DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

A CHECKLIST AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARDS

With the endorsement of the
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

ACCT
ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to assist community and technical college boards of trustees and CEOs to actively implement and reinforce a culture that values and promotes diversity, equity and inclusion. The governing board's role is pivotal in impacting college culture by shaping and supporting goals, policies, practices and college procedures that promote equitable experiences, opportunities, and outcomes. This guide provides college leaders practical steps and institutional examples for designing and implementing equitable institutional policies, practices, processes and programs.

OVERVIEW

Community college trustees and college leaders promote the values and policies that support access, affordability, equity and completion for all community college students. America's demographic diversity is growing, and the way to economic and student success is to be more intentional in our efforts to expand equitable access to quality postsecondary education. College diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies facilitate academic progress and economic and social mobility for all. Governing boards must take a leading role to close the educational and economic gaps of underrepresented populations and eliminate their historic barriers to higher education. In tandem with ACCT's *Equity Action Agenda for Community College Governance*,[1] which informs leaders of a board's and college's readiness to undertake an equity agenda, this pamphlet provides guidelines, resources and practical examples from colleges for implementing diversity, equity and inclusion throughout our community colleges.

EQUITY IS MULTIFACETED

Equity is complex and impacts all facets and all programs in community colleges. Equity in higher education refers to creating opportunities for equal access and success among historically underrepresented student populations, to ensure:

(1) Proportional participation at all levels of an institution (**equitable access**);

(2) Adequate resources directed at closing equity gaps (**resource/financial equity**);

(3) Institutional leadership addressing diversity, equity and inclusion issues (**adaptive leadership**);

(4) A welcoming environment in which all diverse students can succeed (**racial, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, military status, incarceration status, ability equity**);

(5) Social mobility and economic success for all learners (**socio-economic equity**).

Educational equity depends on fairness and inclusion in the educational system and includes equity in various categories: socio-economic, racial, ethnic, gender, gender identity, and disability, among others. Institutions of higher learning have an imperative to avoid discrimination and to support disadvantaged students whether the issues are income and class; race; religion; gender, sexual orientation or gender identity; immigration, incarceration or military status; country of origin or ability. Inclusive, equitable and diverse environments are essential for *all* students to succeed, and college leaders have a deep responsibility to ensure their colleges live up to the American promise of opportunity for all, including equal outcomes among all racial and ethnic student groups in higher education.

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1 *Equity Action Agenda for Community College Governance*, ACCT Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, 2018.

Critical Steps for Boards to Implement an Equity Lens

STEP I: CREATE AN EQUITY-MINDED BOARD AND INSTITUTION

❑ **Developing equity mindedness in board and college culture is the first step.**
Instead of deficit thinking which blames students for qualities they lack or unequal outcomes from a lack of motivation, boards and the college community must be made aware of inequities and reframe equity as an institutional responsibility. Together with the college president, boards can inspire commitment and change at a personal, professional, and systemic level starting with the makeup of the board itself, and the college's mission and vision statements and core values which set the direction of the college. It will also be important to highlight diversity, equity, and inclusion on college websites, particularly home pages, which often reflect a college's core values. Diverse seekers must be able to find DEI immediately and embedded everywhere in the institution.

❑ **Increase the institutional capacity for making change.**
Equity mindedness can mean changing people's underlying beliefs and attitudes and encouraging inquiry, reflection and deep conversations in and out of the classroom. Including impacting the mindset of board members, staff, faculty, and the community, for many colleges, a cultural shift is needed, and this is accomplished in many ways including:

- Ensuring diversity in the membership of the governing board;

- Diversity, equity and inclusion professional development at all levels of the institution;

- Courageous public all-campus conversations by the board, faculty, staff, and student groups;

- Disaggregated data analyses which provide success data on specific diverse student cohorts;

- Cross college collaboration to develop an Equity Lens for all college and learning transactions;

- Equitable outcomes for all diverse full-time and part-time students; and

- Boards and college administrators promoting equity as a public priority for the entire college and community.

