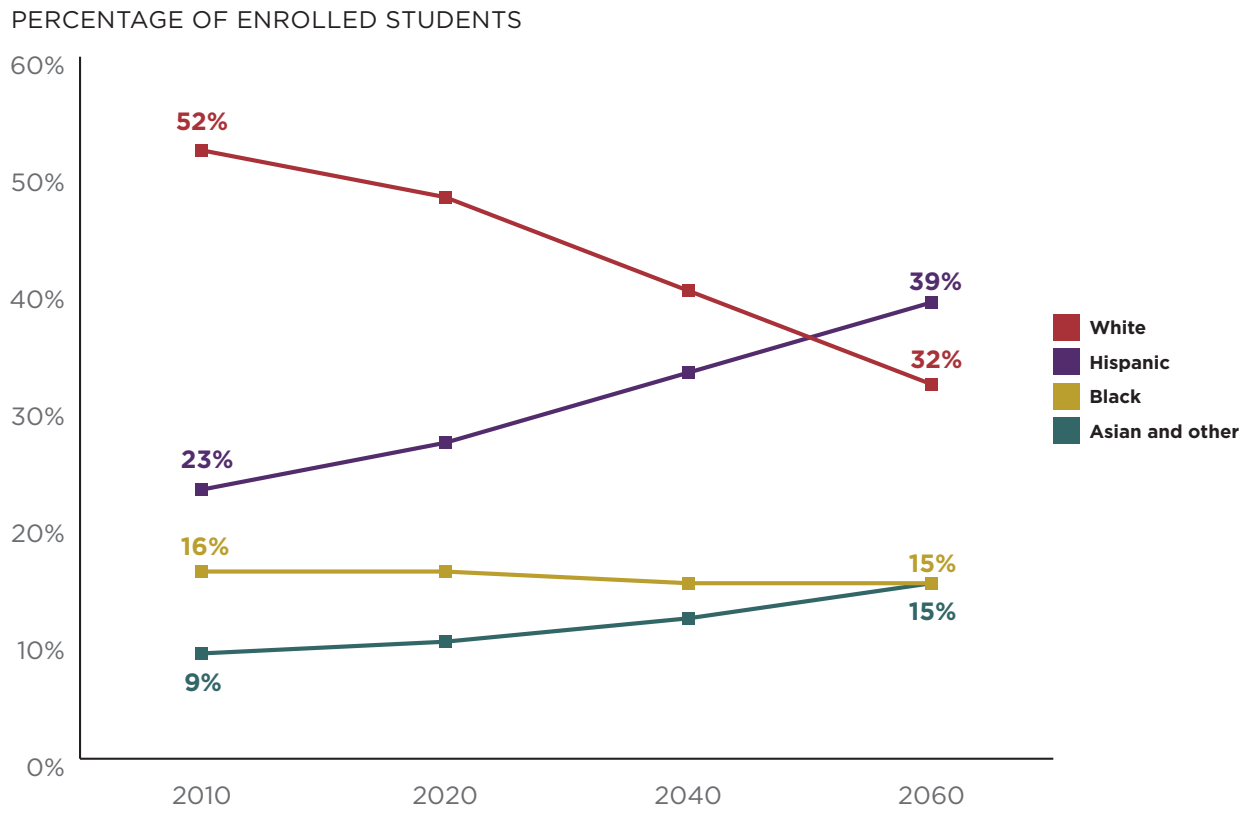
1. Willingness to look at student outcomes and disparities at all educational levels disaggregated by race and ethnicity as well as socioeconomic status.
2. Recognition that individual students are not responsible for the unequal outcomes of groups that have historically experienced discrimination and marginalization in the United States.
3. Respect for the aspirations and struggles of students who are not well served by the current educational system.
4. Belief in the fairness of allocating additional college and community resources to students who have greater needs due to the systemic shortcomings of our educational system in providing for them.
5. Recognition that the elimination of entrenched biases, stereotypes, and discrimination in institutions of higher education requires intentional critical deconstruction of structures, policies, practices, norms, and values assumed to be race neutral.[5]

# Changing Demographics, Deepening Economic Divides

# U.S. Students Will Very Soon Be Majority Students of Color

The demographics of the U.S. population are shifting. The workforce and citizenry of each new generation have a greater proportion of people of color. Older workers are retiring, and younger workers are increasingly coming from communities that have historically been underserved by our educational system. U.S. education must evolve to better serve the students who will be tomorrow's workers, community members, and leaders.

## Public elementary and secondary school enrollment, 2010–2060 (projected)

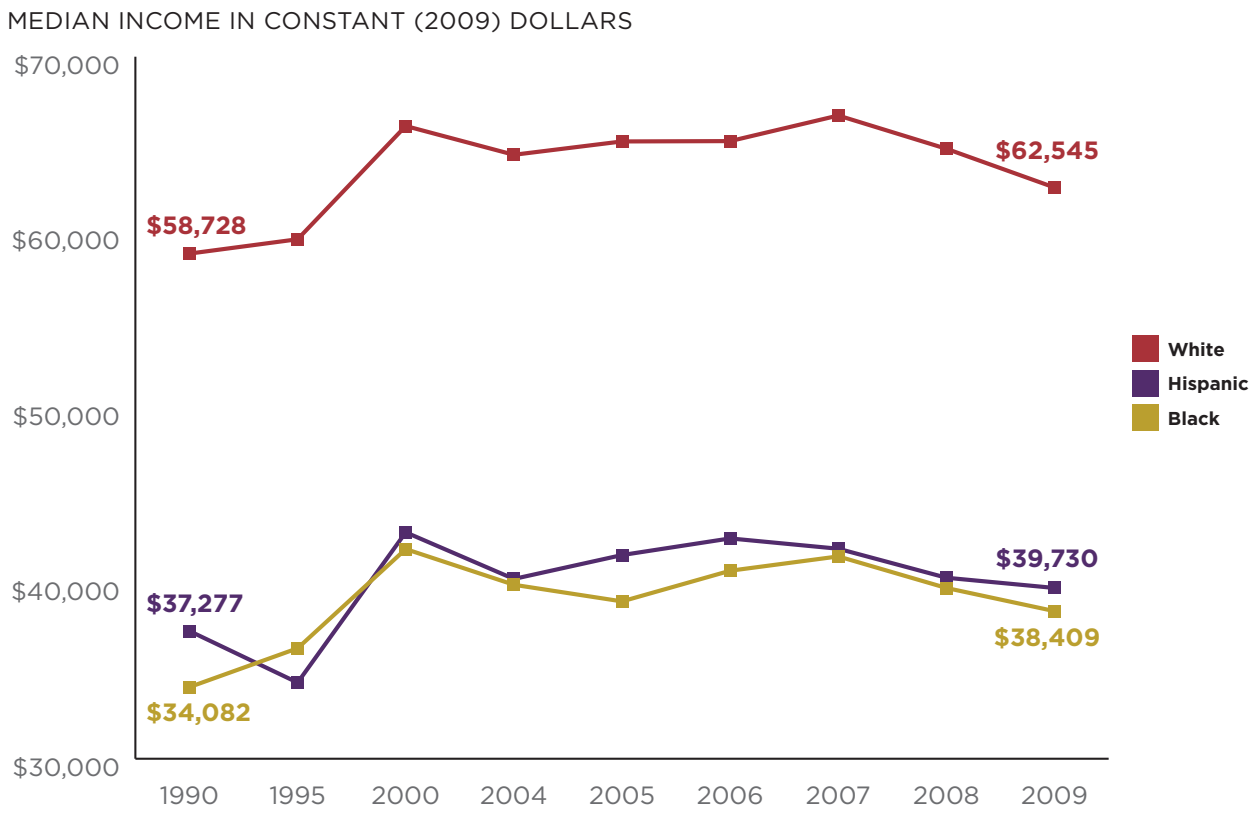



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "2010 Census of the Population, National Projections, 2012-2060, Current Population." As presented in Steve Murdock, "Population Change in the United States and Texas: Implications for Education and Socioeconomic Development" (SHEEO National Meeting, The Grove Hotel, Boise, ID, July 10, 2014).

# Deep Economic Gaps Persist for Latinos and African Americans

The education gap for Latinos and African Americans is accompanied by an income gap. We cannot attain our nation's goals unless everyone has an authentic opportunity to contribute to our economy and to engage in our democracy. Our nation's success depends on having a quality higher education system that extends the advantages of liberal education—and the potential for economic prosperity—to all students.

## U.S. income levels for white, Hispanic, and black families




Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Statistical Abstract of the United States," Income, Expenditures, Poverty, and Wealth Table 697, http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0697.pdf.

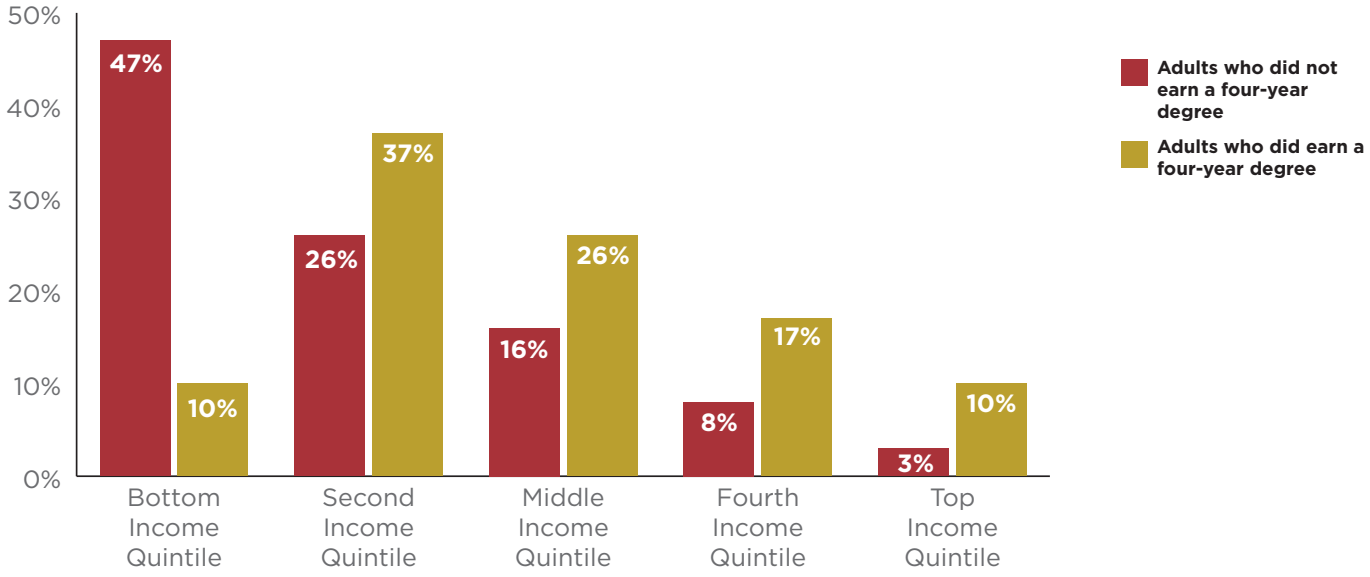
# Completing College Improves Economic Mobility

Educational opportunity and economic success are intertwined. People with higher incomes are more likely to enroll in college—and then more likely to earn the higher incomes that allow their children to attend college. And for children of low-income families, a college degree can provide the means to move out of poverty.

## How a four-year degree affects the adult income of people who were born into poverty

This chart looks at income levels of adults who were born into deep poverty based on whether they earned a college degree. All adults included in this chart were born into the bottom income quintile (the lowest fifth of U.S. household incomes). Among these adults who were born into deep poverty, only 10 percent of those who earned a four-year degree remained in the bottom income quintile, compared with 47 percent of those without a college degree. Moreover, 53 percent of the adults who completed a four-year degree moved from the bottom income quintile to the middle quintile or higher. Only 27 percent of those without a college degree moved to the middle income quintile or higher.

ADULT INCOME LEVELS OF THOSE BORN INTO THE BOTTOM U.S. INCOME QUINTILE (THE LOWEST FIFTH OF U.S. HOUSEHOLD INCOMES)



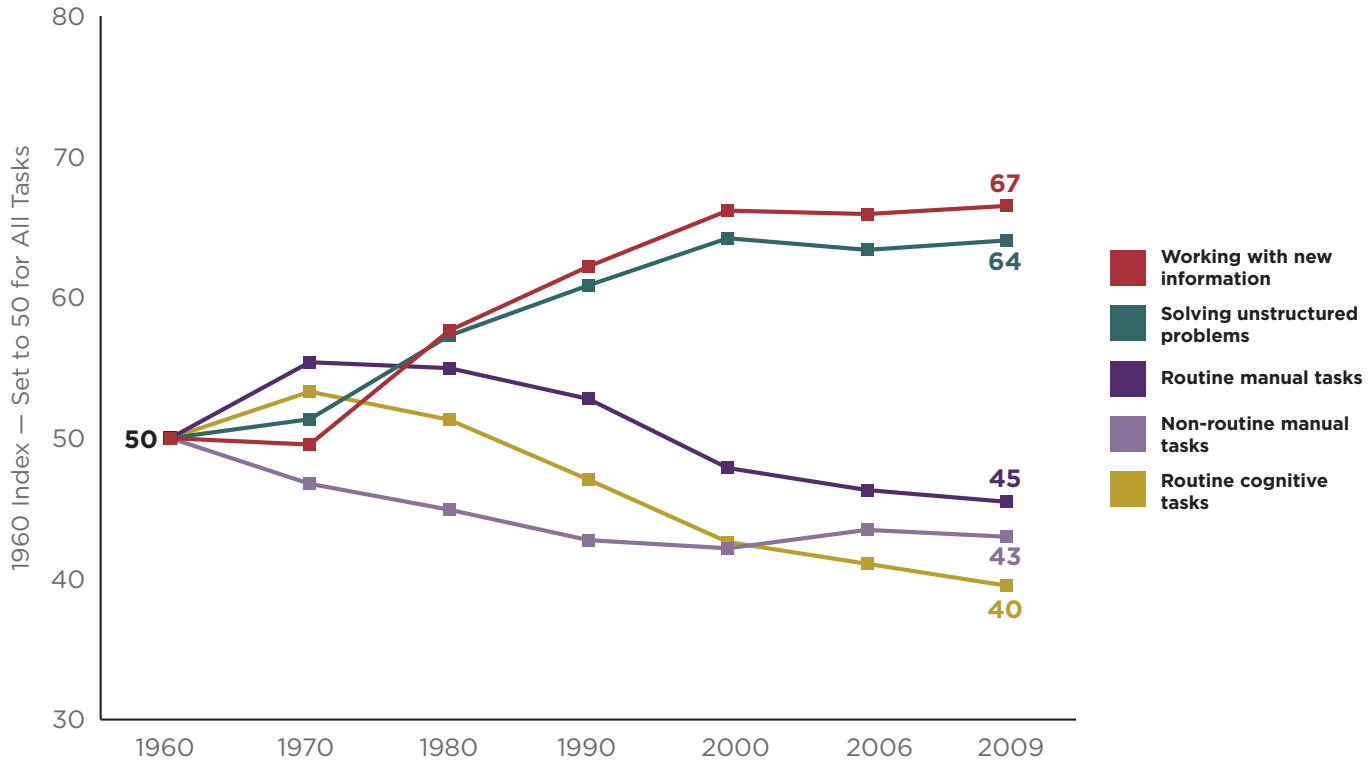

Source: The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations* (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2012), http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2012/PursuingAmericanDreampdf.pdf.

# America's Future Depends on Closing Attainment and Achievement Gaps

# Wanted: Problem Solvers and Innovators

Demands in the U.S. workplace are changing. High-paying, low-skill jobs are disappearing as routine work is outsourced overseas or done by computers. Today, jobs that support families require employees who can "look at problems in unorthodox ways, seeing different angles and finding workable solutions."[6] These are skills developed through a high-quality liberal education. Colleges that are leading for equity must make sure *all* students master them.

## Growth in jobs that require adaptive skills and learning




Source: David H. Autor and Brendan Price, *The Changing Task Composition of the US Labor Market: An Update of Autor, Levy, and Murnane (2003)* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013).

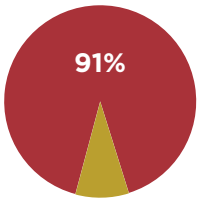
# Wanted: Critical Thinkers and Communicators

In surveys about hiring and promotion priorities, employers underscore the importance of developing skills aligned with today's innovation economy. They assess the quality of a college degree by how effectively the graduate can understand and act on new ideas, communicate information clearly, use evidence, and lead effectively in a fast-changing environment.

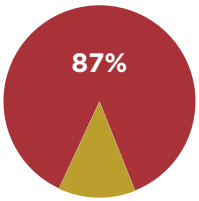
More than nine in ten employers (91 percent) say they value critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills more than a potential employee's undergraduate major. Nearly all employers (96 percent) agree that all college students should have experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own. And 87 percent of employers say they give hiring preference to college graduates who have completed a senior project.

These skills—which are central to a twenty-first-century liberal education—also have value beyond their currency in the knowledge economy. These same skills prepare graduates to live responsibly in an increasingly diverse democracy and in an interconnected global community.

