

Making the Case

Over the past decade, many AGB members and others in the higher education community have developed and implemented various programs designed to increase diversity on campuses, pursue more equitable treatment and support for increasingly diverse student bodies, and manifest a greater feeling of inclusivity for students, faculty, and staff.

Often, these measures have become robust, expansive, and integrative in overall efforts for sustaining and improving institutions and organizations. Many have shared that this work is critical to mission fulfillment, and inherent in the work of higher education.

National efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) are based upon assessments that demonstrate that these principles are the source of improvements in campus culture, student learning outcomes, and quality of intellectual life. As stated unequivocally in the latest version of American Council on Education's *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report*:

Racial and ethnic diversity comes with a host of benefits at all levels of education and in the workforce—greater productivity, innovation, and cultural competency, to name a few. Moreover, the current and future health of our nation—economic and otherwise—requires that the whole of our population have equitable access to sources of opportunity.

Concomitantly, DE&I efforts have become critical in the business world, with several major corporations investing significantly to enhance DE&I and enabling these efforts to improve corporate culture.

AGB is passionate about treating everyone we encounter with dignity and respect. We believe that this will make the world a better place. By doing so, we will create a sense of belonging and make others feel valued and seen as individuals.

AGB's Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative is designed to support and assist higher education's efforts to further DE&I. For AGB, the current climate demands that we lead with deliberate action to advance social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do. We believe that similar efforts taking place at many of our colleges, universities, and institutionally related foundations should not be hindered in their forward movement. Further, the strength of American higher education has long resided in the independence of its institutions as embodied by and entrusted in our boards.

Given the care and inclusiveness that have characterized the genesis of many DE&I programs, we urge institutions to press forward with confidence. Decisions to stop your actions for review, curtail program elements, or to cancel or postpone events will slow progress and raise questions about institutional commitment. Instead, we recommend intensifying your efforts and allowing the learning that takes place on your campuses to lead the institution to deeper and more complete resolve and outcomes.

We believe that addressing matters of social and racial justice is a national imperative. Removing barriers to student success, creating a stronger sense of belonging for all students, faculty, and staff, and contributing to the communities in which we live and work are critical to the success of our colleges and universities and our nation. If we don't stay the course, there is much at stake, including the overall sense of well-being among all people.