

AGB BOARD OF DIRECTORS' STATEMENT ON

Justice, Equity, and Inclusion

And Guidance for Implementation

*This statement focuses very intentionally on **justice**, equity, and inclusion. Many institutions of higher education have experienced increased levels of racial, ethnic, economic, and gender **diversity**. Despite this progress, students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups continue to experience **discrimination**, a lack of belonging, and inequitable **opportunities** for success. Higher education must move beyond representational diversity in order to develop academic institutions in which every individual can **thrive**.*

About AGB

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) is the premier membership organization that strengthens higher education governing boards and the strategic roles they serve within their organizations. Through our vast library of resources, educational events, and consulting services, and with 100 years of experience, we empower 40,000 AGB members from more than 2,000 institutions and foundations to navigate complex issues, implement leading practices, streamline operations, and govern with confidence. AGB is the trusted resource for board members, chief executives, and key administrators on higher education governance and leadership.

Visit the Knowledge Center at AGB.org for resources AGB is continuously developing to support boards and foundations on their justice, equity, and inclusion journey. Members will have access to articles, case studies, professional development resources, assessment instruments, and examples of high impact practices for student success.

Copyright © 2021. All Rights Reserved.



Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
1133 20th Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20036 • www.AGB.org

Permission for graphic on page 11: Grawe, Nathan D. *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*. p. 18, Figure 1.6. © 2018 Johns Hopkins University Press. Reprinted with permission of Johns Hopkins University Press.

Contents

Introduction

2

A Call to Action

3

A Fraught Moment

5

Making the Case for Justice, Equity, and Inclusion on Campus

9

The Way Forward

15

Recommendations and Key Questions

27

Conclusion

37

References

39

Appendix 1: Definitions

41

Appendix 2: Accountability Benchmarks

43

AGB BOARD OF DIRECTORS' STATEMENT ON

Justice, Equity, and Inclusion

And Guidance for Implementation

Introduction

This AGB Board of Directors' Statement was approved on March 25, 2021, by the Board of Directors of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). AGB Board Statements are formal assertions of the critical importance of a particular issue or topic to higher education governance. They are intended to guide boards in the governance of colleges, universities, and systems; advise them on their roles and responsibilities; and clarify their relationship with chief executives, administration, faculty, and others involved in the governance process.

This statement focuses very intentionally on justice, equity, and inclusion. Many institutions of higher education have experienced increased levels of racial, ethnic, economic, and gender diversity. Despite this progress, students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups continue to experience discrimination, a lack of belonging, and inequitable opportunities for success. Higher education must move beyond representational diversity in order to develop academic institutions in which every individual can thrive.

In recognition of the significance of the current historical moment, the statement places racial justice at the forefront of the achievement of socially just institutions of higher education. In doing so, we recognize the interconnection between various forms of injustice—e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, poverty, and inequitable educational opportunity—and the ultimate objective of respecting each person in an inclusive and just higher education community.

AGB continuously develops content to support boards and foundations on their justice, equity, and inclusion journey. Members will have access to articles, case studies, professional development resources, assessment instruments, and examples of high impact practices for student success. Visit the Knowledge Center at [AGB.org](https://www.agb.org) for resources.

A Call to Action

Trustees are fiduciaries. They hold their institutions in trust. Many equate fiduciary responsibility principally with safeguarding the financial and tangible assets of institutions. But in fact, trustees also guard and steward institutional values, mission, campus culture, the educational program, and the well-being of thousands of human beings, especially students. Trusteeship goes far beyond the balance sheet.

Trustees today carry out their vital responsibilities in a fraught time in U.S. history. Our nation is highly polarized and public discourse is often harsh, even toxic. And yet, even in these rough seas, higher education will continue to play a determining role in the unfolding of our great American experiment. Trustee leadership, therefore, remains nothing short of essential to a thriving citizenry and nation. Our colleges and universities are keepers and creators of the light of knowledge that is vital to maintaining our cherished democracy. In our trust are the engines of innovation, creativity, invention, and social mobility—in other words, our collective futures.

But our institutions must be engines of fairness, opportunity, and justice as well. As many institutions today carry out the difficult and critical work of studying their historical relationships with Indigenous, Black, Brown, LGBTQ, and many other groups too long marginalized in American society, it is painfully clear the U.S. system of higher education—both public and private nonprofit—has never been the level playing field some imagine it to be. Indeed, it is strewn with barriers to success for significant numbers of our students, faculty, and staff. A key responsibility of trusteeship is to identify these impediments and remove them. This calling is integral to all we hold in trust and must be at the epicenter of our thinking and action now and in the future.

The *AGB Board of Directors' Statement on Justice, Equity, and Inclusion* outlines three strategies for implementing this important governance work:

1. Developing and applying an equity lens in the board's governance structures and processes;
2. Applying a justice, equity, and inclusion lens throughout the institution; and
3. Contributing to social justice and equity in the communities where the institution is located.

This comprehensive approach engages the board in examining and addressing barriers to equity in its own work, at all levels of the institution, and beyond the borders of the campus. Institutions will embark on this work at different starting points, focus on priorities that speak to their contexts and campus needs, and adapt these strategies to their unique campus cultures. As institutions walk this journey together, we can learn a great deal from each other's experiences and approaches.

At the heart of trusteeship is the power and responsibility to ask big, meaningful, and penetrating questions. This statement suggests many of the questions with which your board might engage. The metaphor of a lens calls on trustees to see their institutions anew—including their policies and fiscal priorities—through the lens of justice, equity, and inclusion.

We urge you to consider this process of reexamination to be part of the continuous work of your board. Resist the urge to think of this complex work as a perfunctory, one-time, quick fix. We also urge boards to not place this work solely upon the shoulders of trustees from groups that are already underrepresented at our tables. This is a moment when we call upon White trustees to lead or colead, to ask difficult questions, to be advocates and allies, and to demonstrate courage.

Reexamining our institutions represents a challenging task for individual board members, and for every campus, system, and foundation. No two campuses will approach this reexamination in precisely the same manner. We are all learners in this effort and begin this work with varying levels of knowledge and different experiences. We invite you to use this document as a catalyst for important conversations and action. In this effort we see the seeds of repair, unity, bridge building, and healing—and a renewed system of higher education that will remain one of our world's great beacons. Let us summon the will—and courage—to commit ourselves to the work.

At the heart of trusteeship is the power and responsibility to ask big, meaningful, and penetrating questions. . . . We invite you to use this document as a catalyst for important conversations and action.

A Fraught Moment

The United States of America is facing the most tumultuous racial reckoning since the 1960s—a reckoning that implicates every aspect of society and all of our institutions. The events of the summer of 2020, including the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, underscore the fact that racial injustice persists within the fabric of our society. The resultant multiracial, nationwide cry for racial justice that has emanated from these not-so-isolated incidents brings into stark relief the national imperative to address systemic racism and all other forms of social injustice.

Consistent with the Civil Rights Movement and other struggles throughout American history, the current moment represents another effort to expand our understanding of “we the people” by incorporating those intentionally excluded by our founding fathers at this nation’s inception. What lays plain before us is the gap between the daily reality of many who live in this country and our national aspirations for liberty and justice for all.

Consider the following:

- The economic insecurity experienced by approximately 40 percent of our population (many of whom are people of color) results in the reduction of their life possibilities as well as underdevelopment of the U.S. economy. (Federal Reserve, 2018; Conway & Popovich, 2019).
- COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black, Brown, Indigenous, and low-income communities.
- Across the educational spectrum, the move to remote instruction has exacerbated educational inequity and highlighted the deleterious impact of the digital divide.
- The United States is failing a significant cohort of students whose primary and secondary schools have inequitable funding and quality; as a result, many students are not adequately prepared for college.
- The accumulated impact of dealing with discrimination, bigotry, and systemic injustice often leads to a mental health burden that is significantly deeper for marginalized individuals.

In the midst of this reckoning, we as fiduciaries of institutions of higher learning, long considered to be the pathway to economic mobility and success, must come to understand that higher education itself often perpetuates inequality in ways that many of us cannot see clearly.