## Skills employers value most




Percentage of employers who say that critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving abilities are more important than a potential employee's undergraduate major




Percentage of employers who say they give hiring preference to college graduates who have completed a senior project

Source: Hart Research Associates, *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015), https://www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research/2015-survey-results.

> "The premium on lifelong learning just keeps going up. . . . Students have to have knowledge and know how to use it—know *and* do."
>
> — David Rattray
> Senior Director, Education & Workforce Development
> Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

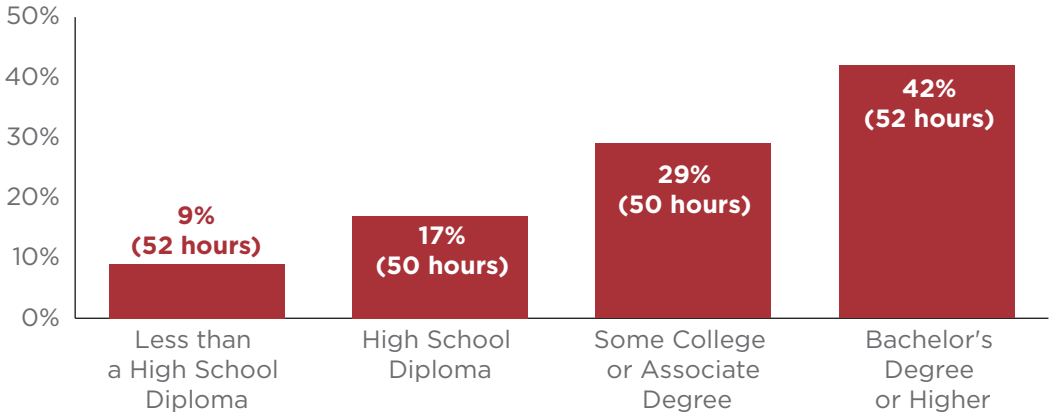
# College Pays Powerful Economic and Social Benefits

In 2011, median earnings of full-time workers with bachelor's degrees (and no advanced degrees) were $21,000 higher than those of high school graduates. And the benefits of education extend beyond the individuals who hold degrees.

One study looked at the impact of increasing the four-year college attainment rate in the fifty-one largest U.S. metropolitan areas. A one-percentage-point increase in the four-year college attainment rate is associated with an $856 increase in per capita income for each of the fifty-one metropolitan areas—a total increase of $143 billion for the nation.[7] Degree holders also contribute more to the tax base and have greater civic participation, including greater participation in voting and more volunteerism.[8]

## Volunteerism increases with education

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS AGED TWENTY-FIVE AND OLDER WHO VOLUNTEERED AND MEDIAN NUMBER OF HOURS VOLUNTEERED IN THE YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 2012




Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Volunteering in the United States — 2012." As presented in Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea, *Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society* (New York: The College Board, 2013).

"The heart of a vibrant democracy is educated, engaged citizens who are able to make choices for themselves, their families, their communities, and their country. In this respect, the success of American postsecondary education is critical to the success of American democracy."

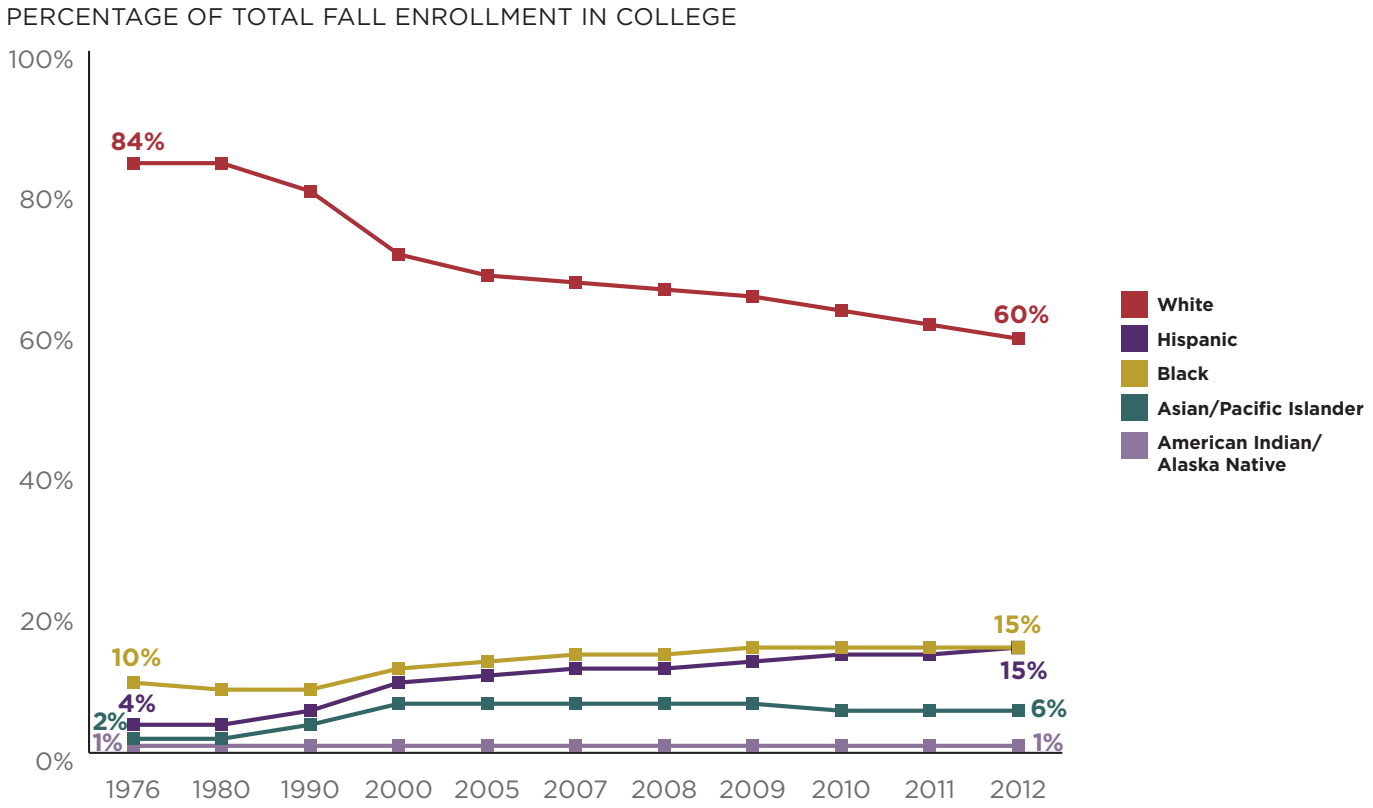
— Charles Kolb
Former President
Committee for Economic Development

# Access to Quality Learning Is Inequitable at All Levels

# The Face of Higher Education Is Changing

Quality learning, from PK–12 through college, is the key to closing achievement gaps. Learning begins with enrollment. While white students still represent the majority of those enrolled in college, there has been a steady rise in college enrollment for students of color. And Latino students slightly outpace white students in one piece of recent enrollment data (not shown): the immediate college-going rate, or the percentage of students who attend college within one year of high school completion. In 2012, the immediate college-going rate of Latino high school graduates was 69 percent, compared to 67 percent for white graduates, 62 percent for African American graduates, and 84 percent for Asian graduates.[9]

## College enrollment trends



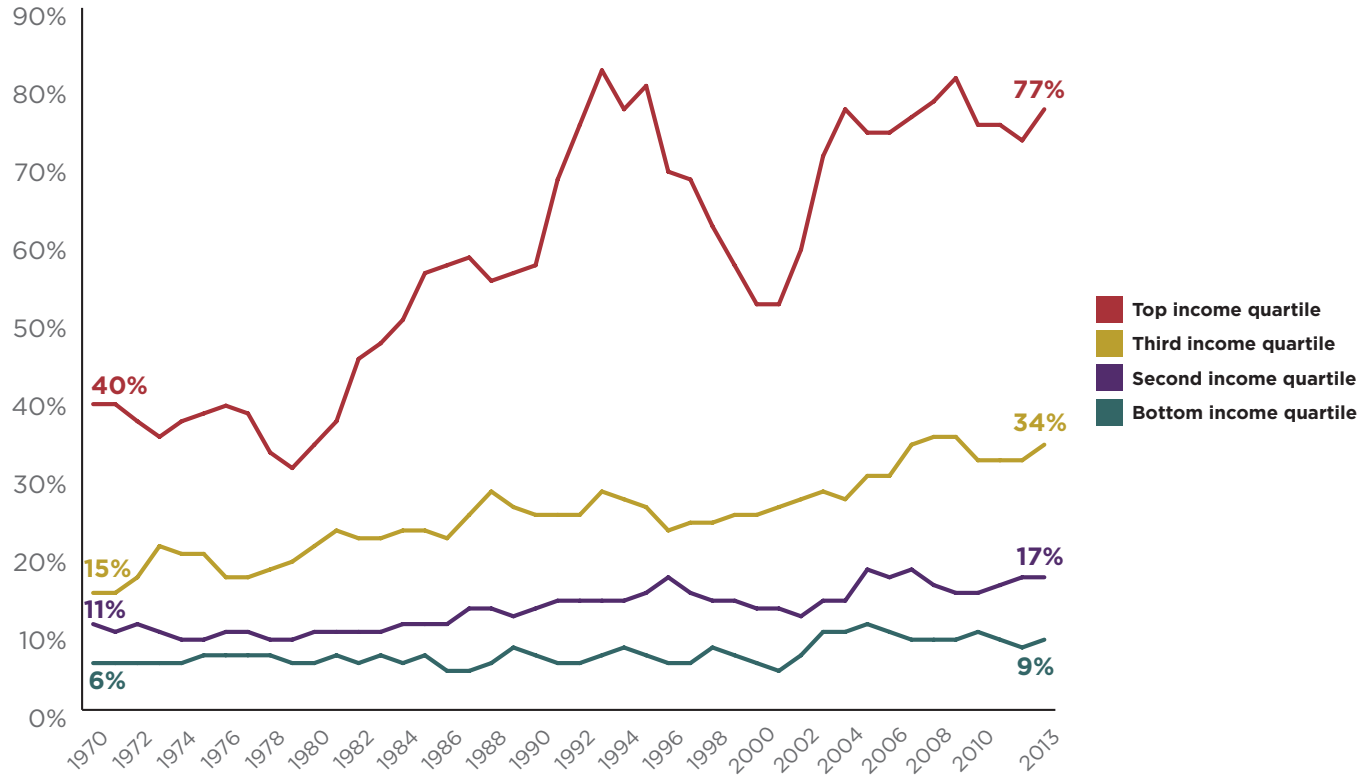

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics: 2013," Table 306.10, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_306.10.asp.

# Too Few Low-Income Students Complete College

While postsecondary institutions are becoming more diverse, the degree attainment gap for low-income individuals is widening. In 2013, individuals from high-income families were eight times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age twenty-four than were those from low-income families. In 1970, the high-income individuals were more than six times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree.[10] In the intervening 43 years, bachelor degree attainment among those from wealthy families nearly doubled while it barely moved for those in the poorest families.

## Higher-income students are more likely to earn degrees

BACHELOR'S DEGREE ATTAINMENT BY AGE TWENTY-FOUR FOR DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS BY FAMILY INCOME QUARTILE



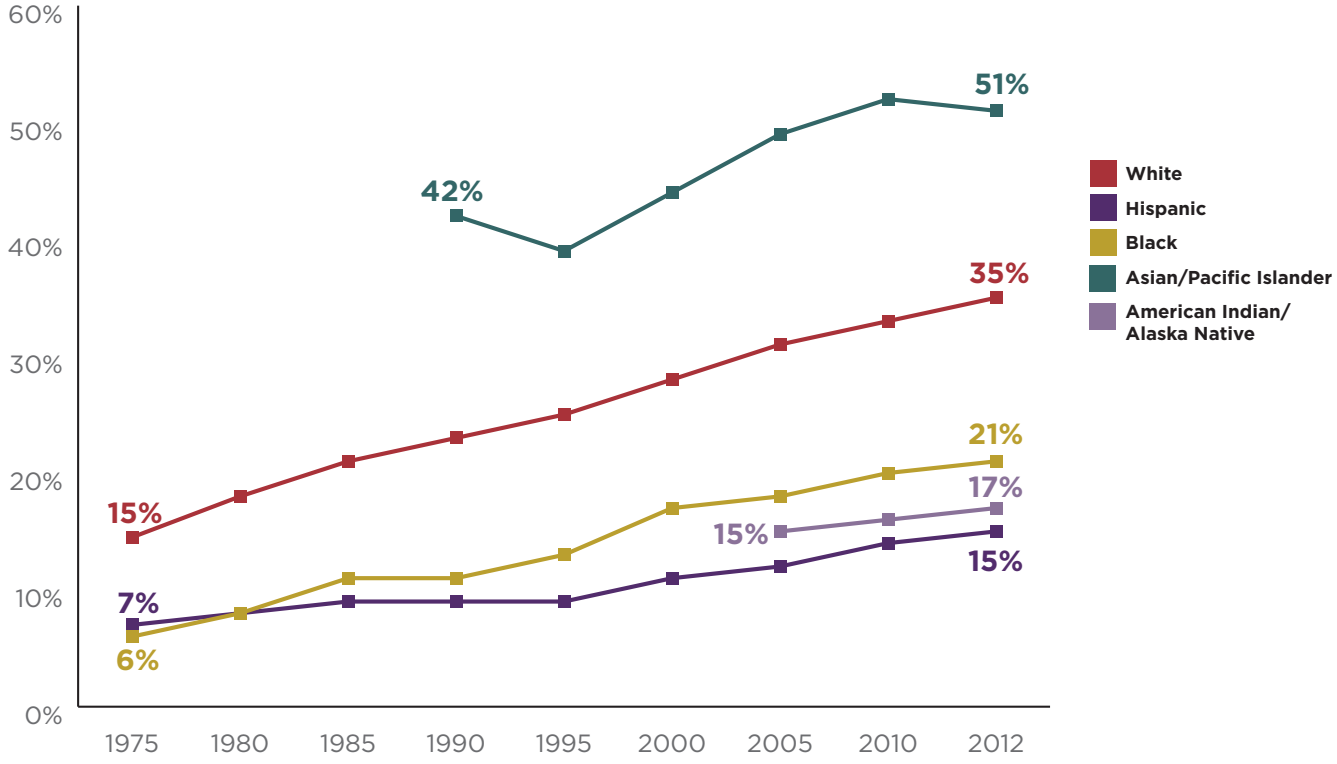

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey Data on School Enrollment," (unpublished data, 2013). As presented in Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education and PennAHEAD, *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States* (2015), http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_45_Year_Trend_Report.pdf.

# Too Few Students of Color Complete College

In addition, there continues to be a degree attainment gap for students of color. An increasing percentage of all groups hold bachelor's degrees, but a consistently higher percentage of white adults holds degrees, as compared to African American and Latino adults.

## Degree attainment levels

PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS AGED TWENTY-FIVE AND OVER WITH A BACHELOR'S OR HIGHER DEGREE, BY RACE/ETHNICITY




Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics: 2012," Table 8, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_008.asp?referrer=report.

Note: Data are not available until 1989 for Asian/Pacific Islanders and until 2003 for American Indian/Alaska Natives.

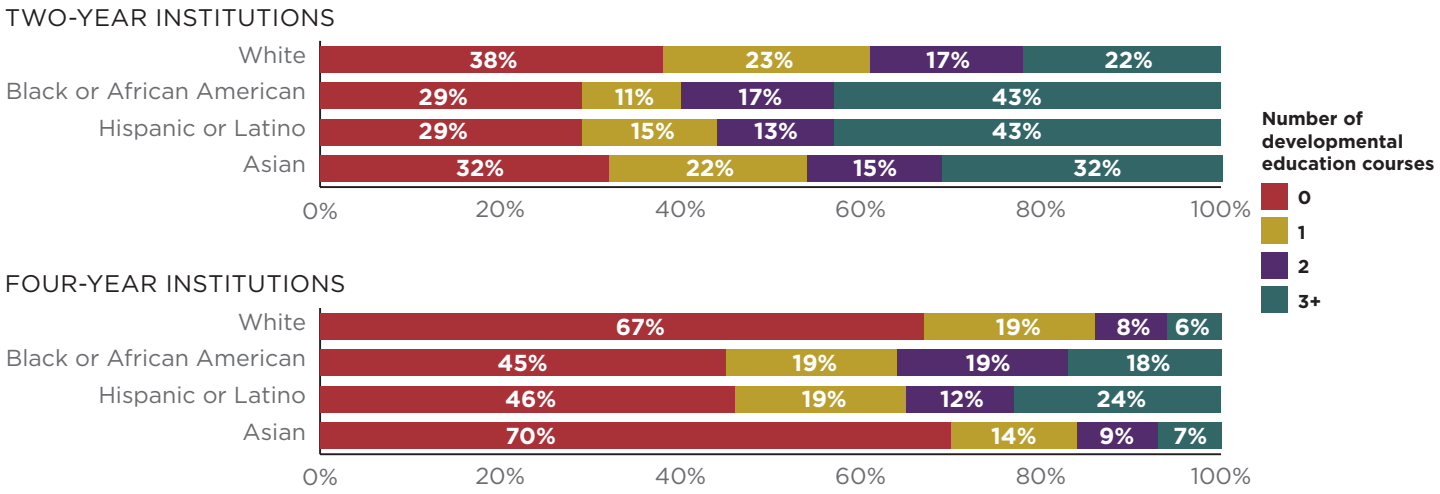
# Inequities in College Readiness

College readiness is a critical factor in degree attainment. And among students who enroll in college, there are dramatic differences in college readiness. This underpreparation grows out of gaps in educational opportunity, often beginning in pre-K and growing over time. Because each educational achievement leads to new educational opportunity, academic achievement becomes highly stratified.