❑ **Review all policies with Equity firmly in mind.**
"Equity is grounded in the principle of fairness. In higher education, equity refers to ensuring that each student receives what they need to be successful through the intentional design of the college experience."[2] More specifically, equity "is a set of principles, reflective questions, and processes that focus at individual, institutional, and systemic levels by deconstructing what is not working around equity; reconstructing and supporting what is working; shifting the way we make decisions and think about this work; and healing and transforming our structures, our environments, and ourselves."[3]

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2 Achieving the Dream Equity Statement. (2020). Washington, D.C.: Achieving the Dream. Retrieved from: https://www.achievingthedream.org/focus-areas/equity#:~:text=In%20higher%20education%2C%20equity%20refers,the%20 barriers%20facing%20underserved%20students

3 *Equity and Empowerment Lens*. (2020). Portland, Oregon: Multnomah County. Retrieved from: https://multco.us/diversity-equity/equity-and-empowerment-lens.

Strategies include to:

☐ Review and redraft or edit the college's mission and vison statements and core values.

☐ Develop, disseminate and publish on the college website a DEI values statement from the board.

☐ Redesign college hiring policies, particularly in hiring the CEO and other top-level college administrators and faculty.

☐ Provide diversity training specifically for college search committees, and, if using a search firm, select one with a proven track record of providing diverse qualified candidates.

☐ Develop broad policies about eliminating barriers to access, success and completion in all college departments and programs. Examples from the field include:

- Micro grants to students with unmet needs (first-generation, low-income, homeless, etc.);

- Addressing food and housing insecurity (food pantries, open campus showers, weekend parking, local housing agreements, etc.);

- Using Open Educational Resources (OER) to reduce cost of student books and supplies;

- Partnering with local childcare providers for student parents;

- Improvements to the FAFSA process and financial aid advising including loan defaults;

- Flexible curricular offerings (for working students, student parents, etc.).[4]

Community colleges have used these among many other strategies.

STEP 2: MONITOR AND EVALUATE COLLEGE PROGRESS ON EQUITY GOALS

Disaggregated data: Including compliance with state and federal civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, marital status, age, genetic information or disability, governing boards have oversight responsibility of college progress on meeting its diversity, equity and inclusion goals. To do this well, boards need a more mindful, systemic approach to data collection and analysis. The data need to be disaggregated so that boards better understand student demographics in their colleges and can proactively remove barriers for underserved students and others.

Equity Plans and Reports: Some states mandate that colleges submit annual equity plans and reports which include assessment of college's methods and strategies to achieve goals and timelines addressing areas of underrepresented minorities in its academic program, activities and employment. Some states and accrediting agencies require equity reports (and/or institutional effectiveness reports) supported by institutional data to evaluate progress on strategic goals. Some community college systems have advocated to include formerly incarcerated students and LGBTQ students in their Student Equity Plans.

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4 *Policy Toolkit: Today's Students-Reforms to Make Higher Learning More Affordable and Valuable for Parents, Adults, Workers and All of Today's Students.* (April 2019). Washington, D.C.: Higher Learning Advocates. Retrieved from: https://higherlearningadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Final-Todays-Students-Policy-Toolkit-1-1.pdf

STEP 3: ANNUALLY EVALUATE BOARD LEADERSHIP, EFFECTIVENESS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION GOALS

Trustees have a leadership role in ensuring that the governing board itself actively promotes diversity, equity and inclusion. The following inventory is a checklist to further gauge board readiness and effectiveness in pursuing policies to increase institutional and student diversity, equity and inclusion. Questions below provide detailed ways for boards and colleges to discuss and intentionally implement diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) throughout the college and community.

Using the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Inventory below, boards can assess their progress and that of their colleges. Examples that follow come from ACCT's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (2019-2020) as well as from the websites of ACCT member institutions.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Implementation Inventory

THE BOARD

❑ Do the College Mission Statement, _____ Vision _____, Core Values _____ specifically include broad and inclusive (multifaceted) DEI language?

❑ Is there sufficient and significant racial and ethnic diversity on the governing board? Does board membership reflect the racial, ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the college's student population and community?

❑ Are board members made aware of the college's history in educating underserved populations? Does the board receive disaggregated data on student access, progress and success and assess the college's past and current record in serving underrepresented populations?