- Many colleges and universities report significant differences in the rate of academic success across racial, ethnic, and income groups. The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time students who began pursuit of a bachelor's degree at a four-year degree-granting institution in fall 2012 was 70 percent for Asian students, 61 percent for White students, 50 percent for Hispanic students, 37 percent for Black students, and 35 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native students. Poverty is also a barrier. Bachelor's degree completion is positively related to annual family income for dependent students, ranging from 44.9 percent (less than \$25,000) to 77.5 percent (over \$100,000) (NCES, 2019). Note: the use of the term "Hispanic" here is consistent with NCES terminology.
- Postsecondary education remains highly stratified by socioeconomic class. Seventy-two percent of students in the nation's most competitive institutions come from families in the wealthiest quartile. High-achieving students from the bottom socioeconomic quartile are only *one-third* as likely to enroll in selective colleges and universities compared to those from the top socioeconomic quartile (Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, 2016).
- Discrimination, harassment, and aggression persist at colleges and universities and in the local communities in which they are located.
 - » For women and members of the LGBTQ community, sexual assault and harassment are continuing problems (AAU, 2019).
 - » Although women constitute a majority of the undergraduate enrollment, many experience gender discrimination on campus and unequal treatment in the classroom (Caplan and Ford, 2014).

In the midst of this reckoning, we as fiduciaries of institutions of higher learning, long considered to be the pathway to economic mobility and success, must come to understand that higher education itself often perpetuates inequality in ways that many of us cannot see clearly.

- » In 2019, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported 186 antisemitic incidents on American university and college campuses, a 58 percent increase over the 108 reported incidents on college and university campuses in 2016 (ADL, 2019).
 - » The *2019-20 Campus Climate Survey* conducted by the California Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CA), notes that nearly 40 percent of American Muslim college and university student respondents reported that they had experienced harassment or discrimination based on their religious identity (CAIR-CA, 2020).
 - » Investigative findings by the U.S. Department of Education Office of General Counsel, and the Office for Civil Rights suggest a lack of tolerance for viewpoints at some institutions.
 - » Students, staff, and faculty of color report repeated encounters with bias (conscious and unconscious) at their institutions (Caplan and Ford, 2014).
 - » In 2018, the Anti-Defamation League Center on Extremism reported a 182 percent increase in White supremacist activity on college grounds compared to 2017 (ADL, 2018).
 - » Asian American students have been victims of increased racial harassment and hostility during the COVID-19 pandemic (O'Malley, 2020).
 - » At many institutions of higher education, support staff report feeling disrespected, and inadequately compensated, as well as disregarded in conversations about the institutional racial climate (Burke, 2020).
- Intercollegiate athletics (particularly the treatment of football and basketball players) are increasingly being assessed through the lens of inequitable educational outcomes and economic exploitation.
 - Institutional histories, symbols, and traditions have garnered heightened scrutiny and generated campus activism.
 - Law enforcement on college and university campuses and in the surrounding community is being reassessed as students, faculty, and staff demand an end to incidents of discriminatory treatment of people of color by campus and local police.

The need for reform is both evident and urgent. The paradigm is shifting as higher education stakeholders—including students, staff, faculty, alumni, and governing board members—reframe issues of race and equity. Generational tides are turning as well: Increasing numbers of millennials and Generation Z expect

inclusivity and reject injustice. They are well equipped to develop multiracial, intergenerational coalitions and to initiate demands for systemic change through social media and direct action. They have limited patience for incremental progress.

During the 1960s, hundreds of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students agitated for the creation of ethnic studies programs, for increases in the hiring of faculty of color, and for the admission of larger numbers of students of color at their institutions. In many instances, these efforts were viewed unfavorably by college and university leaders and trustees.

As was the case in the 1960s, colleges and universities are again being challenged to contribute to the transformation of both higher education and the larger society. What is now called for is nothing less than transformational change. Institutional, system, and foundation boards have a fundamental responsibility to ensure this transformation is achieved. We have a duty to summon the courage needed to speak out for justice, fairness, and inclusion, to work to bring it into being throughout higher education, and to confront and actively combat systemic inequity, intolerance, and bigotry in all of its forms.

Making the Case for Justice, Equity, and Inclusion on Campus

As guardians of higher education, governing boards are responsible for the creation of academic communities in which each individual is seen as a human being, is treated with dignity and respect, and has an opportunity for full participation and academic success. Removing systemic barriers to student success and creating a sense of belonging for all students, faculty, and staff are essential if higher education is to fulfill its promise. Governing boards have a moral, a fiduciary, and an educational responsibility to provide leadership on issues of justice, equity, and inclusion in higher education. The business and financial imperatives for these efforts are equally compelling. Failure to address these issues poses serious risks to institutional integrity, brand, and mission relevance.

The Public Purposes of Higher Education

The more than 50,000 individuals who serve as members of governing boards legally hold their institutions in trust and are charged with safeguarding the public purposes of private nonprofit and public higher education institutions. Among the most sacred is preparing graduates to participate in the economic, cultural, and civic life of a diverse democracy (AGB, 2018). The polarization of American society demonstrates both the need for and challenge of establishing diverse learning environments in which robust dialogue, academic freedom, inclusion, and equity can thrive. As leaders in higher education, boards are called, at this historical moment, to address the fissures in our society by eradicating historical and current practices that support discrimination, bigotry, and intolerance, whether based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, political viewpoint, or any other form of injustice at their institutions and in the communities in which their institutions operate.

Colleges and universities must recruit, retain, and successfully educate a diverse student body if the nation's workforce needs are to be met. To win in global markets,

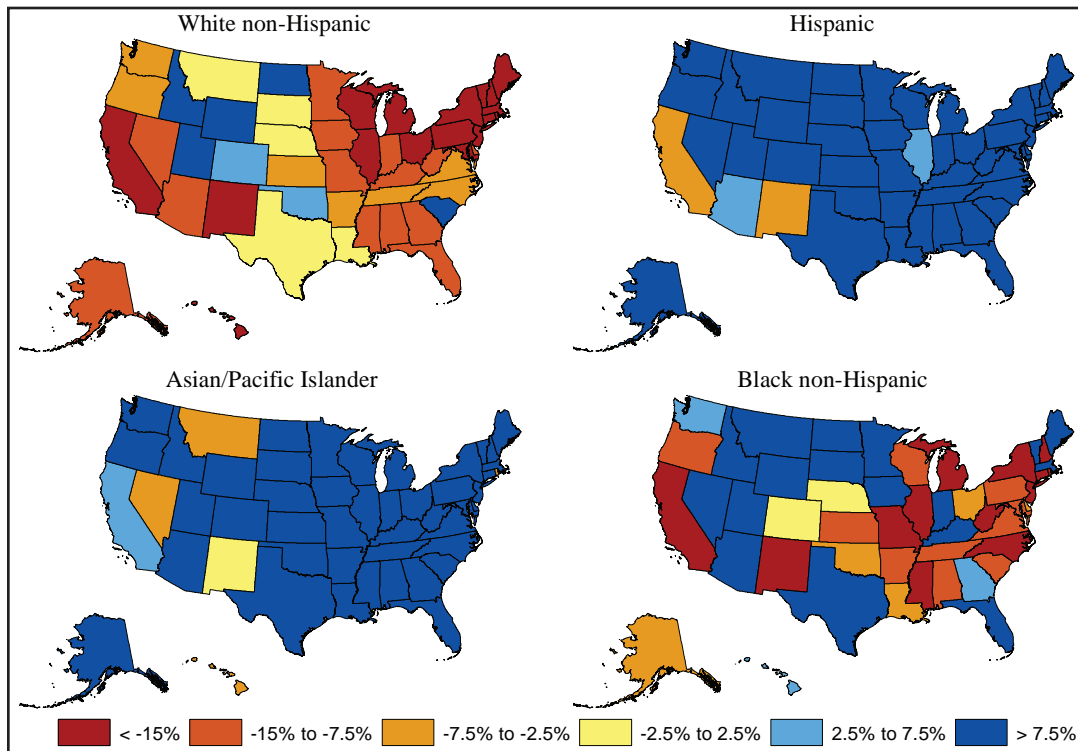
American businesses require talented individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. The business community expects the nation's colleges and universities to admit and educate these individuals. Additionally, institutions are expected to assist students in developing the competencies and sensitivities required to contribute in multicultural, multiracial settings. To achieve these outcomes, governing boards will need to commit themselves to removing barriers to educational success for all students, particularly those in communities that have long been underserved.

