

Conclusions and Next Steps

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:

- 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.

NEXT STEPS

Each institution has its own history, challenges, and place along the journey in pursuit of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (JDE&I). We encourage boards to commit time to continually learn and grow to understand the challenges for their institution, make needed changes, and assess progress.

Here are a few suggestions for sustaining this work and building it into the ongoing work of the board:

- Develop and apply an equity lens to the board's governance, structures, and processes. Have a board discussion around what it would look like if the board were doing exceptionally well on JDE&I. Establish goals and metrics by which the board can assess current practices and progress. Examine board committee charters and consider how the board's work will incorporate and address JDE&I.
- Include an element addressing a different aspect of JDE&I in every board meeting: metrics on key measures of progress, campus climate survey results, conversation with students about lived experience, faculty presentation on high-impact strategies for student success, employer roundtable on cultural competency and other workplace-ready expectations of graduates, demographic trends and enrollment projections, etc.
- Share relevant readings with board members that highlight progress on JDE&I goals.