❑ Does the college have a diversity, equity and inclusion policy approved by the board?

❑ Has the board developed and implemented a public DEI statement, white paper, philosophy or values statement for the college website?

❑ When hiring a new college CEO, does the board ensure DEI are clearly evident in the position description, in evaluating candidates, and then later in evaluating CEO performance?

❑ Do the college's strategic plan and institutional effectiveness reports reflect the board's DEI goals?

❑ Does the board ensure DEI in policy development and implementation? Do all relevant board and college policies and college procedures reflect diversity, equity and inclusion fully, including sexual orientation, gender identity or incarceration status whether or not federal or state law mandates against discrimination?

❑ Does the board have a regular schedule for conducting equity-minded policy reviews, i.e., with an equity lens?

❑ Does the board have a DEI policy regarding contracts, minority bidding, etc.

❑ Has the board prioritized equity through a multifaceted college Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan that includes the board and all departments throughout the institution?

❑ Does the board receive and monitor annual DEI/Equity reports on student demographics, community stakeholders, college partnerships, etc.

❑ Does the board allocate resources based on student data through an equity lens? Are sufficient resources aligned with the board's and the college's equity goals for underserved students?

❑ Do the board and the college provide the campus and community evidence of achieving its diversity, equity and inclusion goals and publish and celebrate milestones?

THE COLLEGE

❑ Does the President's Message on the website reflect DEI values or goals and their multiple facets?

❑ _____ Is DEI reflected in the CEO/ president's annual goals? _____ in public statements to the campus and _____ in the community and _____ in the CEO's evaluation process?

❑ Does the college review disaggregated access and success student data that highlight underserved populations? Is this data shared with the board? With other administrators? With the faculty?

❑ Is there a shared public Equity Scorecard?

❑ Does the college Strategic Plan have specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based (SMART) DEI goals?

❑ Does the college have an institutional Equity Plan?

❑ Does the college have an institutional effectiveness plan with explicit DEI goals and results?

❑ Has the college made a commitment of resources (human and financial) to diversity, equity and inclusion?

❑ Have the President, cabinet, and college staff and faculty had annual equity training and professional development?

❑ Does the college have a multicultural or equity center for students? _____ Do the president, staff and faculty participate in the center's programming? _____ Does the board allocate resources?

❑ Is equity mindedness an explicit goal across the institution's reform efforts?

❑ Are diversity, equity and inclusion goals explicit in hiring throughout the college?

FACULTY AND STAFF

❑ Is the staff diverse throughout the college?

❑ Does the faculty reflect the diversity of the students?

❑ Is equity mindedness an explicit goal for hiring faculty and staff?

❑ Have faculty and staff taken a proactive role in developing the college's equity goals, scorecard, and Equity lens or framework or other approaches to DEI?

❑ Do faculty and staff take an active and leading role in campus DEI activities?

❑ Do faculty and staff participate in the multicultural center's programming?

❑ Equity is interdisciplinary. Does the college's curriculum overall reflect equity-minded values?

❑ Do faculty annually engage in equity-minded program and course reviews?

❑ Do learning outcomes reflect broad and integrative knowledge of diverse histories, cultures, and societies? Are diversity, equity and inclusion part of classroom discussions and course outcomes?

❑ Are there specific courses, programs or departments that offer DEI education for students?

❑ Do faculty/staff have frank dialogues about the college climate for underserved students and examine attitudes about student success that may hinder or advance the college's ability to support these students?

❑ Do faculty and staff engage in equitable practices designed to accommodate differences in students' learning—and not treat all students the same?[5]

❑ Is equity mindedness a typical learning outcome for students? For faculty and staff training?

❑ Is equity-mindedness an explicit goal across the faculty's and staff's reform efforts?

❑ Do faculty and staff use equity-minded data analytics to track student's progress and provide proactive guidance or academic assistance, particularly for underserved populations?[6]

5 *America's Unmet Promise.* (January 2015). Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges & Universities.

6 Several items are adaptations of *Does Your Institution Do the Following?* Step Up & Lead for Equity: What Higher Education Can Do to Reverse Our Deepening Divides. (2015). Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges & Universities.