In their fiduciary role, board members bear responsibility for safeguarding the institution's mission and values as well as its finances and tangible assets. An essential aspect of fiduciary responsibility, the duty of obedience, requires board members to ensure that their institution is operating in compliance with the law and in furtherance of its stated purposes. Public universities and private institutions that accept federal financial aid and/or other types of public support are required to comply with federal law including those that prohibit systematic and individual discrimination based on race, gender, and other protected classes. Thus, boards bear responsibility for ensuring their institution is free of all forms of legally prohibited discrimination and for developing policies and procedures that promote the educational success of those students it has chosen to admit. Fostering equity and promoting justice and inclusion are fiduciary responsibilities consistent with the duty of obedience.

Governing boards have a moral, a fiduciary, and an educational responsibility to provide leadership on issues of justice, equity, and inclusion in higher education. The business and financial imperatives for these efforts are equally compelling.

The Business Case

Anticipated demographic shifts in the student population coupled with the decline in the number of high school graduates underscores the need for every college and university to incorporate justice, equity, and inclusion as an essential aspect of its business strategy. If institutions are to survive, they must have a record of success educating the individuals who enter their doors. Demographic projections indicate that future students will come from increasingly diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Institutions must put strategies in place today that focus on the success of all students, especially first-generation students and students of color.



Forecasted growth in public high school graduates by race/ethnicity, 2012 to 2032

Grawe, Nathan D. *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*. p. 18, Figure 1.6. © 2018 Johns Hopkins University Press. Reprinted with permission of Johns Hopkins University Press

Consider these statistics: “Between 1996 and 2016, the percentage of undergraduate students of color grew from 29.6 percent to 45.2 percent, and the share of graduate students of color grew from 20.8 percent to 32.0 percent” (ACE, 2019). The projected demographics of high school graduates by race and ethnicity 2012–2032 (see chart, above) indicate that within the next decade the White non-Hispanic population will decrease by as much as 15 percent in the Northeast, Midwest, and in some western states, while the number of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander public high school graduates is expected to grow by over 7.5 percent in most states.

Additionally, the total United States population is expected to become increasingly racially and ethnically diverse (Vespa, Medina & Armstrong, 2020). Between 2016 and 2060, the Asian population is expected to double and the LatinX population to nearly double. The African American, American Indian and Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations are each expected to grow by a minimum of 38 percent. Individuals who define themselves as multiracial are projected to increase almost 200 percent over the next few decades, while non-Hispanic Whites are expected to decline by almost 10 percent during the same period.

Trustees should be cognizant of changing demographics and ensure that their institutions are developing the policies, practices, and pedagogies that promote justice, equity, and inclusion. This will result in significantly greater numbers of students experiencing academic success. Institutions that fail to do so will find it difficult to meet enrollment goals or thrive financially.

Student Success

Student success is essential for individuals, families, and for this nation. It translates into enrollment success for the institution as a whole. As institutions of higher education become more diverse, board members should understand that too often Black, Brown, Indigenous, low-income, and/or first-generation students are struggling. Many feel unwelcome and experience a lack of belonging on their own campuses. Some students find their multiple identities (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious, etc.) intersect in a way that compounds the effect of disadvantage and estrangement.

Boards must ask, “What are we doing to ensure that every student we enroll will not only survive but thrive at our institution?” The answer to this question requires an assessment of institutional culture including the manner in which unexamined policies, practices, and pedagogies may impede success for particular cohorts of students.

Higher education research clearly demonstrates that with appropriate educational interventions, students from underserved communities will experience academic success. For example, scholar George Kuh (2008), using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, has demonstrated, that high-impact practices (study abroad, internships, first-year seminars, senior capstone experiences, civic engagement, residential learning communities, and more) “have a pronounced effect on the experiences of underserved students,” including on retention and grade point average. Other interventions such as using data analytics to track student progress coupled with intrusive advising, and when necessary, last dollar grants, are associated with increased levels of student success among all students including the underserved (Jones, 2016). It

Trustees should be cognizant of changing demographics and ensure that their institutions are developing the policies, practices, and pedagogies that promote justice, equity, and inclusion. This will result in significantly greater numbers of students experiencing academic success.

is incumbent on boards to ensure that their institutions incorporate educational practices that promote academic success for all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved.

As the nation and the college-going population become increasingly diverse, institutions will be required to respond to new standards of accountability. Students and families will increasingly expect institutions to provide evidence of comparable educational outcomes with respect to graduation rates, career and graduate school placement, and debt at graduation. Students from various backgrounds, including those who are White and affluent, will place particular emphasis on such criteria as student and faculty diversity, campus climate, and breadth of the curriculum as they make application and enrollment decisions.

Additionally, public institutions are being held to higher levels of accountability with respect to student success. Approximately 40 states require the reporting of performance metrics from their public two- and four-year institutions—most commonly, student enrollment, retention, graduation, and job placement data. These outcomes data are often disaggregated by age, gender, race, ethnicity, and first-time freshmen and transfer students. Most states hope to incentivize their public colleges and universities to improve student outcomes by tying some level of appropriation to institutional performance on these metrics. Public institutions that fail to demonstrate the closing of achievement gaps for historically underrepresented groups based on outcomes data, risk reductions in state financial support, as well as a loss of public confidence. Similarly, regional and professional accreditation bodies are revising their standards to include student success data.

Colleges and universities invest significant human and financial resources to recruit students. Approximately 62 percent of first-time students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a four-year institution in the fall of 2012 completed the degree at the same institution within six years. Thus, on average, an institution may lose one-third of the students who enroll, a significant loss on investment. Attrition rates are significantly higher for Black, Brown, Native American, and low-income students, many of whom may leave their institutions even though they are in good academic standing (Gardner, 2017). A variety of potentially negative outcomes are associated with student attrition: limited economic and workforce opportunities for the individual, higher rates of

Institutions that do not demonstrate success in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students from all backgrounds will face challenges related to institutional sustainability. More important, these institutions are failing to meet their public purpose.

student loan defaults, and significant financial loss to the institution. This level of wastage is unsustainable for individuals, institutions, and the nation. Addressing the issues associated with inclusion, equity, and belonging are key components of a sound retention and student success strategy that will generate a positive impact on the institutional bottom line.

It is incumbent upon boards to ensure their institutions examine performance data and implement the changes required to remove the structural barriers that account for the discrepancies evidenced in student success across racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups. Institutions that do not demonstrate success in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students from all backgrounds will face challenges related to institutional sustainability. More important, these institutions are failing to meet their public purpose. Fostering student success among all groups is a fiduciary responsibility.

The Way Forward

Institutional, system, and foundation boards in conjunction with campus leadership have the responsibility to elevate the principles of justice, fairness, and inclusion within their boardrooms and leadership teams while ensuring that policies and practices that promote racial justice, equity, and inclusion manifest throughout their institutions. This requires boards and institutional leaders to commit to developing an equity lens and to applying that lens to all aspects of the institution including its governance processes. This is done most effectively if boards focus on the following strategies:

- Strategy 1. Developing and applying an equity lens in the board's governance, structures, and processes;
- Strategy 2. Applying a justice, equity, and inclusion lens throughout the institution; and
- Strategy 3. Contributing to social justice and equity in the communities where the institution is located.

Some institutions have a history of bringing laser focus to issues of educational quality and success for students of all races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Others are just beginning to develop capacity in this area. The unique mission, history, and circumstances of each institution will inform its approach to these strategic imperatives. For example, the cohort of institutions that has experienced significant and rapid change in the demographics of the student body may find that past policies and practices no longer serve the needs of current students, necessitating a reexamination of every aspect of the institution. Similarly, while Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have an excellent track record in creating welcoming, supportive environments for Black students, they are now, facing the task of extending their well-honed best practices to new populations. Tribal Colleges, long committed to the provision of equitable education for Indigenous populations, may redouble their efforts by focusing on persistence and success among various cohorts of students. Every institution of higher education has a responsibility to ensure that members of the LGBTQ community, students from limited economic backgrounds, and those

experiencing other forms of marginalization are able to thrive. Justice, equity, and inclusion initiatives will take different forms at the more than 4,000 degree-granting institutions in this country. Boards should recognize no one plan fits all.

Creating inclusive, equitable institutions is difficult, long-term work. Board members should not underestimate the challenges involved. Regardless of the starting point, now is the time for boards and higher education leaders to take focused action to address issues of justice, equity, and inclusion at the institution and beyond. We owe nothing less to the students we purport to serve.

Strategy 1.