For example, 56 percent of white eighth graders are below grade-level proficiency in math, compared to 79 percent of Latinos, 79 percent of American Indians, and 86 percent of African Americans.[11] In high school, 12 percent of white students participate in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, compared with 6 percent of African American and 9 percent of Latino students. The AP divide by income is even greater: 6 percent of low-income students participate in AP courses, compared with 16 percent of students who are not considered low income.

This unacceptable trend continues at the college level, where students of color are overrepresented in developmental education courses. Time spent in developmental education courses, which do not earn credit, delays students' entry into college-level courses and depletes their financial aid. As a result, completing college becomes more expensive and more uncertain.

## Students of color are more likely to take developmental education courses




Source: Data from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study," 2009 data, http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/quickstats. Using calculations presented in Witham et al., *America's Unmet Promise.*

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

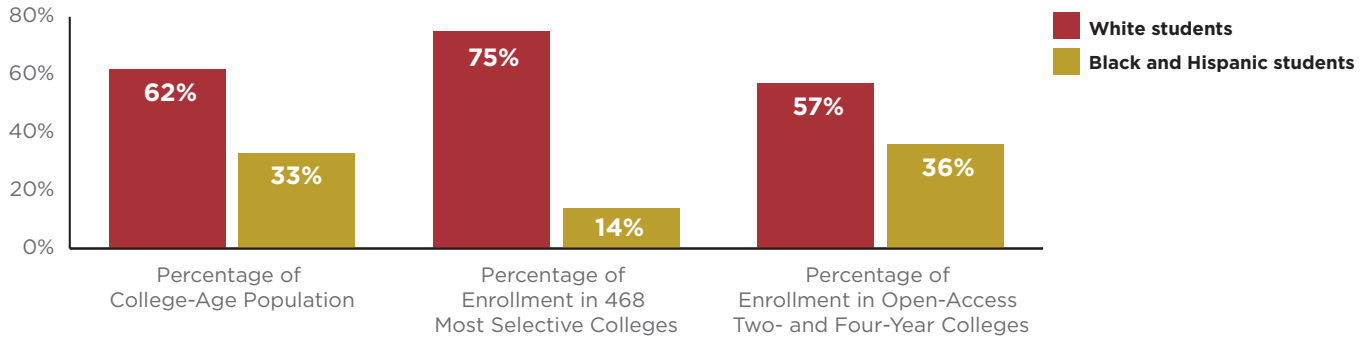
# Inequities in Access to Resource-Rich Institutions

Low-income students and students of color disproportionately attend community colleges and less-selective four-year institutions. And while broad-access institutions have been charged with helping more students graduate, they typically have seen decreases in public funds for their work.

## White students are most likely to enroll in selective colleges; students of color are most likely to enroll in open-access colleges

White individuals represent 62 percent of the college-age population (eighteen to twenty-four years old). They represent 75 percent of students at the 468 most selective four-year colleges and only 57 percent of students at the open-access two- and four-year colleges.

By contrast, black and Hispanic individuals represent 33 percent of the college-age population (eighteen to twenty-four years old). They represent only 14 percent of students at the 468 most selective four-year colleges and 36 percent of students at the open-access two- and four-year colleges.

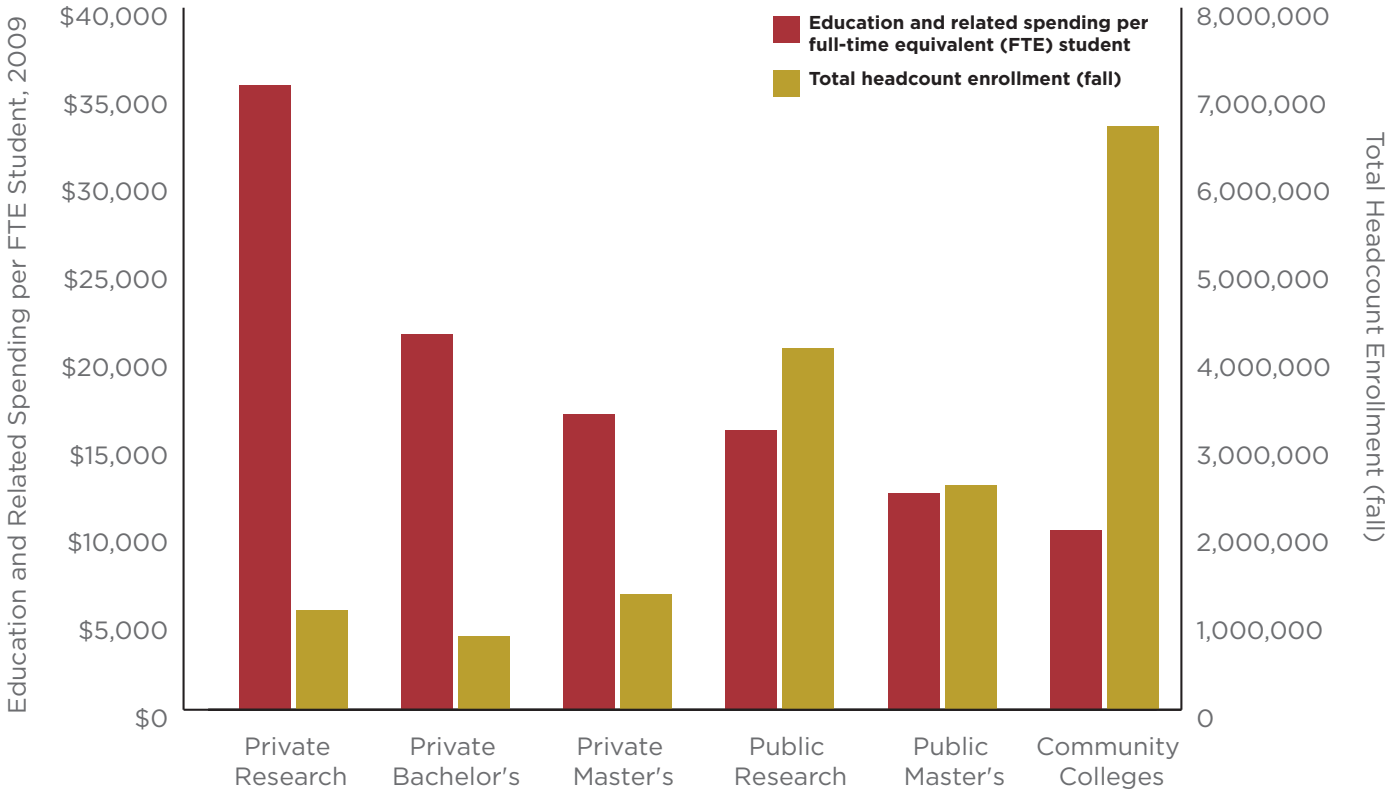



Source: Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, *Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergenerational Reproduction of White Racial Privilege* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013), https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SeparateUnequal.ES_.pdf.

# Inequities in Spending per Student

In effect, the community colleges and less-selective four-year institutions where low-income students and students of color are most likely to enroll have been charged with repairing the inequities that pervade the entire U.S. education system. But these institutions typically have fewer resources, more students, and markedly lower spending per student than the resource-richer institutions where most white students enroll.

## Spending per student by institutional type

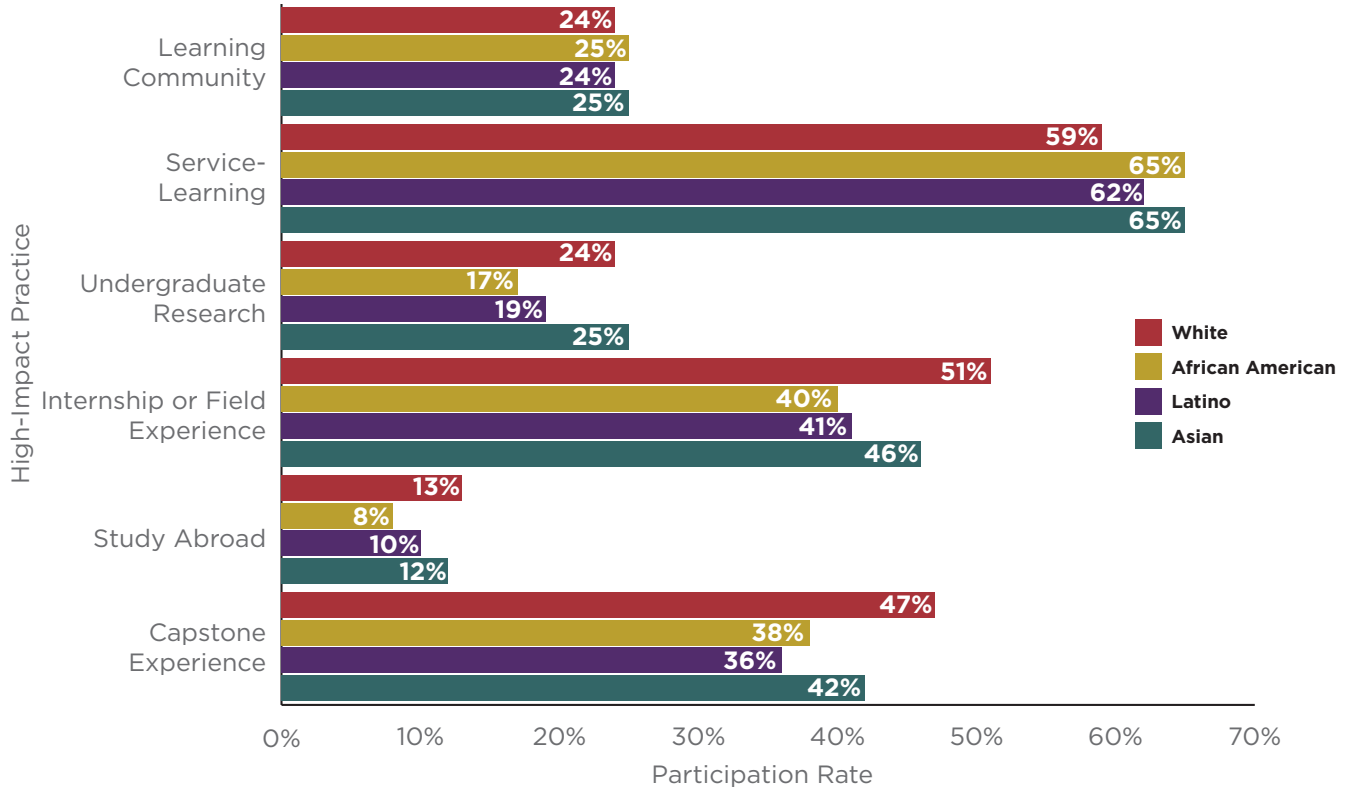



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "IPEDS Analytics: Delta Cost Project Database," 1987–2009, spending data from the 11-year matched set, enrollment data from the unmatched set. As presented in J. Wellman, *Funding Strategies to Support Student Success: The Role of the State,* (Massachusetts: Jobs for the Future, 2013).

# Inequities in Educational Opportunities in College

Students of color are underrepresented in many of the high-impact practices that are central to a high-quality liberal education. These practices teach students to synthesize information, apply knowledge, and develop problem-solving skills—all attributes that are in high demand by employers. And some of these experiences, "such as undergraduate research and internships[,] may constitute critical gateways into graduate education or high-demand and high-wage jobs."[12]

## Students of color experience fewer high-impact practices

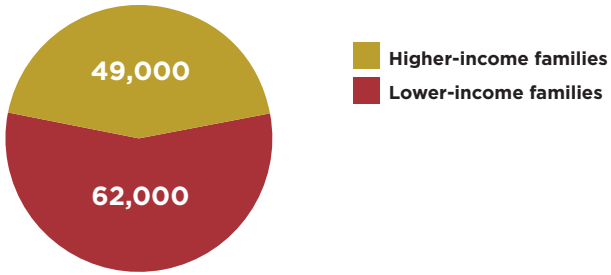



Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, "NSSE 2013 High-Impact Practices: US Grand Percentages by Student Characteristics," (2013), http://nsse.iub.edu/2013_institutional_report/pdf/HIPTables/HIP.pdf. As presented in Witham et al., *America's Unmet Promise*.

## Income Disparity Does Not Account for Racial and Ethnic Gaps

Even after adjusting for income, we see persistent, unacceptable gaps in educational achievement. National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS 1988/2000) data show 111,000 African Americans and Hispanics who scored in the top half of the SAT/ACT (high-scoring students) but did not graduate from college; 49,000 of them came from the top half of the family income distribution.[13]

### Among high-scoring students of color who did not complete college, four in ten were from higher-income families




Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce calculations using data from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study (1988/2000). As presented in Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, *Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergenerational Reproduction of White Racial Privilege* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013), https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SeparateUnequal.ES_.pdf.

> "The postsecondary system is more and more complicit as a passive agent in the systematic reproduction of white racial privilege across generations."
>
> — Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl

# It Is Time to Act: What College Leaders and Faculty Can Do

# It Is Time to Act

**Every college and university must focus with new intensity on supporting higher persistence and higher learning for students from underserved communities. This critical work begins with examining the institution's history and data. Then with this context in mind, institutions should ensure that they have a framework of inclusive excellence—one in which underserved students are experiencing the high-impact practices and engaging in the inquiry-based learning that is essential in any high-quality liberal education.**

In the newest phase of its influential Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, AAC&U has issued the LEAP Challenge: Every college and university should make excellence inclusive and ensure that every student prepares for and completes Signature Work. Through Signature Work, students demonstrate their achievement of twenty-first-century learning outcomes.

As part of this effort, colleges should gather representatives from across their institutions—students, faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees—and engage them in self-study and planning about equity, inclusion, and excellence. The ten items below are designed to help guide such discussions and identify necessary action steps. They provide action steps that emerged from AAC&U's longstanding work on inclusive excellence and the LEAP Challenge. They are informed by *America's Unmet Promise,* AAC&U's General Education Maps and Markers project (GEMs), and the GEMs Equity Working Group. For more detail, visit www.aacu.org/gems.

## Key Terms

Students who are **traditionally underrepresented in higher education,** primarily African American and Latino students, will soon be America's new majority of students. **Underserved students** are students who are not experiencing a high-quality education. Any student can be underserved, including students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. And any student can be well served, particularly in institutions with a strong focus on equity.

In **Signature Work,** a student uses his or her cumulative learning to pursue a significant project related to a problem he or she defines. In work conducted throughout at least one semester, and with faculty guidance, the student produces work that expresses new insights and learning. **Students' completion of Signature Work provides evidence that they are ready to tackle complex problems in the workplace and in society.**

# Does Your Institution Do the Following?

## 1. Know who your students are and will be.

- Study your institutional history and disaggregate data on student access and success.
- Assess your track record in educating students from underserved communities.
- Build PK–12 partnerships to strengthen underserved students' preparation and encourage enrollment in college.
- Make equity-mindedness an explicit goal across the institution's reform efforts.

## 2. Have frank, hard dialogues about the climate for underserved students with a goal of effecting a paradigm shift in language and actions.

- Engage the campus with evidence about how your institution is achieving its equity goals.
- Examine attitudes about underserved student success that may hinder or advance your institution's ability to support these students.
- Ensure that underserved students get whatever help is needed in ways that support, rather than marginalize.

## 3. Invest in culturally competent practices that lead to success of underserved students—and of all students.

- Be aware of who is already leading—or struggling to be heard—on equity and inclusion issues—and who else needs to be included.
- Braid your equity programs into ongoing orientation for all faculty and staff. Include contingent faculty as well as tenure-track faculty.
- Commit to a program of systematic and equity-minded leadership development for curricular and cocurricular change to better support student success.

## 4. Set and monitor equity-minded goals—and allocate aligned resources to achieve them.

- Define success in terms of access to inclusive excellence.
- Hold your institution accountable for progress on four levels: outreach and access, completion/transfer, engaged and high-impact learning, and demonstrated achievement of stated learning outcomes.

## 5. Develop and actively pursue a clear vision and goals for achieving the high-quality learning necessary for careers and citizenship, and therefore essential for a bachelor's degree.

- Develop a framework of associate and/or baccalaureate goals that set clear standards for students' development of the following Essential Learning Outcomes:
  - broad and integrative knowledge of histories, cultures, science, and society
  - well-honed intellectual and adaptive skills
  - in-depth engagement with unscripted problems relevant to both work and civic participation
  - Signature Work, which can include a student's research, practicum, community service, internships, or other project-based learning
- Ensure that all students are working each term on inquiry, analysis, projects, presentations, and other forms of active, collaborative learning.

