The USHE Equity Lens Framework in Addressing Postsecondary Gaps

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Portraits in Salt Lake City memorialize Utahns killed by police violence, in addition to George Floyd
LEVERAGING NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

• Met with Oregon Rudy Ann and Markisha Smith (October, 2020)
• Learn from past experience
• Eliminate reinventing the wheel

CREATING & ADOPTING AN EQUITY LENS FRAMEWORK (FOR UTAH)

- Met with various constituent groups August-December (2020)
- Worked with institutional Chief Diversity Officers to co-create USHE’s Equity Lens Framework to meet Utah context
- Collective effort: Students and USHE staff provided input
- Adopted by Utah Board of Higher Education, December 2020
An equity lens framework is a tool comprised of shared beliefs, common definitions, and critical questions through which an organization commits to continually evaluating any existing or new strategy, policy, or initiative. The beliefs and definitions ensure the organization begins from a common understanding and sets the groundwork for clear accountability, allowing all efforts to be focused on closing opportunity gaps for marginalized populations. Underlying this framework is how data is collected and synthesized to impact policy and systemic change.
STARTING FROM A PLACE OF SHARED BELIEFS:

*We believe* that every student has the ability to learn, and that the System has an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure optimal learning and workplace environments exist on USHE campuses for all students, faculty, and staff.

*We believe* students who are academically underprepared for college are being failed by the educational system. To remedy this reality, the System and its 16 colleges and universities must meet students *where they are* and work to build on and improve each student’s educational outcomes.
TIED TO BOARD 5-YR STRATEGIC PLAN

- Reflective in USHE vision and mission
- Measuring for student outcomes
An Equity Framework

Disparities in access and educational attainment pervade higher education. In order to eliminate these disparities, we must adopt a framework that defines equity as “an actionable concept of quality and practice.” The framework must pervade the entire institution rather than be viewed as an add-on without institution-wide commitment and accountability (Witham et al. 2015, p. 3).

Equity-minded practices require:

1. Willingness to look at student outcomes 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 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 structural racism in institutions of higher education requires intentional critical deconstruction of structures, policies, practices, norms and values assumed to be race neutral. (Witham et al. 2015, p. 2).

These practices are in alignment with the Utah System of Higher Education’s Statement on Racial & Social Injustice. Furthermore, it follows the August 2020 Resolution to Advance Equitable Systemic Change Within the Utah System of Higher Education and utilizes a similar structure for assessment, impact and improvement for all learners.
GUIDE TO EQUITY, INCLUSION AND TRANSFORMATION AT SLCC

SLCC Equity Compass is a tool comprised of shared beliefs, definitions, and five areas to ask critical questions through which we at SLCC commit to continually evaluating any existing or new strategy, policy, or initiative. The compass will be used to:

• Ensure understanding across our organization of the connections between our mission, vision, and values and the role that each of us has at the organization
• Establish processes that promote clear accountability
• Focus our college efforts towards student success and completion are attainable regardless of identities

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THE IMPACT & CHALLENGES OF DATA TO INFORM
DISPARITIES IN COLLEGE PARTICIPATION

The differences in enrollment rates between Utah’s students of color and white students are as much as 40%.

DISPARITIES IN COLLEGE COMPLETION

The differences in completion rates between Utah’s students of color and white students are as much as 35%.

Minority Share of Population, Utah and U.S.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute
EQUITY ATTAINMENT GOALS DRIVE BOARD 5-YR STRATEGIC PLAN

Access
- Increase the college-going rate of high school grads by 3% in 5 years.
- Increase the college-going rate of underrepresented groups by 4% in 5 years.

Workforce Alignment
- Increase the completion rate of graduates in high-demand, high-wage programs by 7% in 5 years.
- Increase the completion rate of underrepresented groups in programs aligned with high-wage, high-demand jobs by 8% in 5 years.

Completion
- Increase timely completion of degrees and awards by 3% in 5 years.
- Increase the timely completion of underrepresented students by 4% in 5 years.
DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS SUPPORT STRATEGIC PLAN

• Disaggregation of existing data tools
  • Enrollments dashboard
  • Completions dashboard

• Development of new data tools
  • Faculty & Staff diversity dashboard
  • Strategic plan dashboard

• Analysis of undocumented students receiving non-resident tuition waiver (HB-144)

• Partnerships with institutions to gather additional demographic data in support of equity efforts
EQUITY-DRIVEN DATA CHALLENGES

COLLECTION CHALLENGES
• Definitions
• Student privacy
• Cell sizes
• Resources

ACTION CHALLENGES
• Shared ownership and accountability for equity gaps
• ‘Equity gap’ disparities often affirms deficit mindset and prevents action
• Incentivizing equity action (institutional/system levels)
Thank you, SHEEO Communities of Practice

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