Developing and Applying an Equity Lens in the Board's Governance, Structures, and Processes

A board will have greater probability of success in applying an equity lens to governance if it is diverse and has instituted a committee structure and meeting agenda that require regular reporting on issues of equity and inclusion, has members committed to continuous learning, and has selected a committed and capable institutional leader.

Leadership of the board's justice, equity, and inclusion strategy should not rest on the shoulders of trustees from marginalized groups alone. Boards should be sensitive to the message sent throughout the institution when members from underrepresented groups are asked to provide the sole leadership of equity and inclusion efforts. Serving as allies, White trustees should "step up" to provide leadership for this strategic work. The institution can send a powerful message when its justice, equity, and inclusion initiatives are led by allies and /or multiracial teams.

Composition, Structures, and Processes

Boards are better equipped to address these issues when the membership includes individuals who bring diverse perspectives, insights, and experiences. When processes are intentionally designed to ensure all perspectives are taken

Regardless of the starting point, now is the time for boards and higher education leaders to take focused action to address issues of justice, equity, and inclusion at the institution and beyond. We owe nothing less to the students we purport to serve.

seriously, diverse boards have the potential to be more anticipatory and receptive toward the views and needs of multiple stakeholders and, thus, to make more equitable decisions (McKinsey, 2020).

AGB member research suggests that there is considerable opportunity to improve representational diversity on higher education boards and that, at a time when it is of critical importance to effective governance, the importance of diverse boards may be undervalued. A 2016 AGB study found that with the exception of the boards of minority-serving institutions, only 17 percent of public governing board members and 11 percent of private governing board members were people of color as of 2015. The same study found that public higher education foundation boards included nine percent people of color and 25.8 percent women (AGB, 2016). AGB's 2020 board composition survey is not yet final; preliminary data show modest increases in board diversity. According to *The AGB 2020 Trustee Index*, when board members were asked: "How important is it for the composition of your board to increase its racial diversity?" only 39 percent of trustees from public institutions and 49 percent from private nonprofit institutions indicated that it was "very important" (AGB, 2020).

More than 75 percent of students in this country attend public colleges and universities, most of which are governed by board members appointed by governors and legislatures. Board members and institutional leaders must make every effort to convey to the appointing authorities the strategic value of boards that are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and perspective. Likewise, self-perpetuating boards at private institutions should make diversity a critical component of board composition. A board cannot demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion if these principles are not reflected in its composition, leadership, and operations. Constituents will question whether the board recognizes the connection between its composition and the mission of the institution.

The board should incorporate a justice, equity, and inclusion framework into its committee structures, agenda development, and decision-making. Each member of the board must see this as a significant component of the duty of care. When this work is effectively integrated, the attention the board devotes to these concerns will be comparable to that of other strategic issues facing the institution—e.g., finances or fundraising.

Boards are better equipped to address these issues when the membership includes individuals who bring diverse perspectives, insights, and experiences.

Commitment to Learning and Growth as a Board and as Individual Trustees

Many board members have limited knowledge of how institutional policies and practices, however well intended, can have negative impacts on certain groups of students, faculty, and staff, especially those who are from unrepresented groups. This lack of knowledge may limit a board's ability to make informed decisions regarding equity and inclusion. In order to exercise their responsibilities in an informed manner, board members should commit personal time to learn about the multiple manifestations of injustice in the larger society and in their institutions through reading, conversation, and broadened relationships.

Board members should strive to develop a better understanding of the impact of structural inequality on several levels:

- Organizational (policies, procedures, pedagogical approaches);
- Cultural (values: stated and unstated, symbols and traditions, forms of communication);
- Interpersonal (inappropriate behavior directed at any student or student group); and
- Personal (unconscious bias, stereotypes, unrecognized privilege, marginalization, and intersectionality, etc.).

Additionally, boards should endeavor to become more informed about the differential impact of emerging technologies on various campus constituents as well as the impact of the digital divide on student access to instructional and cocurricular offerings and administrative services.

The identification of leaders who are committed to fostering an institutional strategy grounded in justice, equity, and inclusion represents the foundation on which any further progress will rest.

Selecting and Supporting the Leader

A governing board's most important responsibility is the selection, support, and assessment of the institutional leader. The identification of leaders who are committed to fostering an institutional strategy grounded in justice, equity, and inclusion represents the foundation on which any further progress will rest. The board should include a commitment to leading institutional transformation related to these principles when

developing the hiring criteria for presidents/chancellors/system heads and, subsequent to hiring, should include accountability for this strategy in the leader's performance appraisal. Boards should also consider the wisdom of providing support and professional development for the senior leadership to ensure they are fully equipped to lead institutional change. Transformational change is disruptive and does not occur without pushback. Boards must be prepared to support the institutional leader in the face of resistance generated by the prioritization of the principles of equity and inclusion.

Strategy 2. Applying a Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Lens throughout the Institution

In conjunction with institutional leadership, boards must ensure that a culture of justice, equity, and inclusion permeates the campus and is reflected in the institutional strategy, in curriculum and pedagogy, and in the work of all departments and divisions. To meet this goal, boards should ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to support these efforts; identify metrics for continual assessment of institutional progress; hold leadership accountable for reaching these benchmarks; and identify, prepare for, and respond to areas of institutional risk related to justice, equity, and inclusion.

Ensuring Sufficient Support

Boards should ensure that system, foundation, and institutional leaders have the required human and financial resources necessary to implement an equity agenda. Such resources might include: scholarships, paid internships, professional development funds, curricular redesign support, enhanced student services, and enhanced institutional research and data analysis, among others.

The appointment of a senior administrator charged with the responsibility for oversight of institutional diversity and equity initiatives, is a recommended practice for larger institutions and merits consideration by smaller institutions. The presence of a diversity officer may help accelerate progress at

*Boards should ensure that
sufficient
resources
are allocated to
support these efforts;
identify metrics for
continual assessment of
institutional progress;
hold leadership
accountable
for reaching these
benchmarks; and identify,
prepare for, and respond
to areas of institutional
risk related to justice,
equity, and inclusion.*

institutions that are initiating this work by providing dedicated leadership for these efforts. This individual, who should report to the president, can be effective only if the campus recognizes that the position has the support of committed institutional leadership and the office has the required financial support for professional development and outreach throughout the institution.

Embracing Leadership, Oversight, and Assessment

For a culture of justice, equity, and inclusion to permeate the campus, the board must accept a leadership role in the articulation, promotion, and continuous assessment of this strategic priority. By engaging the campus community in a conversation about what should be included in an institutional equity agenda and how it should be assessed, the board will generate enthusiasm for this effort and will ensure the strategy incorporates the experience of the wider campus community.

The board might consider the following approach:

- » Led by the institutional leadership and in collaboration with the campus community, the governing board should engage in the exercise of identifying those characteristics and outcomes that would affirm that the institution is inclusive, anti-racist, socially just, and educationally equitable. By incorporating the voices of faculty, staff, and students in this conversation, boards will have a more expansive understanding of what is required.
- » Based on the results of this exercise, the board should clearly articulate the nature of the community it wishes to cultivate and the quality of the educational experience (including the goals for learning) that it expects every student to have.
- » All future decisions (including resource allocation decisions) should be informed by the expectations and outcomes outlined through this process. Actions that support the achievement of the identified outcomes and characteristics should be treated as institutional priorities.
- » In conjunction with institutional leadership, the board should adopt a set of benchmarks by which to assess institutional progress toward the

For a culture of justice, equity, and inclusion to permeate the campus, the board must accept a leadership role in the articulation, promotion, and continuous assessment of this strategic priority.

achievement of the outcomes and characteristics identified. (For sample benchmarks, please see Appendix 2.)

Clear measurable benchmarks that are routinely assessed by the campus and monitored by the board will ensure that equity remains a consistent focus. While many boards routinely monitor student outcome dashboards, the practice of disaggregating by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or first-generation status is less common. If the results of these dashboards reveal discrepancies in academic outcomes (e.g., retention and graduation rates, graduate school acceptance, participation in high-demand degree programs, etc.) or in other student experiences (e.g., participation in high-impact practices), boards should ask institutional leadership about strategies for addressing these discrepancies.

An area often overlooked in the development of institutional benchmarks is the experience of faculty and staff of color. Many of these individuals assume a disproportionate share of the responsibility for supporting, mentoring, and advising marginalized students as well as for leading institutional diversity and inclusion work, often at the expense of their own research and other forms of productivity. Additionally, underrepresented faculty members are often impacted by unconscious bias in student evaluations and inordinate demands for institutional service. Boards should pay particular attention to how these demands impact promotion, tenure, and other forms of advancement at the institution.