## 6. Expect and prepare all students to produce culminating or Signature Work at the associate (or sophomore) and baccalaureate levels to show their achievement of Essential Learning Outcomes, and monitor data to ensure equitable participation and achievement among underserved students.

- Begin at entry to help students engage in problem-centered inquiry and identify problems or questions of special interest.
- Provide at least one experience of cross-disciplinary inquiry work at the associate or sophomore level and additional experiences for juniors and seniors.
- Scale up the number of academic programs that support Signature Work.

## 7. Provide support to help students develop guided plans to achieve Essential Learning Outcomes, prepare for and complete Signature Work, and connect college with careers.

- Faculty and staff advisors should help students plan a course of study keyed to students' goals, attentive to students' life contexts, and designed to help them achieve the Essential Learning Outcomes.
- Using equity-minded data analytics, track students' progress and provide proactive guidance and, as needed, mentoring or academic assistance.

## 8. Identify high-impact practices (HIPs) best suited to your institution's students and its quality framework of Essential Learning Outcomes, and work proactively to ensure equitable student participation in HIPs.

- Collect and disaggregate data on who is participating in selected HIPs.
- Work systemically to redress inequities in students' experiences of high-impact and empowering learning.

## 9. Ensure that Essential Learning Outcomes are addressed and high-impact practices are incorporated across all programs, including general education, the majors, digital learning platforms, and cocurricular/community-based programs.

- Redesign general education to directly address equity goals and to involve students in active learning from their first through final year of college.
- Review and amend major programs to ensure students' achievement of Essential Learning Outcomes in ways appropriate to students' fields of study.
- Provide professional development opportunities that help faculty and staff design and implement quality high-impact practices.

## 10. Make student achievement—including underserved student achievement—visible and valued.

- Assess students' achievement of expected Essential Learning Outcomes and report regularly to faculty, staff, trustees, and other stakeholders. Disaggregate data on students' progress toward completion/transfer and demonstrated achievement of expected Essential Learning Outcomes.
- Develop capacity to tell the story of what an empowering education looks like in the twenty-first century and why it matters for underserved students.
- Develop/expand partnerships with nonprofit organizations and employers to reinforce the college's commitment to making excellence inclusive.

# Endnotes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2. Sheryll Cashin, "Justice for Blacks and Whites," *New York Times,* July 1, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/02/opinion/lessons-from-the-civil-rights-act-50-years-later.html?_r=2.
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4. Adapted from Witham et al., A*merica's Unmet Promise.*
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11. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *The 2014 KIDS COUNT Data Book* (2013), 21, http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2014kidscountdatabook-2014.pdf
12. Witham et al., *America's Unmet Promise.*
13. Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, *Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergenerational Reproduction of White Racial Privilege* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013), https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SeparateUnequal.ES_.pdf.

# Additional Resources on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence

**America's Unmet Promise: The Imperative for Equity in Higher Education** (2015)

By Keith Witham, Lindsey E. Malcom-Piqueux, Alicia C. Dowd, and Estela Mara Bensimon

This publication makes the case for the urgent need to expand access to and success in high-quality educational programs for students traditionally underserved in higher education. Addressing students' access and success in terms of college completion as well as indicators of educational opportunity such as participation in high-impact practices, the authors present an equity-minded guiding framework that can be used throughout higher education. This is an excellent resource for launching conversations about diversity, equity, and institutional change.

**Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence: A Campus Guide for Self-Study and Planning** (2015)

This publication provides a framework for needed dialogue, assessment, and action to address inequities in higher education institutions. Focusing on issues of access and success, it can be used as a tool for bringing together campus leaders and practitioners—across divisions and departments—to engage in internal assessment and chart a path forward to improve all students' success and achievement of key learning outcomes. The Guide is designed with a particular focus on the success of students who come from groups traditionally underserved in higher education.

**The LEAP Challenge: Education for a World of Unscripted Problems** (2015)

The LEAP Challenge builds on a decade of LEAP reform efforts on campus to advance Essential Learning Outcomes and high-impact educational practices for all students. The LEAP Challenge calls on colleges and universities to engage students in Signature Work that will prepare them to integrate and apply their learning to a significant project.

**The Drama of Diversity and Democracy: Higher Education and American Commitments—2nd Ed.** (2011)

This publication, originally published in 1995, addresses foundational questions about the role educators can and must play in building civic capacities—knowledge, skills, commitments, collaborations—for our diverse and globally connected democracy. This new edition features a foreword by Ramón A. Gutiérrez and a preface by AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider.

**AAC&U Centennial LEAP Video** (2015)

AAC&U's 2015 Centennial LEAP Video features the power of an engaged, public-spirited liberal education to transform students' lives and address the "big questions." It is perfect for stakeholders who need a better understanding of what a twenty-first-century liberal education really can do for today's students. Watch the video at **www.aacu.org/centennial/video.**

Institutions working on a framework for inclusive excellence should also consult the Degree Qualifications Profile, Lumina Foundation, 2014.

**For these and other resources, see www.aacu.org/diversity/publications.**

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AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,300 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, research universities, and comprehensive universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education and inclusive excellence at both the national and local levels, and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

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# STRUCTURAL EQUITY:
## BIG-PICTURE THINKING & PARTNERSHIPS THAT IMPROVE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT OUTCOMES

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

**THE ASPEN INSTITUTE** would like to thank Mandy Zatynski, who authored this report in partnership with Keith Witham and Joshua Wyner at the College Excellence Program.

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**THE ASPEN INSTITUTE'S COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM**

The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes in four areas:

- **COMPLETION.** Do students earn degrees and other meaningful credentials while in college?
- **EQUITY.** Do colleges work to ensure equitable outcomes for minority and low-income students, and others often under-served?
- **LABOR MARKET.** Do graduates get well-paying jobs?
- **LEARNING.** Do colleges and their faculty set expectations for what students should learn, measure whether they are doing so, and use that information to improve?

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# **STRUCTURAL EQUITY:**
# BIG-PICTURE THINKING & PARTNERSHIPS THAT IMPROVE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT OUTCOMES

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community colleges play a vital role in creating a more equitable society through educational opportunity. The most effective community colleges—those that not only enroll but graduate large numbers of students from underserved communities—have worked hard to fundamentally reform internal structures and operations so that the education and supports students receive are aligned with student success goals. Much of the national dialogue and efforts to improve community college performance have focused on critical elements of internal change.

What has recently received less attention is the work excellent community colleges have done to actively position themselves as part of a broader ecosystem of institutions acting in concert to transform students' lives. By thinking big-picture about the needs of their communities and regions and then building partnerships that create seamless pathways from high school to community college and on to a four-year degree and a career, community colleges have the potential to disrupt the structural inequities that constrain educational attainment and economic opportunity in the U.S.—and instead, build *structural equity* through pipelines that lead to greater success among underrepresented students. This report illustrates strategies for doing so.

Among the finalists for and winners of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, we find examples of colleges that have played a central role in building structural equity in their communities. These colleges have taken seriously an imperative to achieve not only high levels of student success but also equity in student outcomes. They have done so through three main strategies and a series of deliberate and sustained practices that we describe in this report:

### Strategy 1. Think Big Picture to Redefine Student Success and Set Equity Goals

*Essential practices:*

- ✓ Understand who your students are in their local and regional contexts
- ✓ Rely on data to set big-picture equity goals and define strategies that extend beyond the college
- ✓ Define specific measures against which to benchmark progress

### Strategy 2. Work Externally to Change the Student Experience

*Essential practices:*

- ✓ Identify external partners vital to creating a seamless student experience
- ✓ Devise strategies that speak to the needs and goals of both partners
- ✓ Establish common metrics of progress and success
- ✓ Create structures for frequent and meaningful communication between partners about curriculum alignment and skills expectations
- ✓ Establish conditions in which all partners are accountable for success

### Strategy 3. Work Internally to Build Urgency and Commitment to Equity Goals

*Essential practices:*

- ✓ Build urgency and leadership commitment throughout partnering institutions
- ✓ Create systems for regularly analyzing and discussing data
- ✓ Celebrate wins and build success on success
- ✓ Evaluate effectiveness and revise goals and strategies

# THE EQUITY IMPERATIVE IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

There are deep inequities that impact access to higher education in the U.S., leading to wide disparities in the social and economic opportunity conferred by a college degree. In many communities throughout the country, limited access to education, healthcare, and other social and cultural resources begins from a young age to shape children's futures. And disparity begets disparity throughout their lives. As reflected in the notion of *structural inequity*, the possibility of achieving a college degree is circumscribed by lack of opportunity long before many students could even consider enrolling in college.

Fortunately, the U.S. (unlike many countries) has educational institutions designed to give individuals who've experienced a lifetime of unequal opportunity an on-ramp to a postsecondary education—an education through which they have the potential to build a better life. Community colleges serve as a critical gateway to higher education for millions of students, young and old, who were never given the clear path to college that exists for the more privileged in our society. This is evident based on the composition of students these colleges enroll: Among all undergraduates nationwide, two-thirds of American Indian students and more than half of all African Americans and Latinos enroll in community college,[1] and around 4 in 10 community college students are Pell Grant recipients.[2]

El Paso Community College

More has to be done to realize the potential community colleges have for ameliorating the effects of structural inequity, however. Though the growth of the sector has dramatically increased access to college, the rates at which students complete or transfer have been too low and too slow to improve. Equity in access has not yet been matched with equity in outcomes.

Over the last decade, a significant wave of reform in the community college sector has focused on improving rates of student success. Many colleges have made efforts to improve remedial education, strengthen advising, and enhance the use of data in decision-making. Many are now creating structured curricular pathways, which—coupled with targeted student advising and supports—hold great promise for institution-wide improvements in student outcomes. These strategies are critical for ensuring that community colleges match the promise of open access with strong completion outcomes.

But even when implemented effectively and at scale, these strategies alone may not have a broad enough reach to impact persistent disparities between racial and socioeconomic groups in college access and post-graduation success. That's why some exceptional community colleges—those that have achieved high and improving levels of student success—also engage in deliberate, sustained efforts beyond the college to achieve those goals. By creating deep links to the other sectors that interact with students before and after they arrive on campus, the most effective community colleges are fundamentally changing the way students experience higher education.

This report focuses on strategies for strengthening community colleges' role in advancing equity in student success—that is, in expanding educational and career opportunities and success for the huge numbers of students from populations traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Making a commitment to work beyond the campus to improve student outcomes is challenging. It requires sustained, authentic partnerships with K-12 institutions to help align expectations and build college aspirations; robust connections with local industries to ensure students will have the skills and knowledge needed for in-demand careers; and close partnerships with four-year universities to ensure that students can transfer without losing time or credits.

The most effective community colleges understand themselves as just one stop in a larger educational trajectory for students. They enact that philosophy by creating connections to other sectors in order make that trajectory seamless. While the approaches featured in this report vary based on student needs and local contexts, they are all cemented in the notion that pathways from high school through higher education and into the workforce require robust, cross-sector partnerships that contribute to more equitable post-secondary education outcomes. To be sure, internal reform strategies like those mentioned above are critical for advancing student outcomes. But external partnerships are equally vital as cornerstones of *structural equity*—policies and practices that eliminate chances for students to fall through the cracks before they arrive and after they graduate.

1 American Association of Community Colleges, "2016 Fact Sheet," http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Documents/AACCFactSheetsR2.pdf.

2 Association of Community College Trustees, "Pell Grants," http://www.acct.org/pell-grants (accessed April 29, 2016).

# STRUCTURAL EQUITY IN PRACTICE

Here, we tell the stories of four colleges that have been finalists for or winners of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. These are colleges that have achieved high and continually improving levels of student success while focusing intentionally on improving equity in student outcomes. They are reversing the trends of educational and economic disparity in their communities through big-picture thinking about student success and strategic partnership across sectors. In essence, they are building *structural equity* in their communities and regions by creating seamless pathways that lead directly into community college and on to a four-year degree and/or a career.

## SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

By ***partnering deeply with local school districts*** to build college aspirations and improve curricular alignment between high school and college, SBCC has helped ensure that far more students—especially among the region's growing population of first-generation Latino students—not only go to college but start college academically prepared to succeed.

Like many community colleges across the country, California's community colleges have been under pressure to increase student success, including transfer and degree attainment rates. In 2015, less than half of California community college students graduated within six years of entry.[3] And, like many community colleges across the county, those in California enroll many students who are unprepared for college-level work. Between 70 and 90 percent of incoming freshmen entering California's community colleges are placed in pre-college level English and/or math.[4] Getting more students to the finish line who start out so far behind when they enroll is a daunting task.

Rather than only investing resources in remediating students once they arrive on campus, Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) has taken a different approach: working with prospective students far before they even enroll in college—and, hopefully, before they fall behind academically. That meant going all the way back to ninth grade.

"It started with: What we can we do to increase the academic preparation of high school students coming into community colleges or going to universities?" said Jack Friedlander, executive vice president at SBCC, a 2013 winner of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. "We thought that by students being motivated and having a clear goal—to understand why they're taking that math and why they need to take English and the other [general education courses]—they'd be more successful and more serious in their

Santa Barbara City College

3 California Community Colleges, "2016 Statewide Student Success Scorecard," http://scorecard.cccco.edu/reports/OneYear/000_OneYear.pdf.

4 California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills Completion: The Key to Student Success in California Community Colleges*, http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/AA/BasicSkills/2013Files/BSI_E-Resource_10-18-13.pdf.

SBCC
ORIENTATION
Student Ambassador
International Student Support Program

studies." From this big-picture thinking, the Get Focused, Stay Focused program was born.

The Get Focused, Stay Focused program is a partnership between SBCC and two nearby school districts—Goleta and Santa Barbara. It's anchored in a college-credit course that SBCC provides to all ninth-graders (free of charge), which helps students think about long-term career aspirations and the academic preparation needed to reach them. By the end of their freshman year, students have a digital 10-year plan, which they reference and modify in units incorporated into their English and/or social studies courses in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. These units require students to apply their research, critical thinking and writing skills to explore potential careers they are interested in pursuing, colleges and universities that offer these types of programs, and steps they could take to prepare themselves to secure positions in their desired career field and to be admitted to the universities they identified that are aligned with their career objectives. (Some teachers utilize these units after state standardized tests are completed in the spring in order to keep students engaged and to keep content relevant in those remaining weeks before summer.) They also talk about financial aid, the types of internships and summer jobs that will support their long-term goals, and the financial consequences of not acquiring the credits and skills they need to in high school. Some students have opportunities to job-shadow in their preferred industries as well.

For students at SBCC, a Hispanic-serving institution with a growing Latino population—many of whom are the first in their family to go to college and more likely than not to come in with an undeclared major—this early planning and career focus can be transformational. "Usually, you ask a high school student, 'Where do you want to go to college?' and they say, 'I want to go to this college … because it's got a good reputation'—as opposed to, 'I want to go there because it's got a really strong program in actuarial science,'" Friedlander said. "It's a very different way of thinking about college choice." In 2015, Get Focused, Stay Focused became a nonprofit and now works with more than 100 high schools to implement these 10-year career plans.

To launch the program, SBCC leaders first focused on identifying K-12 superintendents and principals interested in the idea. Once those school leaders were hooked, they took it back to their districts and schools and led the implementation and execution. "They did all of the selling for us," Friedlander said. And once teachers started piloting the 10-year plan, other teachers started to see how much it engaged students—and it grew from there. "Teachers sold other teachers—they were the pioneers," he said.

SBCC continues to facilitate cross-sector collaboration to keep the program fresh and responsive to new demands. Twice annually, SBCC hosts all of the area high school counselors to talk about challenges, experiences, and potential improvements in the way college preparation and advising are delivered. Additionally, in 2016, SBCC began funding a new counselor position that rotates among its feeder high schools, providing information to students about postsecondary options. SBCC invested in this position, at the request of the school district, in order to create an even stronger link between the two institutions.

It might seem odd for a community college to expend significant resources working with high schools to motivate students to prepare for college—students who might not even ultimately enroll in that institution. But SBCC has fundamentally reconfigured its definition of student success by thinking about students' aspirations and preparation far before they reach a college campus. "We felt the best way to [motivate students] was not to give them another lecture about why it's so important for them to go to college," Friedlander said, "but to think of their self-interests [and involving them] in the discovery of themselves through guidance—in terms of what kind of lifestyle they want and what career choice will get them there."

This year, among students who participated in the Get Focused, Stay Focused program and enrolled at SBCC, 79 percent are proficient in reading and math.[5] (Among Latinos, who comprise 40 percent of SBCC's student population, it's 72 percent.[6]) But the impact is even larger. "A lot of these students [who participate in Get Focused, Stay Focused] don't go to community college; they'll go to a [four-year] university," Friedlander said. "But at least they have a clear idea of what they want to do."

## EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By ***understanding the unique challenges in the region and partnering closely with K-12 districts***, EPCC has helped to embed a college-going culture in the region's schools and developed alignment between high schools and the college that dramatically reduce students' need for remedial education.

For more than 20 years, leaders from K-12 school districts and local colleges in El Paso, Texas, have come together for one important reason: to strengthen the connection between the two sectors, creating seamless educational opportunities that are affordable and accessible to the region's students. The partnership started in the 1990s with dual credit options for teenagers, which allowed them to earn college credit while still in high school. By 2005, it expanded to early college high schools, which are—in most cases—housed on high school campuses and offer college-level coursework (and

5 Data provided by Jack Friedlander, executive vice president

6 Ibid.

credits) to students for free. Ideally, graduates of early college high schools earn an associate degree alongside their high school diploma. Thanks to these programs, 73 percent of El Paso's early college high school graduates finish with a diploma and an associate degree.[7] (Nationally, early college high schools confer associate degrees to 31 percent of their students.[8])

These incredible outcomes require a significant level of ongoing collaboration, intentionality, and investment of time and resources. "From day one … the intent was: Let's create some high schools … and put the curriculum and programming in place so they can get their associate degrees," said Steven Smith, vice president for instruction and workforce education at El Paso Community College (EPCC). That has required regular meetings (that continue to this day) where representatives from El Paso's K-12 schools and the colleges align instruction and practice. "It makes sure the appropriate coursework is in place," Smith said. "It's not just a hodgepodge of credits that are offered—they're specific programs."

Additionally, a group of superintendents, principals, student support specialists, educators, and representatives from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)—called the Early College High School Leadership Council—meets once per semester to talk about any changes in education requirements, including those happening at the state level, that may affect these schools. El Paso plans to open its tenth early college high school this fall.

**For a more detailed profile of cross-sector partnerships in El Paso, see *Addressing the 61st Hour Challenge: Collaborating in El Paso to Create Seamless Pathways from High School to College* by Nancy Hoffman & Valerie Lundy-Wagner (Jobs for the Future, March 2016).**

Sustaining this level of collaboration between the instructors of two separate educational institutions, which operate under separate accountability and governance structures, is hard work. The meetings require a significant investment of time and other resources, as well as the will to act on information that emerges from the meetings. And for children in El Paso, the assumption isn't always that they'll go to college. Twenty-one percent of the county's population, ages 25 and older, have a bachelor's degree; and 23 percent live in poverty (above the national average of 15 percent).[9] "There's no disputing the fact that we're somewhat isolated," said William Serrata, EPCC president. The city is in the geographically isolated western-most tip of Texas, which makes the community college's efforts all the more instrumental in sustaining and building El Paso's livelihood.

Of teens who go on to college, about 85 percent stay local, enrolling at either EPCC or UTEP.[10] Much of the region's population is Latino, and many of the students in the K-12 system come from families with no postsecondary credentials. This is, in part, why EPCC works to begin instilling a college-going mindset as early as elementary school. "Our freshman class of 2025 is in third grade right now," Serrata says, matter-of-factly.

The college "adopted" its third elementary school this year—and by adopting, they contribute $10,000 to the school to bill it as a "college-bound elementary school." Students receive T-shirts that say "Future College Student" and backpacks; educators and support personnel are asked to display their college degrees in their classrooms and offices; and third grade is referred to as the high school graduating class of 2025 and college graduating class of 2029, for example. The college also buses students to the nearest of its five campuses for tours and other events.

El Paso Community College

7 Phone interview with President William Serrata

8 Michael Webb with Carol Gerwin, *Early College Expansion: Propelling Students to Postsecondary Success, at a School Near You*, March 2014, http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Early-College-Expansion_031714.pdf.

9 United States Census Bureau, "Quick Facts," http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00,48141 (accessed April 29, 2016).

10 Phone interview with President William Serrata

The hope is that, by talking about college from a young age, it won't become a question—but more an affirmation—in middle school. By the time students are in the eighth grade, EPCC tests them to see if they're eligible to begin taking college-credit coursework in high school. Leaders say providing these dual credit opportunities is advantageous for a few reasons: It gets students started on a long-term educational goal, exposes them to the rigorous coursework they'll encounter in college, and saves them money. Of the students who earn dual credit in high school through EPCC, 80 percent matriculate into college; among graduates without dual credit, 33 percent matriculate.[11] Each year, more than 1,000 early college high school graduates enroll in their first year as juniors at UTEP.

And among students who enroll at EPCC, Serrata says they see higher caliber students than in previous years. Three years ago, 17 percent of all faculty contact hours at EPCC were in developmental education; last year, it was 12 percent. "We're all in this together to have a collective impact to move the region forward," Serrata said. "If we increase the educational attainment level in our region, that will inherently increase our quality of life."

## LAKE AREA TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

By *intentionally analyzing student outcome data disaggregated by Pell eligibility, redefining measures of success to include students' labor market outcomes, and working intentionally to design programs that link to careers*, LATI has not only completely eliminated disparities in graduation rates for Pell recipients but also ensured those students secure good jobs after they graduate.

Lake Area Technical Institute

For colleges like those among the Aspen Prize finalists and winners—especially those with graduation rates astonishingly higher than the national average—it might be easy for leaders to be complacent. But the commitment to continually improve (that gets those institutions to such high levels of success in the first place) is precisely what prevents complacency. Because community colleges serve so many first-generation and low-income students, achieving high and continually improving levels of student success requires that they have structures in place that keep equity top of mind and in turn, ensure that equitable student outcomes are consistently monitored and gaps are acted upon. In particular, structures to improve equity have to be supported by an ongoing analysis of, and learning from, data disaggregated by race/ethnicity and income.

That's just what leaders at Lake Area Technical Institute (LATI), in Watertown, South Dakota, were doing a few years ago when they were plotting to improve the already-exceptional graduation rate. When they compared those rates by demographics, they saw something they hadn't before: Pell Grant recipients were graduating at a rate 8 percentage points behind non-Pell students. Pell recipients also were more likely to stop at a certificate, rather than continuing to an associate degree. That finding didn't sit well with leaders, and the data helped build urgency for closing those gaps.

"When you think about it, a college degree is an abstract thing—to most people, but particularly to high school students," said Michael Cartney, president at LATI, a three-time Finalist with Distinction for the Aspen Prize. For low-income students, community college can be a catapult out of poverty, but beyond that, the connection to real life isn't always apparent. "When you talk about a degree, they're probably going to look at you and bounce their head up and down and say, 'Yeah, I'm working toward a degree,'" Cartney said. "But it's a lot more powerful for them to say they're working toward a specific occupation, or 'I'm going to be an energy technician … and I'm going to make $50,000 a year six months after graduation.'" And the college's cohort model does just that.

11 Ibid.

At LATI, students don't just apply; they must declare a major in order to enroll. Once admitted, they're assigned a cohort, ranging in size from 20 to 100 students (depending on major), that moves through a prescribed series of courses needed for the occupation students are studying for. The cohorts help students avoid wasting any time or money in coursework they don't need. For the Pell recipients who comprise half of the population at LATI, this efficiency is of particular importance. It forces students to be deliberate about their career choice from day one. Rather than working toward a degree in auto mechanics, for example, they're working toward becoming an auto technician. This gives them purpose in their day-to-day work and a sense of how their education connects to their long-term goals.

Moreover, the cohort model provides a critical support net of peers who can serve as a source of morale and encouragement when—as they often do—life challenges get in the way of education.

Since LATI began intentionally splicing the data and focusing on low-income students, the gap in graduation rates between Pell Grant-eligible students and non-Pell students has closed. Last year, Pell students even outperformed non-Pell students with a graduation rate of 84 percent compared to 79 percent, respectively.[12]

But gathering data is only a tool that helps keep the focus on results. The real catalyst for change is a multi-faceted strategy that LATI leaders have employed to encourage more equitable success—a strategy that is centered on a broad definition of student success.

In 2014, leaders decided that graduation rates didn't fully capture whether students had succeeded, so they drew a stronger line to careers—by including job placement rates in their definition of success. "By doing so, you change the entire conversation … from the time you sit down with a potential applicant," Cartney said. "The question isn't, 'What classes do you want?' It's, 'What do you want to be after you graduate?' It really pushes the concept that college is a pathway, not a destination."

Lake Area Technical Institute

Leaders rely on six-month, post-graduation data from the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, as well as longer-term data from the National Student Clearinghouse. They also track graduates' salaries and whether they stayed in South Dakota. College leaders follow up with local employers to see that graduates are meeting workplace expectations—and if not, LATI faculty work to adapt instruction accordingly. Cartney says, "We have to recruit and get [students] in the door, retain them, keep high marks in student satisfaction, and graduate them. So success now includes all of those things, plus placement."

To codify this change in the definition of success, Cartney also revised the college's mission statement to include "changing lives and launching careers," which recognized the importance of embedding a big-picture student success vision in the culture of the college. "The mission statement ripples down through your whole organization," he said. "This made sure that everybody knew this wasn't just something we were giving lip service to, and this was something very important and something that needed to happen if we were going to raise our graduation rates."

The shift in paradigm reflected in the new mission statement sends an important message to parents, as well, Cartney added. "If you can get a parent thinking less about … a particular degree from a particular place, and rather, more focused on what their child's future is going to be, that changes the conversation for them too." What could be more powerful for a student from a family that has never been to college?

12 Data provided by President Michael Cartney

# VALENCIA COLLEGE

By ***partnering deeply with a four-year institution, establishing structures that fundamentally change students' transfer experience, and embedding commitment to equity throughout the college and its partners***, Valencia has more than doubled the number of students earning associate degrees since 2005, increased by more than 10 percentage points the completion rates of Latino students, and dramatically improved the rates at which low-income and underrepresented minority students go on to earn bachelor's degrees after transfer.

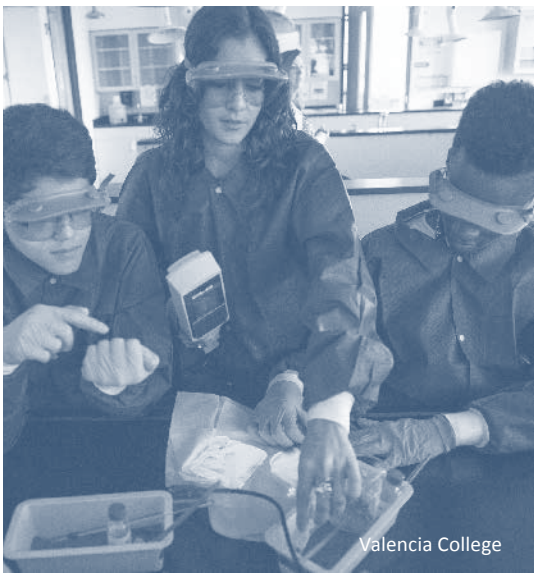
More than a decade ago, Florida's community colleges had begun to create bachelor's degree programs of their own to meet the demand that remained as four-year universities became increasingly more selective. More often than not, those most negatively impacted by increasing selectivity and competition were first-generation and low-income students, which exacerbated inequities in a region home to a rapidly growing Latino community.

Rather than competing, the presidents at Valencia College and the University of Central Florida (UCF) collaborated to establish a transfer program that would not only avoid competition, but also bring a four-year degree within reach for many in their shared community who might otherwise have not had access to one.

Called DirectConnect, the transfer program is much more than an articulation agreement between two-year and four-year institutions. More than aligning transfer credits, leaders and faculty at Valencia and UCF collaborate to ensure courses feed into one another; that rigor and expectations are consistent from one campus to the other; and that students who graduate from Valencia succeed at UCF. The partnership is built on information-sharing and a deep curricular collaboration for which having adequate data is critical. For example, if a student takes a general education science course at Valencia, is she more or less likely to pass a higher-level science course at UCF? Or once a student enrolls at UCF, how likely is he to change his major, which might extend time to degree? And among students of color, what percentage are transferring? What's their average GPA, and how many are graduating within three years? The commitment to finding answers to these kinds of questions—and addressing the weaknesses and disparities in student outcomes that emerge—help make DirectConnect the success that it is, but these questions couldn't be addressed if Valencia or UCF didn't share the outcomes of each of those courses and the trajectories of the students in them.

"This requires a level of data-sharing—sometimes at a student-record level—that many institutions are not prepared to exchange," said Kurt Ewen, presidential fellow and former assistant vice president of institutional effectiveness and planning at Valencia. This ensures that courses on either side of the transfer fit together seamlessly. Ewen said Valencia leaders largely have relied on—and shared—student outcome data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and income, to be able to identify trends at a granular level. This means not only tracking transfer, retention, and bachelor's degree attainment, but also breaking down that data by race/ethnicity and gender and comparing it over time in order to spot trends and any gaping holes in students' progression toward graduation.

UCF sends regular feedback reports to Valencia and the other community colleges that feed into the university. The report includes data on transfer students, including enrollment by each community college, average GPA, number of terms to degree, whether students changed their major, and degree attainment rates. This allows stakeholders on both ends of the pipeline to see how students' experiences connect and align—and adjust approaches and supports, when necessary. The reports also illustrate the impact this partnership has had among Valencia's Latino students, who now comprise the majority of students transferring to UCF from Valencia. Since 2010, the percentage of Valencia transfer students who are Latino has increased from 49 percent to 57 percent. And of the Valencia transfers who graduated from UCF in 2015, 29 percent were Latino and 12 percent were black—both larger percentages than those of the general graduating population at UCF.[13]


Valencia College

13 UCF Office of Institutional Research, *UCF Florida College System Consortium Partners' Student Success Feedback Report, Valencia College 2014-2015*, http://valenciacollege.edu/governance/llc/documents/IR30815UCFStudentSuccessFeedbackReports-VC.PDF.

Ewen says much of this data-sharing is possible, thanks to the strong relationships between—and the longevity among—leaders on both campuses. Sandy Shugart joined Valencia as president in 2000; at UCF, John Hitt has been in office since 1992. Both remain today, 10 years into DirectConnect, and that consistency has contributed to the program's vitality and success, leaders say. "Everything stems from high-level presidential and executive-level leadership on both sides of the transfer," Ewen said. "These have to be in place for the nature of relationships to not only be meaningful, but impactful, to students."

Data-sharing has also had an additional (positive) side effect: encouraging more buy-in among faculty, some of whom initially remained a bit skeptical. "One of the hurdles we had to overcome early on was getting university professors at UCF to believe that the guarantee of admission to UCF once you've completed an associate degree at Valencia wasn't a lowering of standards," Ewen said. Much of that initial doubt dissipated as faculty from both institutions worked together to ensure courses from Valencia appropriately fed into courses at UCF. And the data that came later confirmed what they all had been working toward—successful transfers for students. "Certainly, the data-sharing and curricular alignment activities continue to reinforce the fact that we're serious about rigor, they're serious about rigor, and by working together, we can make sure it all happens well," Ewen said.

**For an in-depth description of Valencia College's partnership with University of Central Florida, see *Collaborating for Student Success at Valencia College* by Jessie Brown and Martin Kurzweil (Ithaka S+R, October 2015).**

Currently, the two institutions are working on a multi-institutional predictive analytic pathway, which would allow a deeper level of data-sharing. "We'd be able to give students a whole lot better advice about their optimal path from Valencia to UCF by looking at comparable students in Valencia's history and UCF's history," Ewen said—advice like which courses to avoid taking at the same time, which could increase the efficiency of a pipeline already delivering far more graduates than it used to.

The depth and robustness of the partnership between Valencia and UCF reflects perfectly the notion of building structural equity. Through extensive sharing of data and maintaining a continual process of communication and knowledge-sharing, the two institutions are achieving greater equity in student access and success despite the fact that DirectConnect does not explicitly target any particular group. Rather, DirectConnect creates more equitable outcomes by fundamentally redesigning the student transfer experience to eliminate barriers that disproportionately impact disadvantaged students.

Valencia College

It's a systemic strategy that works. Of all of the students who graduated from UCF in 2015, 41 percent came via DirectConnect transfer at one of the six community colleges. Of those DirectConnect graduates, Valencia contributed the largest share (60 percent)—nearly half of whom are students of color. In all, 64 percent of Valencia's DirectConnect students earned a degree within four years of transferring to UCF.[14]

The program has been pivotal for underrepresented students, who were impacted most as UCF became more selective. From 2005 to 2014, the number of students graduating from Valencia with an associate degree more than doubled—from 926 to 2,007.[15] Among Latinos, 46 percent earn an associate degree, an increase of 12 percentage points from a decade ago.[16] Through DirectConnect, Valencia bridges the gap to a four-year degree by delivering the rigor and the required coursework—at half the cost, on campuses accessible to local communities—that make enrollment attainable at one of the largest four-year universities in the country. It's that sense of purpose and certainty that can make the difference for underrepresented populations historically shut out of high-quality educational opportunities.

14 Ibid.

15 Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, *Promoting Equity & Student Success in Transfer Through Partnership: A Case Study of Two At-Scale Approaches.*

16 Ibid.

# STRATEGIES AND ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR BUILDING STRUCTURAL EQUITY

In the end, exceptional community colleges achieve structural equity by redefining student success to extend beyond college walls and taking strategic actions in line with that vision. In particular, we identify in these colleges' experiences three major strategies and a series of essential practices for achieving them.