One of the most important ways boards add value is by asking probing questions that promote learning and move the institution's justice, equity, and inclusion strategy forward. In its oversight role, the board should carefully review institutional data and ask critical questions with the objective of fostering new understandings and continuous learning. These discussions may lead to resource reallocation, process improvements, or additional initiatives. The board's sharp focus, reliance on data, and probing questions represent important levers for change.

Boards should consider emerging issues that might impact equity. For example, innovation today often outpaces our ability to understand its consequences, creating questions regarding the relations between technology, equity, and social justice. Boards should be assured that institutional leaders and faculty are well informed about the implicit equity issues that are part of technology innovation and use that

In its oversight role, the board should carefully review institutional data and ask critical questions with the objective of fostering new understandings and continuous learning.

permeates campus life, from demographic categories in enterprise data platforms, to research priorities, to facial recognition software. The presence of bias in technology will become an increasingly important issue for boards and campus leaders.

As fiduciaries, board members are ultimately accountable for the quality of the education offered by their institutions including the learning outcomes and the curriculum. Boards are responsible for ensuring that graduates possess the knowledge, skills, and consciousness required to participate in a diverse democracy and that, upon graduation, students in professional programs are prepared to exercise their professional roles in a manner that reflects humane, just, and culturally responsive service delivery. Boards should ask the president and appropriate institutional leaders to organize a review of the curriculum with the goal of determining that the academic program addresses the breadth of human experience, treats the experience of people of color and other marginalized groups as central to this examination, and prepares students to assume their professional roles in a pluralistic society.

Board members can gain additional insight into how effectively the institution is addressing issues of racial justice and inclusion through direct interaction with students. An institution that has made considerable progress with representational diversity may still reflect a culture in which various forms of racism and sexism continue to have negative impact. Quantitative benchmarks such as annual climate surveys are extremely helpful. Board members can add context to these data when they engage directly with students to understand more fully their experience in the classroom, on the campus, and in the local community. Benchmarks and quantitative measures do not fully capture the pain and trauma that those who experience marginalization at colleges and universities feel. Trustees must be ready to listen generously, to hear the voices of students, and to accept the discomfort that the conversations may generate. Through conversations with students, boards will develop a much more nuanced perspective about supporting the critical needs of a diverse student body.

Using feedback from institutional data (climate surveys, National Survey of Student Engagement, etc.) board members might focus their conversations on such issues as:

- » **Safety:** Ensuring the safety of all students is central to the work of boards. Given the fraught relationship of students of color with the police, it will be important for boards to hear directly from students regarding their interaction with campus public safety and with local law enforcement agencies. The results of such conversations may lead the board to consider further interaction with local law enforcement.

- » Effective practices: Trustees might ask students for concrete examples of what is working well for them as well as what they perceive as the most significant hurdles to their success.
- » Based on the results of climate surveys, board members may wish to learn more about the students' experiences in the classroom, in residence halls (where applicable), and in interaction with their peers.
- » The board might also use this venue to learn about students' experience in the local community.

In the context of these conversations, board members should remember that their role is not to take action or to make hasty promises. It is to listen, to learn and, consequently, to discuss their learning with institutional leadership.

Addressing Risk

The early histories of many of this nation's colleges and universities are linked to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, racial and religious discrimination, and the confiscation of Indigenous land (Wilder, 2013). More recent histories include acts of overt racism and perpetuation of structural inequality (Cole, 2020). Institutions that fail to address their historical and current inequities risk facing questions about institutional integrity as well negative publicity and brand diminution.

Many institutions have bravely interrogated their histories, published the results, and instituted a series of actions to acknowledge, if not repair, negative acts of the past. Boards should request a review of the institution's history. Undertaking such a review proactively may forestall more aggressive demands from the college or university community that such action be undertaken. Each institution will approach this review differently based on its history, mission, and context. Consistent with higher education's commitment to teaching, research, and service, our institutions must model evidence-based cultures that are committed to transparent sharing of all findings—even when it is uncomfortable. It is incumbent on boards to respond in a strategic way with a focus on the future, not on legacies of the past.

Similarly, the injustices exposed in recent history have generated increased activism across the country. This

Many institutions have bravely interrogated their histories, published the results, and instituted a series of actions to acknowledge, if not repair, negative acts of the past. Boards should request a review of the institution's history.

heightened level of engagement provides a unique opportunity for learning. Conversely, failure to understand and appropriately respond to campus activism is a significant risk factor with the potential to impact enrollment, philanthropy, and reputation. In all situations, campus safety is paramount. Boards and institutional leaders must uphold local, state, and federal law as well as all institutional policies. They can also anticipate and respond to student activism in ways that strengthen the institution.

Board and institutional leaders might consider this approach:

- » Boards might encourage institutional leaders to engage with students proactively regarding campus concerns and, additionally, to strategize with them about how to address issues that foment their activism in the larger community. Through their engagement with campus activists, institutional leaders, in accordance with their role as educators, can model effective methods for sustained impactful discussion of difficult topics.
- » The board should charge institutional leaders with developing a proactive communication plan that will address the varied concerns of internal and external constituents.
- » Boards should resist making statements that are merely cosmetic—e.g., issuing statements without clear evidence of intended action, making determinations about what students need without consultation, promoting diversity while maintaining problematic symbols. Such actions will likely generate rapid, negative responses.
- » Boards and institutional leaders should be cautious about responding to incidents that spark public and media attention without sufficient information.
- » Although intense activism by students often puts stress on the institution, particularly on institutional leadership, boards should recognize that student demands can serve as a catalyst and speed the implementation of long-overdue, needed change.
- » Campus leaders need to be open to understanding the legitimate concerns of students. Emotions often run high on campuses. Leaders need to listen, and to understand the intensity of feelings and their

Our institutions must model evidence-based cultures that are committed to transparent sharing of all findings—even when it is uncomfortable.

relationship to the gravity of the underlying situation. So long as activists, themselves, do not violate campus policies, or the law, leaders should do all they can to clearly and effectively listen, understand, and communicate with the entire campus community the essence of the concerns raised, and work toward developing solutions to resolve the concerns in a time frame that is achievable.

Boards can assist their campuses in infusing an equity lens in all operations by insisting on a culture of evidence and placing laser focus on those measures that demonstrate success at reducing or eliminating achievement gaps across all categories of students, an institutional climate that guarantees fair and just treatment of faculty and staff from marginalized groups, and a campus culture that fosters full inclusion.

Strategy 3. Contributing to Social Justice and Equity in the Community in Which the Institution Is Located

*Boards have
tremendous capacity to
foster justice
and equity
in the local community
and the region by
elevating these issues
throughout the
institution's various
forms of engagement.*

Boards have tremendous capacity to foster justice and equity in the local community and the region by elevating these issues throughout the institution's various forms of engagement. By doing so, the institution can enhance brand reputation and institutional sustainability while contributing to the public good. Additionally, as recognized community leaders, board members, through their actions, have a tremendous opportunity to serve as advocates for justice, equity, and inclusion throughout the region.

Institutions of higher education have a significant economic footprint in the local community and region. Boards should intentionally ensure the business opportunities they tender are available to those sectors of the community that have often been neglected, especially businesses owned by women and people of color. Additionally, boards should ensure the businesses with which the institution engages model inclusive hiring practices and support equity and justice throughout their operations.

Many institutions of higher education, particularly those in urban areas, have histories characterized by problematic relationships with the local community.

As these institutions expanded their physical footprint, gentrification often followed. The original communities (sometimes Black, Brown, Indigenous, and/or working-class) that surrounded the campus were eradicated or negatively impacted by these changes. Institutions should learn about their historic relationship with their neighbors and look for ways to enhance the quality of life in surrounding communities through partnerships that produce healthy sustainable communities.

In rural or suburban communities, the advent of students of color sometimes generates negative or problematic reactions from citizens, businesses, and governmental entities. Students often find the environments surrounding the campus inhospitable, if not hostile. Board members and institutional leaders should monitor issues related to how hospitable students, faculty, and staff find the local community. This might include developing a community climate index and tracking bias incidents or other problematic events that occur in the local community. In conjunction with institutional leaders, board members should serve as advocates for their students and address these matters with the appropriate agencies/businesses within the locality. Boards should leverage their economic impact in support of those agencies and businesses that make the community more hospitable and should also be prepared to provide support and leadership for community education on matters of diversity, inclusion, and racial and social justice.