## Strategy 1. Think Big Picture to Redefine Student Success and Set Equity Goals

*Essential practices:*

- ✓ Understand who your students are in their local and regional contexts
- ✓ Rely on data to set big-picture equity goals and identify strategies that extend beyond the college
- ✓ Define specific measures against which to benchmark progress

As a starting point for achieving equity in outcomes, colleges have to understand—in a deep and meaningful way, relying on data rather than anecdote or assumption—who their students are, where they're coming from, and what the opportunities are that exist for them in the region.

Santa Barbara City College, for example, decided to extend its reach into K-12 based on the recognition that too many students from the region's low-income and largely Latino communities were given neither the hope of attending college nor the academic preparation to do so. In El Paso, leaders saw the vast majority of students staying in the area, so in order to create a stronger local economy, they knew they would have to create a college-going culture that encouraged high school graduates to pursue the training they would need for the jobs that existed in the region.

But understanding students' experiences and the contexts of their lives is only the first step. Colleges have to set explicit, equity-focused goals that make clear for whom and on what measures student success needs to be improved. Colleges have to define what success means for students *beyond the walls of the campus*, whether it's transfer and completion of a bachelor's degree, placement in a job that pays a family-sustaining wage, or both.

Leaders at Lake Area Technical Institute redefined success to include not only graduation rates, but also job placement rates. That change in thinking spurred intentionality about designing programs that link directly to careers and provide students both the structure and the motivation and support they need to succeed. And at Valencia, leaders measure the college's success not just by the rates at which students transfer to a four-year institution but the rates at which they successfully complete a bachelor's degree after transfer, which are provided in regular feedback reports from the University of Central Florida.

Having set goals and established measures against which to benchmark progress, colleges have to also be committed to evaluating progress regularly and revising strategies as needed to ensure that the impact of all student success reforms are, indeed, equitable. Leaders should not assume that reforms will impact all students equally and should be vigilant and disciplined about examining outcome data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income, gender, age, and other factors that characterize the diversity of their student enrollment.

El Paso Community College

Valencia College

## Strategy 2. Work Externally to Change the Student Experience

*Essential practices:*

- ✓ Identify external partners vital to creating a seamless student experience
- ✓ Devise strategies that speak to the needs and goals of both partners
- ✓ Establish common metrics of progress and success
- ✓ Create structures for frequent and meaningful communication between partners about curriculum alignment and skills expectations
- ✓ Establish conditions through which all partners are accountable for success

Many effective community colleges have developed strong partnerships with key institutions in other sectors in order to help students succeed. Equity-focused institutions do so intentionally as a way of creating a fundamentally more equitable educational pathway for the most vulnerable populations in their communities.

This type of collaboration with the K-12 sector, four-year universities, and industry can be challenging—particularly as organizations in different sectors work under different sets of incentives, operate within different accountability and governance structures, and have different missions. Leaders at colleges that are spearheading such efforts must identify partners who are committed to improving student success, a precursor to implementing a seamless student experience, and then work to build a collective framework for action and evaluation. The Collective Impact framework offers important principles for developing practices that contribute to shared goals, measures, and accountability across a set of partners.[17]

Frequent, structured communication is vital. Santa Barbara City College created (and continues to maintain) a strong foundation for sharing the kinds of vital information needed to make the partnership with K-12 districts work: Instructors from the college and the high schools meet regularly to discuss curriculum; SBCC has embedded an adviser that rotates among feeder high schools and serves as a critical liaison; and the partners conduct annual training sessions for instructors in both sectors.

Partnerships also have to serve the interests of all the organizations involved. Business leaders, for example, may not be motivated purely by the goal of helping students succeed—but they are motivated by the need to hire qualified employees. At Lake Area Tech, leaders looked for opportunities to make local employers partners in their student success initiatives, as those employers stand to gain the most benefit from well-trained graduates. To do so, they asked employers to split the cost of funding full-ride scholarships for low-income students. In exchange, students commit to work for the employer for three years. So industry invests, the community college provides, and students succeed.

And though the community college can be the driving force behind these types of deep partnership, others have to be equally accountable for their success. The terms of the partnership need to make clear what the contributions and expectations are of each partner and what resources will be dedicated, in an ongoing way, to ensuring shared success. The DirectConnect partnership between Valencia and UCF epitomizes this notion of shared accountability: Both institutions measure their own success based on the outcomes of students who transfer between them, meaning both institutions have a stake in the students' total four-year experience, not just their two-year segment of it.

17 For more information about the Collective Impact Framework developed by FSG, go to http://www.fsg.org/approach-areas/collective-impact.

## Strategy 3. Work Internally to Build Urgency and Commitment to Equity Goals

*Essential practices:*

- ✓ Build urgency and leadership commitment throughout partnering institutions
- ✓ Create systems for regularly analyzing and discussing data
- ✓ Celebrate wins and build success on success
- ✓ Evaluate effectiveness and revise goals and strategies

While specific goals and strategies differ from one institution to the next, one common component at successful community colleges is strong leadership that not only embodies a student-centric mission, but also creates the expectation that others will follow suit. Sustaining the structures that fundamentally change the student experience requires a wide net of leaders beyond the president who are dedicated to the partnership and can continue the work required for it even after the initial champion of the effort is gone.

Much of the success seen at Valencia can be traced back to its president, Sandy Shugart, who has been in the position since 2000. He's forged and maintained a close relationship with the president at UCF, and both presidents have been deliberate about diffusing the commitment to that relationship among other leaders at both colleges. Seeing the enduring commitment of leaders to spend their own time and their institutions' resources in advancing partnership goals, administrators and faculty at both institutions now work closely together to align curricula and share data on students' progression between the two institutions.

But asking individuals throughout the college to commit to an equity goal isn't enough; some may nod their heads in agreement when the president expresses a new vision and then continue business as usual. True distributed leadership around equity requires that top leaders *manage the change culturally*: They have to build urgency around an equity imperative, use successes to incrementally build buy-in, and create incentives and accountability mechanisms that hold individuals throughout the organization accountable for implementing and measuring success in their part of the bigger strategy.

In El Paso, leaders from the K-12 and higher education sectors have worked together for more than 20 years, creating various dual credit opportunities for teenagers in the region. And although leaders changed in that time, the work did not—because no one person from K-12 schools, El Paso Community College, or the University of Texas at El Paso is solely responsible for driving these initiatives. Rather, commitment to the partnership has been *institutionalized* in processes and practices, including regular meetings to discuss curricula, analyze student success data and evaluate progress, and identify shared opportunities for development and improvement.

As a president, the decision to invest resources (financial or otherwise) beyond the campus perimeter is a risky one. There will always be great needs on campus: improvements in facilities, investments in professional development, raises in acknowledgement of faculty and staff's hard work, and so on. When the campus community sees leaders investing time and money in K-12 schools or in partnerships with other institutions or industry, it's natural for them to regard these as neglecting more important and immediate needs.

Leaders have to be prepared for this resistance and be dedicated to building buy-in incrementally through such intentional, disciplined tactics as setting a clear student success vision, finding champions for the vision among faculty and staff, scoring and celebrating early wins, and then using success to beget more success.

Santa Barbara City College

# CONCLUSION: LEADING FOR EQUITY

The exemplary colleges profiled here showcase various approaches to creating the structures and policies that foster more equitable educational pathways for students. In every case, their efforts extend beyond campus—into the K-12 sector to better prepare and bridge the transition to collegiate-level work, into four-year universities to boost students' likelihood for success, and into the workforce to ensure training matches demands. While these institutions have distinct approaches, one thing is common: Each operates as one rung in an education and career ladder, linking with the rungs before and after it. No excellent community college operates in isolation.

Leaders at El Paso Community College and Santa Barbara City College concentrate their efforts on instilling a college mindset in students long before they begin thinking about their postsecondary plans. Through high expectations, structured guidance, and early exposure to collegiate-level work, they aim to help students shape those plans into pathways that lead students toward family-sustaining careers.

At Lake Area Technical Institute and Valencia College, leaders focus on creating seamless and accessible connections to life after community college, whether that be a career or four-year university. By enlisting a shared commitment from industry and a four-year university, these institutions have created pathways that not only strengthen purpose and direction for students, but also—and most importantly—bring more opportunities within reach for the students who, too often, don't have them.

Leaders at these institutions acknowledge that it's not enough to craft programming and supports, in hopes that they will reach the underrepresented students who most need them. Nor do they assume that reforms on campus, though important, will serve automatically as "rising tides that lift all boats." Instead, they identify the groups of students they are not serving well, learn about the obstacles those students face, and tailor their strategies accordingly. That's how they move graduation rates higher year after year; it's how they lift more low-income students out of poverty and into self-sustaining careers; and it's how they've created pipelines that benefit all students—and especially those who most need it.

These practices require hard, sustained work and the willingness to take risks with the confidence that students' successes outside of college perimeters will contribute, if indirectly, to the long-term success of the college itself. They require leaders to think big and to redefine not only the college's definition of student success but also their own measures of their impact.

*Structural equity*, as we've described it through these examples, requires an intentionality about making the community college the agent of change for a whole community. And accomplishing that goal means working across an ecosystem—not just during the two or three years while a student is enrolled, but in true partnership—to secure a better future for the young people and adults who may one day pass through campus.

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**https://theconversation.com/online-learning-during-covid-19-8-ways-universities-can-improve-equity-and-access-145286**

# Online learning during COVID-19: 8 ways universities can improve equity and access

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This summer, universities around the world planned for an unprecedented back-to-school in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In most universities, centres of teaching and learning are responsible for supporting faculty members' teaching for more effective student learning and a high quality of education.

Our collaborative research group, based at Université Laval, Concordia University, Florida State University, University of Southern California and San Francisco State University, sought to better understand how universities planned to make sure all students would have access to online learning and be able to participate as courses moved online. Our team met remotely with staff from 19 centres in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Lebanon.

We analyzed publicly shared resources from 78 centres in 23 countries about about how instructors could transform online learning during COVID-19. We also compiled publicly available resources from these centres about ways to address educational equity in relationship to online learning.

We identified emerging best practices that many universities are recommending for improving students' equitable access online during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We also heard from staff at centres of teaching and learning that universities have a distance to go in understanding how to address racism online.

## Educational equity

We used the Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development's definition of educational equity to guide our questions. We also relied on a working definition of equity in higher education:

- All students are able to achieve equal learning outcomes as they are supported by institutions, faculty and other systems to engage in the learning process.
- All students are able to receive the financial, social and academic support and guidance they need to succeed in the institutional programs, thus enabling lifelong success as well.
- All students are given access to appropriate and effective learning opportunities, and instructional resources, activities, interactions and evaluative assessment — which are differentiated according to their unique sets of characteristics and needs.

## COVID-19 & student vulnerability

Staff who participated in our study identified many problems students were facing in accessing online learning. Students were working from home; some international students had returned to their home countries. Many students lacked access to a computer, the internet or adequate bandwidth to support synchronous video conferencing.

According to both publicly shared resources from centres for teaching and learning and information relayed by directors, factors accentuating student vulnerability at the onset of the pandemic included: physical and/or learning disabilities; sickness or stress due to the pandemic; issues related to technology access; students' existing information

communication competencies; official language proficiency; whether students had caregiving duties; socio-economic and immigration status; time zones; and students' racialization or ethnicity, gender, culture and religion.

Many factors accentuated students' need for personalized accommodation and support to achieve academically during rapid transitions online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Systemic racism**

Systemic racism was brought to the forefront, particularly after the death of George Floyd in the U.S., which catalyzed global anti-racist protests and calls for systemic change. University staff from centres for teaching and learning said addressing systemic racism was a priority. Many reported they were asked to produce guidelines and recommendations to address systemic racism and inclusion in online learning environments as quickly as possible.

However, they were being cautious not to rush this process as their goal was to develop effective measures that would result in positive change, a task that many also acknowledged requires careful consideration. They had unanswered questions such as such as: How can centres for teaching and learning provide support to students experiencing racism in the classroom? How can centres help reduce systemic racism in their centres and in teaching and learning contexts? How can they spread awareness of issues of systemic racism in online contexts?

**An equitable future**

Our analysis of online resources and discussions with staff in centres for teaching and learning revealed eight priorities from these centres to ensure an equitable and accessible online learning experience for students during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future.

1. Create accessible materials: Ensure that documents can be easily shared and printed; share documents and materials that are compatible with assistive technologies; adopt inclusive writing, respectful and sensitive to students from different backgrounds; provide descriptions in hyperlinks and images for students with visual impairments and using screen readers; format text in easily readable colours and fonts; provide course content materials in multiple formats.
2. Choose adequate digital technologies: Use university and institutional IT department-supported digital technologies; use digital technologies available for students in different time zones and international contexts; choose tools that include accessibility features, such as text-to-speech, high-contrast themes, enlarged cursors, closed-captioning, keyboard shortcuts and alternative text.
3. Record lectures, and caption videos and audio content: Ensure the asynchronous availability of lectures; facilitate the accessibility of these lectures or any other video or audio content through captioning.
4. Adopt inclusive culturally responsive teaching: Instill equity as a value in designing learning experiences; avoid one-size-fits-all instructional designs; be aware of the risks of a "colour blind" approach as claiming not to see race may mean ignoring racism or discrimination; explicitly value all students' experiences; design courses to activate students' cultural capital; make sure that all students are seen, heard, respected and valued for who they are.
5. Adopt a flexible approach to student participation: Prepare for flexible timing for student assessment; discontinue traditional three-hour lectures; opt for asynchronous activities; give priority to project-based assignments in order to promote asynchronous participation; provide additional time for completing exams and other evaluations when necessary.
6. Ensure financial support and equipment: Facilitate students' access to financial aid and technological equipment, or provide this when possible during the pandemic to students facing financial constraints, no questions asked.
7. Understand student needs: Host panels with student organizations, identity-based equity centres, LGBTQ resource centres and multicultural centres, and other student-led groups where student panellists talk about their new reality and what they want faculty to know; administer ongoing surveys to monitor students' situations; pause and ask students about their needs, their expectations and how things are going with them — because they know best about their own situation.

8. Address systemic racism: Staff noted that as resource centres charged with supporting faculty in providing quality learning experiences and providing safe and equitable experiences for racialized students, there is more work to be done.

Our research group's work on this subject continues. On Oct. 2 we are holding an online symposium called "Leading the Future of Higher Ed — Planning for Sustainability".

# Anti-Racism in Higher Education: A Model for Change

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**Abstract:**

Racism continues to persist in higher education and traditional diversity initiatives that focus only on support resources and tolerance training continue to fall short in making lasting change on college and university campuses. The purpose of this scholarly paper is to present a model for change within higher education that distributes leadership and institutional power across racial lines and enlightens the White community about systemic inequities.

**Keywords:**

Racism, Anti-racism, Whiteness, Critical White Studies, Diversity Initiatives

# Anti-Racism in Higher Education: A Model for Change

Racism and white dominance have been a part of the United States higher educational system since its inception. The privileged mindset of white male founders who allowed Harvard College to admit only rich young White men continues to be pervasive today in both overt and covert forms. Despite attempts to attend to racial problems, United States higher education has not come very far in addressing systems of White dominance (Alvarez McHatton, Keller, Shircliffe, & Zalaquett, 2009; Dodge & Jarratt, 2013; Stage & Hammrick, 1994).

In the early American colonies, colleges and universities were never intended to educate people of color, though a number of campuses were built by the hands of Black slaves. Moreover, scholars have often silenced the voices and experiences of students of color in the re-telling of higher education history. During the early colonial era in particular, there was no indication of a desire or commitment to educate people of color (Thelin, 2004). In fact, the creation of universities was rooted in an anti-black ideology that benefitted from chattel slavery that built the early colleges in America (Wilder, 2013). However, later in this era, college presidents and board members abused education and misused Christian evangelism of converted Native Americans as a strategy to grow enrollment, increase funds, and to solicit donors in England (Thelin, 2004), revealing an early indication of what Critical Race Theory scholars would later refer to as interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In fact, one modern scholar argues, "The first five colleges in the British American colonies – Harvard…William and Mary…Yale…Codrington…and New Jersey—were instruments of Christian expansionism, weapons for the conquest of indigenous peoples, and major beneficiaries of the African slave trade and slavery" (Wilder, 2013, p. 17). Due to denied access to what we introduce as Traditionally White Institutions (TWIs), historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), though originally under-resourced, emerged during the post-Civil War Reconstruction era as a response to the demands to educate African Americans (Sissoko & Shiau, 2005). Centuries after the establishment of higher education institutions in the United States, a critical mass of students of color

were still not seen accessing, persisting, and graduating from TWI's until the 1960s (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014; NCES, 1995). Although access and persistence improved, "there has been a constant assault on the intellectual capacity of people of color" (Anderson, 2002, p. 4), which has resulted in policies and practices that have continued to limit full access to higher education to people of color. In addition to problems of access for students of color, other forms of racism have been embedded in the structures of higher education institutions and are regularly manifested through the campus climate.