Recommendations and Key Questions

Each college, university, system, and foundation board has an obligation informed by mission and strategic direction to intentionally assure that the institution acts justly, promotes equity, and is seen as fair to all. To achieve these goals, boards must be inclusive with regard to their own governance practices and in the development of policies and procedures that regulate the institution. These recommendations provide a roadmap for consideration.

Strategy 1. Developing and Applying an Equity Lens in the Board's Governance Structures and Processes

1. Boards should ensure their composition results in a robust team that is demographically diverse and brings a variety of perspectives to its decision-making.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Does our board composition reflect the skills, insights, and perspectives required to oversee our priority of justice, equity, and inclusion for all institutional stakeholders?
- » If our board lacks sufficient diversity, do we have a plan to remedy this situation?
- » Has our board identified professional expertise in the areas of justice, equity, and inclusion as skill sets necessary for effective governance?
- » What changes are required to ensure our board's governance and nomination procedures foster greater diversity in our membership and leadership?
- » Does our board recognize and effectively utilize the knowledge and skills of board members who have expertise in the areas of justice, equity, and inclusion (Brown, Legon, and MacTaggart, 2020)?

- » Is financial capacity an overvalued criterion for board membership? Does our expectation of a significant financial contribution limit participation of sectors whose presence would add value to the board—e.g., younger individuals or leaders in the nonprofit sector?
2. Governors and state legislators should seek to identify board members who will contribute to the diverse skill sets needed by each governing board, and who, additionally, have demonstrated commitment to justice, equity, and inclusion initiatives in their own businesses and other voluntary engagements.

QUESTIONS TO ASK (*public institutions with gubernatorial or other political appointments*):

- » Does our board maintain a profile of desired member skill sets, and seek to inform the appointing authority about the expertise, background, and experiences needed to complement our board?
 - » Does our board use its influence to request appointees who share a commitment to justice, equity, and inclusion?
 - » Does our board use its influence with appointing authorities to request appointees who will contribute to the overall diversity of the board?
3. Boards should embed the work of justice, equity, and inclusion in their governance structures and practices and each member of the board must see this as a significant component of fiduciary responsibility.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Do our institutional mission, vision, and strategy reflect a commitment to justice, equity, and inclusion?
- » Has our board adopted and published a statement of values that reflects an institutional commitment to creating a learning environment that is effective for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and/or viewpoint?
- » Does our committee structure facilitate comprehensive consideration and oversight of institutional progress related to clearly articulated justice, equity, and inclusion goals?

Each college, university, system, and foundation board has an obligation informed by mission and strategic direction to intentionally assure that the institution acts justly, promotes equity, and is seen as fair to all.

- » Do our bylaws and committee charters need to be revised to reflect the board's commitment to apply an antiracist equity lens throughout the institution?
 - » Has our board assigned responsibility for leading efforts related to justice, equity, and inclusion to all members of the board, not just those who may be from underrepresented groups?
4. Board members should commit to continuous learning related to justice, equity, and inclusion.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » How much time on board agendas is devoted to these topics?
 - » Do our board meeting and retreat agendas provide opportunities for members to enhance their understanding of these issues on an ongoing basis?
 - » Does our board orientation include a profile of the current student body and a discussion of any documented differences related to academic success and to equity of educational experiences across race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background?
 - » Recognizing that time in board meetings is limited and that individuals learn at different paces, does the board provide guidance and support for members to pursue additional learning opportunities in contexts beyond those associated with the institution?
 - » Do our campus leaders and our board and foundation members have an accurate understanding of the unique history of our institution as it relates to race? Have we addressed “mythologies” that contradict the actual history of our institution?
 - » Does our board orientation include a thoughtful discussion of a potential need to abandon names, symbols, and traditions that were previously meaningful to alumni and now create a less-than-welcoming environment for current students?
 - » Is the expectation that board members will deepen their knowledge of justice, equity, and inclusion incorporated into our trustee assessment instrument?
5. The board should include a commitment to and demonstrated success in leading institutional transformation related to diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of the hiring criteria for the CEO and for senior leadership and incorporate accountability measures related to this strategy into the annual assessment of all senior leaders.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Has our board clearly articulated metrics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and incorporated these into institutional strategic priorities and into the annual assessment of the chief executive officer and the leadership team to ensure accountability?
- » Has our board provided the necessary development opportunities to ensure leadership is prepared to lead a justice, equity, and inclusion strategy at the institution?
- » Is our board fully prepared to support institutional leadership as it navigates the pushback that often accompanies transformational change?
- » Do our hiring criteria for senior leadership positions include a commitment to the creation of an inclusive, equitable, and racially just campus?

Has our board clearly articulated metrics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and incorporated these into institutional strategic priorities and into the annual assessment of the chief executive officer and the leadership team to ensure accountability?

Strategy 2. Applying a Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Lens throughout the Institution

1. The board should provide sufficient funds to support the resource requirements necessary to achieve the institution's justice, equity, and inclusion goals, based on a recommendation from leadership.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Has the board charged the chief executive with the responsibility for articulating the leadership and resource requirements necessary to achieve the institution's justice, equity, and inclusion goals?
 - » Has the board committed adequate resources in support of the institution's justice, equity, and inclusion goals?
2. The board should accept its responsibility to initiate and monitor institutional efforts to embed justice, equity, and inclusion throughout the institution.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Does our board have clear goals and benchmarks in place for measuring achievement gaps and whether or not the campus climate fosters a sense of belonging?
 - » Has our board affirmed that closing achievement gaps are an institutional priority that will be demonstrated by evidence that race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender are no longer predictors of academic success?
 - » Does our board receive data for students, faculty, and staff on key performance indicators disaggregated by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender that will allow us to understand and assess whether or not the campus is achieving its goals in this regard?
 - » Are departmental and divisional program reviews designed to collect data related to differences in student success and persistence in the academic major disaggregated by race, ethnicity, first-generation college status, Pell Grant eligibility, and gender?
 - » Is the institution addressing the pipeline of talent for the future by ensuring equitable participation of all students in high impact research opportunities, mentoring, and advising for graduate school?
 - » Are all students able to access equitably all opportunities our institution has to offer—e.g., study abroad, undergraduate research, internships?
3. The board should require a periodic audit of all institutional policies, practices, and procedures in an effort to identify and eradicate systemic bias that contributes to inequity on campus. Policies, practices, and procedures should also be continually assessed to ensure these affirmatively promote inclusion and equity.

Has our board affirmed that closing achievement gaps are an institutional priority that will be demonstrated by evidence that race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender are no longer predictors of academic success?

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Has our board conducted a policies, practices, and procedures audit to assess their relevance and impact of key policies on different campus populations?

Specific attention should be given to:

- admission and financial aid policies;
- residence life, student organizations, and student conduct policies;
- intercollegiate athletics;
- campus policing; and
- human resource policies, practices, procedures, and outcomes, including the assessment of teaching and scholarship, the incorporation (to the extent possible) of institutional commitments to justice, equity, and inclusion in employment contracts, and good faith efforts as part of negotiations with unions.

- » Has our board reviewed our investments and investment managers from a perspective that includes consideration of environmental/social/governance (ESG), diversity, and inclusion concerns?
 - » Has our board reviewed our policies for contracting from the perspective of justice, equity, and inclusion?
 - » Has our board directed campus leadership to review admission policies in anticipation of judicial limitations on the use of race in college admissions?
 - » Has our board requested that institutional leaders become more informed on the social and ethical implications of emerging technologies and how their development can impact ethnic, gender, and other groups differently?
4. The board should establish a set of metrics that provide reliable information about the experience of faculty and staff of color.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » What do trend data reveal about efforts to diversify the faculty and staff by department/college?
 - » Are there significant differences in rates of retention, promotion, tenure or compensation between faculty and staff of color and White faculty and staff? Tenured versus contingent faculty?
 - » Has our board reviewed policies in the faculty and staff handbooks with an equity lens?
5. The board should establish a set of practices that enable structured interaction with students from underrepresented groups.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » What opportunities does our board have to hear from students about their concerns, including issues of justice, equity, and inclusion?
 - » How is campus climate assessed and what do the results of the most recent study reveal?
 - » What are the results of efforts to improve the campus climate for all students?
6. Governing boards should request evidence from the faculty that the institution's curriculum addresses the breadth of human experience, particularly the experience of marginalized communities, and that it prepares students to participate effectively in a diverse democracy.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Is the breadth of our curriculum sufficient to ensure that students graduate with an intellectually honest understanding of our nation's treatment of its diverse communities?
 - » Do our institution's professional programs expose students to curricular content that will enable them to exercise their professional roles in a manner that contributes to a humane, just, and culturally responsive model of service delivery?
 - » How effectively do our curriculum and cocurriculum prepare students to weigh evidence, listen to and critically examine divergent schools of thought, and engage in difficult yet respectful conversations?
 - » Does our curriculum provide opportunities for students and faculty to consider the differential impact of rapidly expanding technologies and the degree to which these may foster or inhibit the creation of solutions that can make the world a better, more equitable, and more inclusive place?
7. The board should commission a review of the institution's history, including past policies and practices, and identify instances and ways in which the institution may have been responsible for racial, ethnic, religious or other forms of injustice. It should commit to a transparent airing of those situations and to correcting policies and practices that enabled past injustices (Brown, Legon, and MacTaggart, 2020).

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » How have our historical policies and practices related to admission and financial aid, research and curriculum, contracting, capital development, hiring and employee retention, and philanthropy and investing intentionally or unintentionally fostered inequality?

- » What roles have individuals whom our institution has honored played in the perpetuation of inequality or, conversely, in the pursuit of equity?
 - » Have our institution's financial resources been generated by past unjust practices?
 - » Upon whose land does our institution rest and how was it acquired?
 - » If and when our board discovers unacceptable past practices or unacceptable current traditions, do we have a process for determining how to respond? What would constitute symbolic restitution? What would constitute actual correction and atonement?
 - » How can our institution effectively engage alumni and donors in conversations about controversial symbols, events, and individuals in our past and present?
8. Institutional leaders and governing boards should anticipate and prepare for increased levels of activism on the campus and in the local community.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » How has our institutional leadership prepared to address campus activism?
- » Are there likely flashpoints on issues that the board should be aware of and proactively address?
- » Is our board chair well informed about the institution's commitment to justice, equity, and inclusion and prepared to speak for the board if an incident occurs that violates any of these key principles?
- » How can our institution communicate proactively with alumni and donors regarding these issues?
- » What do the student newspaper and social media posts reveal about campus concerns related to equity and justice?

Strategy 3.

Contributing to Social Justice and Equity in the Community in which the Institution Is Located

1. Boards should examine the institution's business practices ensuring these foster equity and justice within the local community.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Do our outsourcing contracts ensure those with whom the campus does business share the same commitment to justice, fairness, and inclusion?
 - » Does our master campus plan displace families and compromise communities?
 - » How might our institution partner with local agencies to promote healthy sustainable communities?
 - » How have our historical policies and practices intentionally or unintentionally fostered inequality or negatively impacted the local community?
2. Board members in conjunction with institutional leaders must ensure that the local community is welcoming to students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » What have we learned about how marginalized students, faculty, and staff experience our community?
 - » What data should we collect to understand and monitor this issue?
 - » With what agencies can the institution partner to promote safe and welcoming communities for all members of the campus community?
3. Boards should encourage institutional leaders, working in partnership with the government, business, and the nonprofit sector, to address systemic inequities evident in local/regional public education, housing, employment, health, and other key factors for quality of life.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » How might our institution leverage its intellectual capital and problem-solving capacities to provide assistance in addressing such issues as homelessness, health disparities, and inequities in K-12 education?
 - » How can individual board members bring a justice, equity, and inclusion focus to their work as community leaders?
4. Working with institutional leaders, boards should seek opportunities to acknowledge and reward scholarly work and community engagement that addresses intractable problems associated with inequality and injustice.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Does our institution foster relationships with community leaders to learn about local/regional priorities we might assist in addressing through study, service, or other engagement?
 - » How is civic engagement encouraged and demonstrated by institutional leadership?
 - » How are faculty recognized and rewarded for civic engagement in the promotion and tenure process?
 - » How are all levels of staff recognized and rewarded for community engagement efforts that promote justice, equity, and inclusion?
5. The board should encourage institutional leadership to develop programs that enhance the effectiveness of K-12 education and expand college access to children and adults from the immediate community and should help garner resources to support these efforts.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Has the board prioritized assessment and enhancement of the teacher education programs at our institution?
- » In what ways does the institution partner with the local education authority to promote equitable outcomes in K-12 education, (e.g., specialized professional development for teachers, enhanced programming in STEM at the middle school level, and assistance with data analysis and program design)?
- » What do data regarding the extent to which high school graduates from the locality attend our institution reveal?
- » Are there barriers to access and are there practices we might adopt to address any concerns?
- » Do institutional tuition remission programs provide educational access to all categories of staff?

Working with institutional leaders, boards should seek opportunities to acknowledge and reward scholarly work and community engagement that addresses intractable problems associated with inequality and injustice.

Conclusion

As those who hold higher education in trust, governing boards, in collaboration with institutional leaders, have a fiduciary responsibility to advance racial justice, equity, and inclusion in their institutions, local communities, and the society at large. The question is whether we will rise to the demands of this moment. The actions we take, or fail to take, will reverberate throughout our higher education institutions, our economy, and our society for decades to come and will significantly impact the life experience of our students and their families.

Institution, system, and foundation boards have the capacity to serve as catalysts for the necessary institutional transformation. With sustained commitment and focused attention, boards and senior leaders can create the institutions our students and our society deserve by:

- Developing and applying an equity lens in the board's governance, structures, and processes;
- Applying a justice, equity, and inclusion lens throughout the institution; and
- Contributing to social justice and equity in the community in which the institution is located.

Undertaking this work will be challenging and complex for every institution, system, and foundation. It will require knowledge, intentional resolve, and courage. And yet, it could not be more important at a time when our system of higher education is in need of renewal, and at a time when our country is divided and in need of unity, fractured and in need of healing, inequitable and in need of justice.

In the 1960s, Black, Brown, and Indigenous students brought the Civil Rights Movement to their campuses through calls for diversification of the student body, the faculty, and the curriculum. In many cases, boards and campus leadership were slow to respond to these calls for change. Since

The actions we take, or fail to take, will reverberate throughout our higher education institutions, our economy, and our society for decades to come and will significantly impact the life experience of our students and their families.

that time, we have learned a great deal about the unmet needs of our students, about the impact of marginalization on academic success, and about strategies that promote student success and racial justice at our institutions. If we effectively apply the lessons learned, governing boards, working with institutional leadership, can create the just and equitable institutions upon which our collective future depends, and upon which our students build their dreams.

Now is the time for boards to summon the will and courage required for this work. Let us ensure, unlike in the 1960s, that when the history of this era is written, those responsible for the governance of colleges and universities will have risen to the demands of this historic moment. By doing so, we will have assured that American higher education remains one of the world's great beacons.

Undertaking this work will be challenging and complex for every institution, system, and foundation.

It will require knowledge, intentional resolve, and courage.

References

- American Council on Education. *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Higher Education, 2019.
- Anti-Defamation League. *White Supremacists Step Up Off-Campus Propaganda Efforts in 2018*. New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2018.
- Anti-Defamation League. *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents in 2019*. New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2019. <https://www.adl.org/audit2019#themes-and-trends>.
- Association of American Universities. *Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct*. Washington, DC: Association of American Universities, 2019.
- Association of Community College Trustees. *Equity Action Agenda for Community College Governance*. Washington, DC: Association of Community College Trustees, 2018.
- Association of Governing Boards. *Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing and Foundation Boards 2016*. Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards, 2016.
- Association of Governing Boards. *The AGB 2020 Trustee Index*. Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards, 2020.
- Bensimon, Estela Mara. “Reclaiming Racial Justice in Equity.” *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 50, issue 3-4 (2018): 95–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2018.1509623>.
- Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. *Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2017*. Washington, DC: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2018.
- Brown, Carlton, Richard Legon, and Terrence MacTaggart. “It’s Time for Governing Boards to Weigh In on Race.” *Inside Higher Ed*, July 10, 2020. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/07/10/college-governing-boards-must-weigh-meaningfully-race>.
- Burke, Lilah. “Black Workers and the University.” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 27, 2020. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/10/27/black-workers-universities-often-are-left-out-conversations-about-race-and-higher>.
- California Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. *Campus Climate 2019–2020 Report*. <https://static.ca.cair.com/reports/downloads/CAIR-2019-2020-Campus-Climate-Report.pdf>.
- Caplan, Paula J., and Jordan C. Ford. “The Voices of Diversity: What Students of Diverse Races/Ethnicities and Both Sexes Tell Us About Their College Experiences and Their Perceptions About their Institutions’ Progress Toward Diversity.” *Aporia: The Nursing Journal* 6, no. 4 (2014): 30–69. <https://doi.org/10.18192/aporia.v6i4.2828>.
- Cole, Eddie R. *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Freedom*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020.
- Conway, Maureen, and Mark G. Popovich. “The State of Our Economy-Opportunity Requires Boosting Job Quality.” *Aspen Institute*. Last modified February 6, 2019. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/the-state-of-our-economy-2019-extending-opportunity-requires-boosting-job-quality/>.