## RACISM AND RACIAL VIOLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Students of color report experiencing both outright racial macroaggressions as well as racial microaggressions on campus (Chang, 2000; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Hurtado, 1992; Lowe, Byron, Ferry, & Garcia, 2013; Marcus, Mullins, Brackett, Tang, Allen, & Pruett, 2003; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000), therefore, college campuses are replete with stories of racialized bias incidents in the so-called post-racial American society. Fraternity members' overt racist actions (Moyer, 2015; Syrluga, 2015), racial epithets being written on campus property (Chan, 2015), acts of protest against people of color (Kolowich, 2017; Stripling, 2017) and deadly physical violence (Quintana, 2017; Yan, Simon & Graef, 2017) are a few examples of the racism that persists on college and university campuses. In fact, the prevalence of such overt and covert racial incidents is such that they cannot be adequately listed here. Suffice it to say, even the federal Department of Justice has reported that the third highest rate of race or ethnicity-related hate crimes occur in the educational system as a whole (Criminal Justice Information Service Division, 2018).

These events reveal a need for a deeper conversation on ways to address racial inequality within higher education. Research has historically addressed racial inequalities by focusing on support resources for students of color (Ash & Schreiner, 2016; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Paredes-Collins, 2013; Pyne & Means, 2013) and conducting tolerance training for higher education communities (Bennett, 2001). Recent scholarship has begun to address whiteness as an oppressive system

within higher education (Cabrera, 2012; Cabrera, 2017; Collins & Jun, 2017; Jun, Jones Jolivet, Ash, & Collins, 2018; Matias, 2013). However, studies have also shown that White higher education leaders remain caught in a cycle of deficit thinking (Ash, 2018; Risdon, 2019) in the midst of supporting students of color and encouraging the professional progression of leaders of color. They have failed to address within the White community systemic issues that result in racism.

Educational leaders should seek a better solution to address the scourge of racism that has historically impacted students of color in higher educational institutions other than simply offering individualized support for injured students of color. Leaders ought to do more than merely teach communities about cultural appreciation for the purpose of being tolerant of one another. In this article we argue that to dismantle systemic and structural problems associated with racism in higher education, some White leaders will need remedial education that focuses on systems of whiteness, power, and oppression rather than training on embracing individual tolerance and inclusive excellence. Simply stated, an intentional and sustained anti-racist activism ought to drive the collective consciousness of leaders, and this shift in mindset ultimately ought to lead to a significant change in educational policy. Before reviewing higher education's past and current diversity efforts, we set forth the conceptual framework that undergirds and guides the argument of this paper: Critical Race Theory.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework developed by legal experts and scholars in the early 1970s to counter a "historical deficit" that people of color faced in the U.S. legal system and various professions that privileged Whites. CRT scholarship is undergirded by the principle that racism is at the root of this historical deficit for people of color because it is deeply embedded in much of the White Western thought and culture. The work of CRT scholars has researched and explored the presence of systemic racism at all levels of social structures (Collins & Jun, 2017; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012) and how such systemic racism strengthens and perpetuates the power

held by the dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Sullivan, 2014). Since its original inception, CRT has been applied to various disciplines, including higher education (Brayboy, 2013; Brown & Jackson, 2013). CRT has seven tenets that give shape to the theory's framework, and of the seven, the permanence of racism, intersectionality, interest convergence, and whiteness as a property are of particular relevance to this study (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Dixson, 2013).

## PERMANENCE OF RACISM

The first tenet of CRT is a foundational premise—that racism is ordinary, deeply ingrained, and a permanent part of Western society. Scholar, Bell (1992), described racism's permanence in his 1992 book Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism. In the book, he discounted the White liberal notion that racism can be eliminated, arguing "racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society" (p. ix). Bell did not propose that people of color acquiesce to racism, rather, empowerment is realized in the struggle to fight racism itself (Bell, 1992; Brown & Jackson, 2013). Racism and its effect on people of color have been the accepted norm for centuries, as White hegemony has evolved to the degree that it allows many forms of racism to go unacknowledged, unconscious in the minds of Whites, and largely invisible (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Because racism remains invisible, most Whites unconsciously perpetuate its permanence (Collins & Jun, 2017; Lynn & Dixson, 2013). Further, addressing overt racist acts by individuals allows Whites to believe they are addressing racism effectively, but these responses, while helpful, will never challenge the permanence of racism. Instead, such public responses lull the dominant White culture into thinking they are addressing the problem, thus, allowing the deeply rooted systemic racism to invisibly persist. Dominant White Institutions (DWIs), which prove hostile to people of color, display the permanence of racism in policies, procedures, pedagogy, climate, and culture (Gusa, 2010).

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Another important tenet of CRT, intersectionality, describes the multiple layers or dimensions of identities of historically marginalized peoples (Crenshaw, 1989; Nash, 2008). Intersectionality challenges the notion of arbitrary binaries placed on race and gender by exploring the complexity of race and gender identities and how such complexities shape people (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality allows a researcher to simultaneously consider a multitude of complex social processes that comprise the whole person, such as gender, race, sexual identity, and socioeconomic background (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Nash, 2008). In the context of higher education, the theory of intersectionality is critical for leadership to utilize, as it considers the complexity of racial variation in students, faculty, and staff to avoid over-simplifying racial discourse or wrongly attempting to transcend difference at the expense of people's complex identities. Such attempts can have the effect of suppressing difference and asking people of color to assimilate into the dominant culture of whiteness.

## INTEREST CONVERGENCE

Interest convergence is a tenet of CRT and describes the concept that Whites in power will only accommodate racial equity for people of color when it converges with their own interests and is to the benefit of Whites (Bell, 1980; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Gillborn, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998). The founder of this concept, Bell (1980), contended that when pursuing equity becomes beneficial to Whites in power, then it becomes far more appealing, and there will be a greater willingness to pursue equity. However, when racial equity threatens White hegemony, support erodes. Whiteness can only be dismantled when Whites are aware of how their own actions might be perpetuating White hegemony and, thus, supporting the interests of the dominant culture. White leaders must move past considering the health and survival of an institution structured to perpetuate White dominance and oppress people of color, to working toward an institution that pairs concern for institutional health with an understanding

whiteness must be dismantled. For those Whites who currently hold positions of power in various higher education institutions, dismantling White hegemony and privilege will result in a profoundly different understanding of what it means to be White. In an institution where interest convergence is not preeminent, the interests of Whites as defined by whiteness are not always met. These interests are replaced by a new understanding of White identity in relationship to other racially constructed identities, in which a new normativity is mutually constructed by all to create a radical new community. (Risdon, 2019).

## WHITENESS AS PROPERTY

Another tenet of CRT that is critical to this study is the property characteristics of whiteness and how its establishment in the court of law set the stage for White hegemony. Dominant White culture has historically struggled to define whiteness through a specific set of physical traits or a particular culture lineage. Whiteness is a racialized system of definitions and dominant thinking derived from ideological beliefs that attempt to give parameters to the exclusivity of whiteness (Donnor, 2013; Lopez, 2003). The concept of whiteness rests on the objectification of African Americans, particularly as a subordinate racial class. Whiteness is an abstract and artificial construct, but interestingly, a construct legally recognized as something one can have or own (Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2009). As it made its way through the legal system, the property of whiteness began to inform the ratification of laws, policies, and procedures. This ratification established whiteness and its way of viewing the world as the cultural norm within the United States.

As legally recognized and sanctioned slavery of African Americans in the United States declined and retreated from public view, the concept of whiteness as property replaced it. Within the legal system, whiteness became a concept and legal means to allocate particular benefits in society exclusively to Whites. Laws were ratified and enforced that gave whiteness a unique status with privilege others were excluded from obtaining. Empowered by a legal system that recognizes its validity, whiteness as

property continues to overtly and subtly allow the demarcation between those who are White and all others. Only Whites were empowered to determine if persons deemed as "other" might hop on board the White compartment on a train (Bell, Higgins, & Suh, 1990; Donnor, 2013; Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2009; Lopez, 2003).

Central to CRT is the idea that power structures must shift and change to create more equitable environments within society as a whole. However, efforts to enact racial diversity have been lacking within the higher educational system. In what follows, we discuss the need to shift our current diversity efforts from a tolerance-based system to educating about whiteness and dismantling racial inequities.

## LITERATURE: WHITENESS, DIVERSITY INITIATIVES, AND POWER SHARING

### WHITENESS AND POWER

Much can be cited about the prevalence of a culture of whiteness that dominates the spaces of colleges and universities across the country. In our discussion of whiteness, we use the framework of Critical White Studies (CWS), which is a tenant of CRT and a body of scholarship that addresses the role that whiteness has played within society to reify white dominance and supremacy at the expense of other races (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). Collins and Jun (2017) have recently redefined the power and dominance of whiteness on a college campus by referring to Dominant White Institutions (DWIs) rather than the more commonly used term, predominantly White institutions (PWIs). In doing so, they highlight the role of power and downplay the compositional diversity that so many neoliberal educators use to measure and celebrate progress. Policies and procedures at DWIs reveal much about the White architecture of the mind (Collins & Jun, 2017) that drive most decision-making by White leaders in higher education. For the purposes of this paper, we have already referenced the term Traditionally White Institutions (TWIs) to denote those institutions that were

traditionally White at the time of the development of HBCUs. This term continues to apply to institutions that have a predominance of whiteness in its history. Additionally, we use the term Dominant White Institutions (DWIs) as described by Collins and Jun (2017). These scholars proposed that the term DWI highlights the dynamic role of power held within the institution by Whites. Hughey (2010) describes "hegemonic whiteness" (p. 1289) as an identity that both produces and maintains domination by the positionality of those marked White as superiors with power and privilege. Whiteness is internalized as normal and natural, in turn, marking non-Whites as abnormal and unnatural. Hegemony is "cultural power, including the dominant cultural patterns that achieve and sustain their dominance by encouraging—but not forcing—people to believe in them" (Parker, 2012, p. 867). Dominance and subordination, thus, are sustained, not necessarily by force, but through social practices, systems, and norms (McClaren 2009); the kind of practices, systems, and norms that are found in institutions of higher education. Systems of oppression are maintained because educational leaders do not challenge the validity of these norms and attitudes that perpetuate systems of domination and subordination because they are viewed as normal. The majority White culture that permeates DWIs and university campuses supply and secure the symbols, attitudes, and norms that embed a hegemonic frame.

White normativity is effective and pervasive in that the underlying systemic beliefs often unconsciously define whiteness as separate and superior to all that is "not-White". When campus diversity initiatives seek to address the challenges that confront White dominant narratives without educating the community about the realities of systemic racism and histories of White supremacy, those in the White community may describe themselves as the newly oppressed and demonstrate processes of White fragility (Hughey, 2010; DiAngelo, 2011; Twine & Gallagher, 2008), "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 54). Thus, those in the White community subconsciously rely on long-standing, flawed White hegemonic beliefs rooted deep within their psyches to perpetuate oppressive structures in higher educational institutions, a reality that Collins and Jun (2017) describe as the White architecture of the mind,

Peggy McIntosh (2003) in her seminal piece on the pervasiveness of whiteness described privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious" (p. 148). On college and university campuses, dominant group members are granted unearned privileges based upon the perception that membership belongs to those who possess certain characteristics and values related to that particular social group (Edwards, 2006; Lechuga, Clerc, & Howell, 2009). Although McIntosh's contributions to the understanding of White privilege have been critical in discussions on whiteness, we also highlight Cabrera's (2017) critique of McIntosh (2003) and his proposition that "White immunity" (Cabrera, 2017, p. 82) is a more accurate term than White privilege. Cabrera defines White immunity this way: "White immunity means that People of Color have not historically, and are not contemporarily, guaranteed their rights, justice, and equitable social treatment; however, White people are because they have protection from this disparate treatment" (p. 82). Although privilege and immunity focus on different aspects of whiteness (privilege emphasizes unearned gains and immunity describes a lack of unjust treatment), both underscore the need to include whiteness in discussions and initiatives of diversity in higher education.

## FAILED DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

The first significant initiative to diversify education racially was arguably the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision of the Supreme Court, which declared that segregating public schools based on race was unconstitutional. From 1954 to today, educational leaders have attempted to diversify schools based on race. However, this diversification effort was what Bell (1980) cited when he introduced the concept of interest convergence into CRT scholarship. He argued that this diversification only occurred because of the mutual benefit that enacting integration had on Whites. Furthermore, structurally diversifying schools did not result in a racial utopia. It was, in fact, quite the opposite. In other words, the underlying racist ideologies that were foundational in creating a segregated educational system did not disappear when laws

made school segregation illegal (Fine, 2004; Pickren, 2004). For example, after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, private Christian education surged in growth because of the concern that White Christians had with racial integration (Yancey, 2010).

One result of these ongoing problems related to race and higher education was the adoption of diversity initiatives to assist in communities becoming racially sensitive and tolerant of one another across racial lines. However, many of these initiatives have failed to educate about the reality and prevalence of White dominance and supremacy on campuses and have focused on merely changing individuals rather than dismantling structural inequalities that perpetuate systemic racism in college (Bennett, 1986; Case, 2007; Castellanos, Gloria, Mayorga, & Salas, 2007; Watt, 2007). This approach has had the potential to engage the difficulties from a deficit mindset, which frames "students and their families of origin as lacking some of the academic and cultural resources necessary to success in what is presumed to be a fair and open society" (Smit, 2012, p. 369) and constructs "images of people of color as outsiders, at-risk victims, commodities, and change agents" (Iverson, 2007, p. 586). These deficit approaches to improving higher educational institutions along racial lines continue the "subordination of people of color" (Iverson, 2007, p. 587) and the reproduction of racial inequality.

## DEFICIT THINKING

Valencia (2010) explained that the deficit model has racist roots dating back to the early 1600s and is used to explain the academic failures of low socioeconomic students of color. He defined the deficit-thinking model as the following:

> at its core, is an endogenous theory—positing that the student who fails in school does so because of his/her internal deficits or deficiencies. Such deficits manifest, adherents allege, in limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn, and immoral behavior. (p. 6-7)

This idea removes the blame of academic failure from the education system and places it on the individual and/or subgroup (Clycq, Nouwen, & Vandenbroucke, 2014). Deficit thinking permeates education when individuals lower their expectations of students of

color due to their negative views and stereotypes (Ford & Grantham, 2003). In higher education, deficit thinking is represented by educators labeling students as at-risk, underprepared, and low socioeconomic status (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009). Based on this mindset, many diversity initiatives are intended to bring a solution to what is perceived as a problem when the root of the problem is actually systemic issues, policies, and procedures.

Deficit thinking is found in hiring practices when white administrators use the phrase "a lack of qualified candidates" when referring to people of color. Gasman, Abiola, and Travers (2015) conducted a study on the lack of diversity at eight Ivy League institutions that recalled an incident with the president of the University of Pennsylvania, being questioned about the lack of faculty of color represented at the university. The president's response was a lack of qualified candidates. The authors noted that "the word 'qualified' is used as a euphemism, which allows people to ignore the need for diversity and thus to discriminate in hiring" (p. 1). Shifting the blame of hiring people of color away from the institution and placing it on people of color and their lack of being qualified is a clear example of deficit thinking.

Viewing emerging leaders of color through a deficit mentality continues to have a detrimental effect on any semblance of a developmental path for leaders of color in higher education institutions. This reality is especially true when those who hold such views continue to hold the seats of power at these institutions.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHIEF ABSOLUTION OFFICER

The role of the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) has emerged in higher education to oversee the "services and programs offered to students, faculty, and staff that seek to ensure compliance with non-discrimination and related policy and law, and to affirm social membership group differences in curricular, co-curricular, and workplace contexts" (Clark, 2011, p. 57). CDOs are executive level administrators who typically report to presidents or provosts and who utilize their personal charisma and relationships to execute their agenda (Leon, 2014). These agendas include diversity initiatives,

programs and trainings to increase diversity, confront systemic issues, and celebrate differences (Patton, 2017; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Metzler, 2003). However, many of the existing diversity initiatives, specifically related to race, fail to address systemic issues (Metzler, 2003) while shifting the blame on people of color. This failure is evidence of what is fundamentally problematic with diversity initiatives that are undergirded by dominant white ideology.

Metzler (2003) examined reasons why diversity initiatives fail and found that organizations neglect to address why groups and individuals are systemically oppressed and marginalized. He argued that when discriminatory behaviors are exposed, it reveals oppressive practices and the need to change the organizational culture (Metzler, 2003). A shift in organizational culture requires an overhaul of practices, policies, and procedures. On the surface, organizations with dedicated diversity initiatives may begin to be visibly diverse but continue to marginalize people of color if power dynamics and organizational structures are not examined and changed (Metzler, 2003). This marginalization can occur in several ways, one being the reification of a deficit mindset with regard to people of color when approaching the racial challenges within higher education. As for the CDOs, their roles are often relegated to serving as nothing more than *Chief Absolution Officers*. Ahmed (2012) argues that the work of the CDO can be understood as the "means by which organizations establish and maintain good will" (p. 142). They may be expected to become that senior administrator of color that university presidents often called upon or reference to clear racist policies or actions on behalf of all people of color. In this context, the CDO is more of a public relations employee rather than a diversity professional who is seeking to find solutions to complex problems within the institution (Ahmed, 2012). This expectation—that CDOs will assuage the guilt of their leaders' conscious or unconscious racist mindset and actions and serve as a key public relations representative for the school by navigating a tightrope of diplomacy and advocacy due to the political structures of higher education—is part of the problem of White supremacy in higher education (Ahmed, 2012). When CDOs find themselves in this position, they may experience the expectation to become complicit in perpetuating the system of dominance. However, when CDOs challenge White

supremacy by not falling into the trap of what we refer to as a *Chief Absolution Officer*, they hold presidents accountable for their racist mindsets and actions.

Institutions hire CDOs to implement diversity strategies that will help to absolve issues surrounding diversity but fail to provide adequate resources. In a study conducted by Williams and Wade-Golden (2007), they interviewed 110 CDOs and collected data from over 700 CDOs. They noted that some of the challenges CDOs face are the ambiguity of their role, lack of support staff, resources, and support to fulfill the demands of their responsibilities (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2007). No single individual can make the necessary changes for an institution to achieve their diversity goals.

## LACK OF SHARED POWER

Although recent studies show minor improvements in the number of leaders of color in higher education, Whites hold the overwhelming majority of leadership and regular faculty positions in higher education institutions nationally. Several studies reveal that, though there has been a steady increase in diversity among administration in higher education, the most senior level leadership is dominated by White people. A 2009 study reported that people of color collectively held less than one-fifth of the full-time administrative positions in higher education compared to Whites, which held close to 83% of the administrative positions (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). A more recent study that focused on the positions of president and chief academic officer (CAO) noted a troubling decline in people of color holding these positions at predominantly White institutions. Between 2008 and 2013, African Americans in the CAO position declined from 3.7 percent to 2.3 percent. Similar trends were noted for Asian-American CAO, 3.7 percent to 2.4 percent, and Hispanics, 1.5 percent to 0.8 percent (King & Gomez, 2013; Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009).

For the purposes of this paper, we collected data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS) on workforce demographics in higher education for 2015 to 2016. Table

1 displays staff national demographics for racial diversity among full-time employees, part-time employees, and graduate assistants at higher education institutions. Table 1 indicates that Whites dominate staff positions in higher education holding 67.2 percent of the positions. Among people of color, African Americans hold the largest percentage at 10.6 percent, followed by Hispanic/Latinos at 8.5 percent, and Asian American and Pacific Islanders at 7 percent. It is important to note that this collection includes historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). When looking at DWIs alone, the numbers shift to show an increase in White staff and slight decreases to each people of color group (Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009).

Table 1

*Statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS) on Workforce Demographics in Higher Education for 2015 to 2016*

| Racial Categories | Full-time | Part-time | Graduate Assistants | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nonresident alien | 63,664 | 17,030 | 108,144 | 188,838 |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 14,604 | 5,945 | 1,035 | 21,584 |
| Asian | 165,404 | 51,029 | 24,725 | 241,158 |
| Black or African American | 267,507 | 108,434 | 14,753 | 390,694 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 215,533 | 83,380 | 18,786 | 317,699 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 6,424 | 3,121 | 371 | 9,916 |
| White | 1,693,483 | 790,627 | 175,120 | 2,659,230 |
| Two or more races | 26,102 | 11,190 | 6,108 | 43,400 |
| Race/ethnicity unknown | 68,575 | 71,014 | 21,778 | 161,367 |

One traditional pipeline for senior leadership in higher education has been faculty positions. An examination specifically of faculty positions within degree-granting institutions in a 2013 study revealed that 78 percent were White, 6 percent were African American, 4 percent were Hispanic, 10 percent were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent were Native American/American Indian (Kena, et al., 2016). Additionally, a 2016 study by the American Council on Education (ACE) revealed 85 percent of the college presidents in the United States had been working in higher education prior to

taking the position of presidency. With 85 percent of college presidents being internal hires and the vast majority of current lower level staff positions still being held by Whites, any shift in composition diversity in senior leadership positions seems a long way off if we continue to rely on the "pipeline". Here is how author and speaker Jeff Chang (2018) described this same pipeline as POC experience it:

> The pipeline, that's what people of color get reduced to…to be dropped into the pipeline and sent across the U.S., right? And sometimes be in danger of leaking out and polluting things. And then you get to the other side of the country to be put in a barrel and then sent off somewhere only to be ending up in somebody's car getting burnt up. That's the pipeline. The question I always have for folks in the universities and arts world is, What have 25 years of pipelines done for us? It's got a lot of us burnt out and running fleeing from the system. And so, this is important, it's important for us to be able to change the culture in all of these different kinds of ways including the ways in which we completely think about what it means to be in these institutions. How do we create ecosystems, instead, that feed each other? That create support for each other, that help to foster more growth. Creating ecosystems as opposed to creating pipelines, might be the beginning of a way of actually achieving not just equity, but moving towards justice and an actual shift in the universities, so that 25 years from now, in 2043, we aren't having the same conversation.

The promise of pipelines to positions of power has been touted by current leadership in higher education as a way to promote emerging leaders of color, yet the changes in the racial landscape have barely improved. It is unacceptable that so little progress has been made in regard to the diversification of higher education leadership. Chang was relatively gentle in his critique of higher education's pipelines. However, if we consider his critique in looking at higher education systems, many Whites, across the political and social spectrum, are invested in holding tightly to their power and privilege. When Whites control the pipeline, they control the resource and how it is used. Power rests in the hands of those who control the pipelines. Those who control the pipeline commodify POC, often focusing on process over people, and in doing so, threaten to reduce or remove the humanity of those they are purporting to serve (Risdon, 2019). Whether the

focus is on faculty, staff, or senior leadership, the small percentages in ethnic-racial diversity within higher education is bleak, especially when compared to increases in racial-ethnic diversity among students. If educators and researchers have postulated that a pipeline to senior leadership for people of color has existed via staff or faculty positions, the data above seems to imply that this pipeline is either broken or perhaps never existed in the first place. It is time for a new model.

There is considerable literature on the pervasiveness of whiteness within higher education in the United States. To date, the term DWI has been used to describe higher education institutions where this pervasiveness exists. Gains in racial diversity within higher education should be celebrated, but such celebrations ignore the systems that favor and support hegemonic whiteness. Such hegemony is prevalent among higher education institutions (Hughey, 2009) sustaining power and privilege for Whites, while making it a hostile environment for staff and faculty of color (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009). The prevalent White hegemony has shaped and sharpened paths and pipelines that lead toward leadership within the institution to the advantage of Whites. Subsequently, people of color have been offered limited options within institutions. Many DWIs keep a firm grasp on power by offering "revolving door" positions to people of color, where a person of color previously held the position. Such hiring practices might satisfy racial diversity requirements for the institution but will ultimately undermine attempts to truly diversify the faculty with respect to race and ethnicity (Weinberg, 2008) keeping White privilege and power securely in place.

## MOVING FORWARD: A MODEL FOR CHANGE

For institutions to address problems of race, they must distribute power across racial lines and encourage a growth in the awareness of and engagement in addressing systems of injustice. We acknowledge that past efforts to address racial inequities in higher education—such as increasing support resources for students of color and increasing cultural awareness—remain important factors for scholars to study and educational

leaders to redress. However, educational leaders have incorrectly assumed that these initiatives are the primary solutions to problems that exist along racial lines within the higher educational system. An ideology that purports the answer to race-based problems in higher education to be found solely in providing additional support to students of color and cultural awareness training is an ideology that fails to understand the historical reality of systemic racism that has caused the very inequities that remain palpable today. Without addressing the more fundamental problems of systemic racism within higher education (i.e., a White racial hegemony within higher educational leadership and a lack of education about the historical realities of racism), the support resources will continue to be poured into a broken system that cannot support the very assistance being offered to it. Institutions must find new ways to achieve their stated goals and strategies. We conclude this paper with suggestions for sharing power across racial lines and educating the White community about issues of race and justice.

## SHARING POWER

It is not surprising that White people have permeated higher educational leadership given the historical foundations of access to college in the United States based on race. For example, Black people who graduated from higher education institutions before the Civil War numbered less than 30 (Ringenberg, 2006). With this racist foundation of the American higher educational system, today White people continue to hold the majority of leadership positions and White racial dominance is even greater among the highest levels of leadership (American Council on Education, 2012; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009), even though racial diversity in the workplace overall has steadily increased over the past 20 years in the United States (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). For example, a 2012 study revealed that at predominantly White institutions, only nine percent of college and university presidents were people of color (American Council on Education, 2012).

Institutional leaders must consider a change from White people filling the overwhelming majority of the highest positions of leadership to increasing the

percentage of people of color holding these leadership positions. Throughout this paper we explain this concept as "sharing power." We acknowledge the limitations of this term and describe our reasons for using it. The idea of sharing power implies that currently, there is an owner of that power. In other words, proposing that power should be shared across racial lines implies that Whites own the power and should, therefore, benevolently open the leadership doors to allow people of color to enter. To share implies entitlement (i.e., I will graciously give you part of what is actually mine), which does not interrogate the prevailing assumptions of existing power. One could argue that using this term further accentuates and legitimizes the White historical ownership of power within higher education and keeps Whites in the ultimate place of power with regard to a willful surrender of it. However, even though this term has its limitations, we also understand the need to expose the unfortunate reality associated with its problems. For example, as discussed previously, CRT scholars have argued that Whites will not *share* power willingly because of their adherence to interest convergence (Bell, 1980). Therefore, we use the term *share* to highlight that the surrendering and sharing of power, though not a historical practice among Whites, is necessary for institutional equity and inclusivity. We submit that the term helps to highlight the current reality of a dominance of whiteness within higher education; not only a statistical dominance, but a White dominant mindset (Collins & Jun, 2017). We are hopeful that the concept of "sharing" will expose the term and problematize it by highlighting the White structural dominance and White dominant and supremacist mindset within higher education leadership. We acknowledge the need is not only to share power, but also to surrender the power that has been dominated by one racial group throughout the history of higher education in the United States.

It is difficult to suggest ways in which people of color should position *themselves* for leadership roles when they have been denied access by those historically in positions of power. In other words, the process of people of color moving to the upper right quadrant in Figure 1 is not the responsibility of people of color, but Whites. To state this process as such would be to suggest that people of color have yet another responsibility for fixing a system that is historically disadvantaged them. For years, people of color within institutions have gone above and beyond their job responsibilities to address

climate issues and to provide spaces for students of color to feel valued and loved. Further, there has been an unwritten expectation for people of color to sit on diversity committees or assist with implementing diversity initiatives simply based on the criteria that they are a person of color. No doubt, people of color have been participating in the higher education system, but they have not had access to the highest positions of power to change the systems themselves. People of color obtaining positional power must begin and be driven by White administrators sharing and surrendering their own power. No longer can our current institutional leaders expect diversification to magically occur by following the same practices. Neither can administrators use the lack of qualified people of color as an excuse not to fill roles of leadership. Qualified educated people of color do exist. White administrators who have the capacity to shift power must examine their institutional structures and values to assess if they are willing to be a part of the solution or continue to perpetuate the problem.

If the pipeline does not work for educational leaders of color, then a new metaphor and model should be strategically designed and implemented. Borrowing from Chang's (2019) call for creating new ecosystems, current leadership must be very intentional in creating an ecosystem in which emerging leaders' identities are recognized and celebrated. That these leaders are not asked to shed certain layers of their identity to better "fit in", but that they thrive and are supported for they are and are becoming.

One practical step is to ensure that a building block supports a path for educational leaders of color who are positioned to move into the highest places of leadership within higher education. This may begin within the educational system itself when undergraduate and graduate students study in environments where all students, faculty, and staff are educated about racism and seek to end it within their schools. In our current systems, we put the onus on POC to adapt and change. However, in a new ecosystem, the water has been changed so that everyone understands that they must grow and adapt because we are deeply dependent upon one another for all to thrive. So, where racism is redressed, all have a greater opportunity to achieve their highest potential. A new environment could result in a greater number of PhD candidates of color, resulting in an increase of faculty of color, then department chairs, then deans, then vice presidents, and presidents of color across the educational spectrum. As this leadership

shift occurs, policies will shift along with the power, and campus communities will begin to reflect not only racial diversity but also the kind of racial justice that has been long wonting on college campuses for centuries.

## RE-EDUCATING WHITE LEADERS

White leaders must practice self-examination to understand how they fit into the social construct of whiteness and how that whiteness consciously and unconsciously affects their leadership decisions. Too often Whites have not cultivated a deeper criticality to recognize the systemic nature of oppression, as neither their own lived experiences nor their public or private education effectively educated them on the realities of life for People of Color. They often, thus, avoid this critical stage of identity development both to their own detriment, but even more so to the detriment of those around them, particularly people of color (Gusa, 2010; Collins & Jun, 2017). The understanding of self shapes one's sense of identity (Collins & Jun, 2017; Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Renn, K. A., 2009). Understanding whiteness in relation to self (Reason, R.D., Roosa Millar, E A., & Scales, T. C., 2005; Helms, 1990) and developing a "realistically positive view of what it means to identify as white" (Collins & Jun, 2017) informs White identity development. Whites in positions of influence or power must understand not only how whiteness has systemically privileged them, but also, they must develop an awareness of how whiteness has shaped their conscious and unconscious thinking processes related to race. Without this self-examination and exploration, Whites will not be able to be fully aware of systemic racism.

We propose that this kind of learning must begin with the boards of trustees and presidents of institutions. These leaders should incorporate into their annual work responsibilities the process of learning the racial history of whiteness, the way whiteness impacted the inception of their institutions, and personal work related to their own conscious and unconscious biases. This latter work should include an outside consultant meeting individually with each White board member and the president (if he or she is White) to provide an assessment of the present state of understanding and the growth

that is needed from each individual to move closer to a conscious understanding of racial biases to change behaviors and the processes of making institutional decisions. An important part of this exploration is discovering the moments that their ascendancy to a position of power was aided by invisible opportunities not afforded to people of color (McIntosh, 2012: Giroux, 1997). The president's cabinet and/or senior advisors who are White would then go through the same process followed by the White middle managers of the institution.

A common pitfall that many Whites face as they seek to build racial consciousness is coming to terms with their own racial fragility with regard to the fears of losing privilege and power. Researchers on White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011a) have found that often White people who serve as anti-racist allies have faced and worked on their own White fragility along the way. Since they rarely faced significant racial stress before engaging in racial justice advocacy, most Whites have not had the opportunity to construct cognitive and effective skills to develop the stamina that would allow for constructive engagement when facing difficult racial matters (DiAngelo, 2011a). Essentially, Whites need to develop the skills that people of color have long mastered for the sake of survival. Should Whites not engage in this way, when facing moments of racial stress, they may instinctively engage in attitudes and behaviors that attempt to reinstitute the equilibrium they are used to feeling. Whites must avoid this instinct if true progress is to be made toward racial consciousness.

Another trap that White administrators in positions of power must avoid is that of the White savior complex. Some Whites with power and privilege undergirding their efforts consider themselves moral agents who can cleanse themselves of the stain of privilege by helping others, namely people of color whom Whites have historically (Collins & Jun, 2017; Heron, 2007). Such a desire to help may seem appropriate but can also be an attempt to absolve White guilt. Due to a "white architecture of the mind" (Collins & Jun, 2017), Whites fail to decenter themselves, desiring for and often expecting acknowledgment of their desire to help by people of color. White savior mentality assumes that a good mentorship, good friendship, good sponsorship with people of color will solve the problems associated with racism. This mentality creates two critical issues: 1) Whites can continue to ignore the historical institutional,

economic, and legal causes of systemic racism that interpersonal relationships and saviors cannot solve, and 2) it perpetuates the belief by Whites that their interpersonal relationships and positive relationships are, in and of themselves, the solution. Such a belief lulls White people into believing that if they have strong relationships and work at reconciliation with people of color that the problem of racism will be solved. Although potentially beneficial, interpersonal relationships alone will not dismantle systemic racism and privilege (Sullivan, 2014). Emphasis put on interpersonal relationships between whites and people of color can also place pressure on people of color to instruct and encourage Whites on racism. Such work is ultimately exhausting and disheartening for people in that it also does little to dismantle systemic racism and, thus, needs to be repeated again and again by people of color.

## CONCLUSION

What would higher education look like with shared power across racial lines and all members enlightened to the awareness of systemic racism that has perpetuated systems that marginalize people groups based on race? Why is it important to educate the White community about systemic racism and to shatter the glass ceilings that have oppressed leaders of color within the higher educational institutions for so long?

Higher education continues to be a space where inequity and inequality collide. This discussion is an important contribution to the ongoing debate of racial diversity in higher education, which continues to be a contested space where conversations around diversity and whiteness are challenged daily. The call to dismantle systems of White supremacy in higher education is often met with accusations of reverse racism, challenges to free speech, academic freedom, and a general critique of an increasingly oversensitive faculty and student body. At the same time, race-based equity continues to be at the forefront of institutional initiatives, the focus in court cases surrounding admissions criteria, and federal incentives aimed at offering financial incentives for institutions that become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Clearly, the racial diversification of college and university campuses remains a critical issue facing higher

education. As institutions engage in various methods to expand and explain diversity, our work focuses on the need for critical consciousness among those in dominant positions of higher educational institutions and the sharing of power across racial lines for the equity and empowerment of all campus community members. A radical yet achievable reconceptualization of consciousness and collective action is required. Only the intentional, albeit painful, steps toward power-sharing at the highest levels of higher education will lead to meaningful change that values, affirms, and empowers historically marginalized people in higher education.

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