- Dixon-Fyle, Sundiatu, et al. *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*. New York: McKinsey & Company, 2020.
- Giancola, Jennifer, and Richard D. Kahlenberg. *True Merit: Ensuring Our Brightest Students Have Access to Our Best Colleges and Universities*. Lansdowne, VA: Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, 2016.
- Grawe, Nathan D. *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018.
- Jones, Stan. "Why College? The Many Implications of Completion." *Trusteeship*, January/February 2016.
- Kuh, George. *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2008.
- National Center for Education Statistics. "Table 326.10. Graduation rate from first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, time to completion, sex, control of institution, and percentage of applications accepted: Selected cohort entry years, 1996 through 2012." *Digest of Education Statistics*, (2019). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_326.10.asp.
- Nettles, Michael T. "Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving the National Postsecondary Degree Attainment Goals." *ETS Research Report Series* 2017, issue 1 (2017): 1–71. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12141>.
- O'Malley, Lisa. "Students and Advocates Combat Rise in Anti-Asian Discrimination." *INSIGHT Into Diversity*, November 2020.
- Quest For Peace. "UCI GATEWAY Courses-JOHN N. GARDNER." YouTube video, 32:38. December 6, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eU6AtUEn24E&t=18s>.
- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. New York: Basic Books, 2017.
- U.S. Department of the Interior. "Minority Serving Institutions Program." Accessed February 8, 2021. <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program>.
- Vespa, Jonathan, Lauren Medina, and David M. Armstrong. *Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060*. Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau, 2020. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf>.
- Wilder, Craig Steven. *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.
- Zhou, Irene. "Asian American students report acts of racism during COVID-19 pandemic." *Daily Bruin*, June 8, 2020. <https://dailybruin.com/2020/06/08/asian-american-students-report-acts-of-racism-during-covid-19-pandemic>.

Appendix 1

Definitions

Antiracism—the active process of identifying and eliminating racial bias and discrimination, systemic racism, and the oppression of marginalized individuals and groups by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes so that equitable opportunities are accessible to all people and power is redistributed and shared equitably.

Diversity—A broad definition that focuses on who is present in a particular setting/organization with a focus on: race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, marital status, education, language, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

Equity—the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist in the provision of opportunities to all groups. (Adapted from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Terms—University of Houston.)

Inclusion—the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a fully participating member. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.

Intersectionality—the interconnected nature of the identities that a person can hold such as race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, marital status, professional status, etc. These combined identities may create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Racial Justice—Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice initiatives address structural and systemic changes to ensure equal access to opportunities, eliminate disparities, and advance racial equity—thus ensuring that all people, regardless of their race, can prosper and reach their full potential. Racial justice and equity is not achieved by the mere absence of racial discrimination or the perceived absence of harmful racial bias, but rather through deliberate action to dismantle problematic and build positively transformational systems—action must be carried through with the conviction, commitment and dedication of advocates. Racial justice is distinct from social justice and from the broader rubric of diversity, equity, and inclusion work. (<https://diversity.williams.edu/racial-justice/>)

Sense of Belonging—individuals perceive themselves to be an essential part of an organization or institution. Belonging is achieved when individuals can be fully themselves within the organization and have the ability to critique and hold an institution responsible for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Social Justice—Social justice examines the distribution of wealth, privileges, and opportunity within a society and involves fighting oppression such as ableism, ageism, classism, racism, sexism, and oppression of those who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community, are from different countries, or are religious. (<https://diversity.williams.edu/racial-justice/>)

Structural Racism—a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing, ways to perpetuate racial inequity. As defined, it is a long-standing feature of our social, economic, and political system and identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges and/or disadvantages associated with race and ethnicity to endure and adapt over time. (Adapted from “11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism,” <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/structural-racism-definition/>.)

Appendix 2

Accountability Benchmarks

Campus Benchmarks

1. Campus climate surveys of students and employees
2. Bias incidence reports
3. Academic achievement data (retention, graduation rates, success in gateway courses, persistence in selected fields, e.g., STEM, etc.) disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status
4. Academic Engagement data (participation in high impact practices: study abroad, internships, undergraduate research, learning communities, etc.)
5. Postgraduation outcomes: debt at graduation, graduate school acceptance rates, career placement, earnings, etc. (disaggregated by demographic groups)
6. Faculty and staff diversity
7. Leadership team diversity
8. Retention of faculty and staff from marginalized communities
9. Racial/ethnic/gender differential patterns in promotion and tenure

Governance Benchmarks

If the board is holding the campus accountable it should lead by establishing its own justice, equity, and inclusion governance benchmarks.

1. What measures would indicate the board is effective in applying a sustained justice, equity and inclusion focus into its operations?
2. What are the indices that demonstrate the board has successfully developed membership that reflects intellectual, cultural, and demographic (age, race/ethnicity, SES) diversity?
3. How does the board promote and assess effective justice, equity and inclusion practices in other advisory and philanthropic bodies: alumni boards, booster clubs, boards of visitors, etc.

Acknowledgments

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and its board of directors are grateful to the many people who contributed to the development of this statement. We are especially grateful to Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran, who served as the primary author of the statement, and to the Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Group:

Kim Bobby, Executive Search
Consultant, AGB Search

Carlton Brown, Senior Fellow,
AGB Consulting, and Former
President of Savannah State
University and Clark Atlanta
University

Robin Cummings, Chancellor,
University of North Carolina
at Pembroke

Juliet Garcia, Former Member,
AGB Board of Directors and
Former President, University
of Texas at Brownsville

Eleanor Horne, Member,
Board of Directors, AGB and
Trustee, The College of New
Jersey

Tom Hyatt, Partner, Dentons
and Senior Fellow, AGB

Leo Lambert, Member, AGB
Board of Directors and
President Emeritus, Elon
University

Rae Mang, Chair, University of
Cincinnati Foundation Board
of Trustees

Angel Mendez, Secretary, AGB
Board of Trustees

Steven Lewis Point, Chancellor,
University of British Columbia

Henry Stoeber, President and
Chief Executive Officer, AGB

Blaine Tamaki, Vice Chair,
University of Washington
Board of Regents

Alec Taylor, Member and
Former Chair, Furman
University Board of Trustees

Thanks, too, to the AGB Project Team: Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran, Merrill Schwartz, and Anne Elizabeth Powell.

AGB Board of Directors

Chair

Shauna Ryder Diggs

The University of Michigan—Regent Emerita

Vice Chairs

Monroe Miller

Johnson C. Smith University

Beverly Seay

University of Central Florida

Secretary

Angel L. Mendez

Lafayette College

Members

Eric P. Blackhurst

Alma College

Robert King

*U.S. Department of Education—Former
Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education*

Nelson A. Carbonell

George Washington University—Chair Emeritus

Leo M. Lambert

Elon University—President Emeritus

Kathleen A. Dore

University of Iowa Center for Advancement

Ross Mugler

Old Dominion University

Fred DuVal

Arizona Board of Regents

Ronald C. Parker

Texas Christian University

Cathy Havener Greer

Randolph College—Trustee Emerita

Laurene Sperling

Duke University

Eleanor V. Horne

The College of New Jersey

Henry Stoeber

*President and Chief Executive Officer, AGB
Ex Officio*

Mary K. Hughes

University of Alaska System

Jeffrey L. Humber, Jr.

University of Virginia Law School Foundation

Horacio Valeiras

Virginia Tech

AGB BOARD OF DIRECTORS' STATEMENT ON

Justice, Equity, and Inclusion

And Guidance for Implementation



1133 20th Street, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20036
www.AGB.org