

Getting Started With Equity

A Guide for Academic
Department Leaders



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Preamble

In 2020, we saw civil unrest, protest, acts of state-sanctioned violence, natural and manmade calamity, and the exponential growth of the wealth gap. That year brought increased awareness about the continued disregard for Black life: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many others were murdered by those who were supposed to make our communities safer. At the same time, COVID-19 illuminated the health disparities that exist between Black, Indigenous, and other Peoples of Color (BIPOC) and white Americans.

In higher education, racially minoritized students were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 precisely because poverty is a comorbidity for most diseases and illnesses¹, and racially minoritized peoples are disproportionately impacted by poverty². Of course, these realities predate 2020 – in some cases by centuries – but 2020 serves as a microcosmic example of the realities that racially minoritized and poverty-affected students are forced to navigate in our schools and in our society. This point is made clear by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, which reports that post-secondary enrollments declined across all racial categories in Spring 2021, but losses were greatest among Black and Indigenous students³.

This country and its systems are inherently anti-Black and anti-BIPOC, because they were founded and predicated upon a racialized, capitalistic value system that assigns more value to white lives than non-white lives.⁴ This includes our educational system, which is designed to work in the interest of affirming, standardizing, and promulgating whiteness and, by default, white supremacy.⁵

Deficit thinking yields the conclusion that the academic struggles of racially minoritized and poverty-affected students are attributable to innate scholastic deficiencies. But a systems view makes it clear that these struggles are because brilliant, talented students are forced to navigate educational terrains laden with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. These “equity gaps” are antithetical to the scholastic success of racially minoritized and poverty-affected students. The system of higher education is inequitable by design, and therefore, must be redesigned for equity.

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- 1 Bernstein, S. F., Rehkopf, D., Tuljapurkar, S., & Horvitz, C. C. (2018). Poverty dynamics, poverty thresholds and mortality: An age-stage Markovian model. *PLOS ONE*, 13(5), e0195734. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0195734>
 - 2 Creamer, J., (2020). Poverty rates for Blacks and Hispanics reached historic lows in 2019. *America counts: The stories behind the numbers*. United States Census Bureau, September 15, 2020.
 - 3 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, March 11, 2021, accessed at <https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/on 4/16/2021>.
 - 4 Glaude, E. S. (2020). *Begin again: James Baldwin's America and its urgent lessons for our own*. Crown Books.
 - 5 Sims, J.J. (2018). *Revolutionary STEM Education: Critical-reality pedagogy and social justice in STEM for Black males*. New York, New York: Peter Lang.



Equity is not an end goal, but rather the first critical step in the long road toward social justice.

Simply leveling the playing field – creating “equality” – won’t do. Equality is achieved when everyone has the same thing, irrespective of their specific needs (or lack thereof). This is very different from equity, though the two concepts are often confused or conflated. Equity is achieved when the varied needs of people are considered when developing programming, policies, and pedagogies. While equality is often deployed in the interests of placation and pacification, equity is deployed in the interest of empowerment for traditionally disempowered peoples.

A systems approach to centering justice – in the interest of equity-advancing work – is the responsibility of the entire campus community, not just individual instructors making choices around their own teaching. Equity-advancing work demands a change in systems and culture, which is a collaborative effort, not an individual one. It calls for the demystification and deconstruction of systemic inequities. This work shapes policies, course offerings, assessments of learning, and curricular content. And finally, it supersedes checklists full of superficial changes.

Getting Started With Equity: A Guide for Academic Department Leaders has a very specific purpose, which is to serve as a first step for department chairs to develop and curate an educational environment that is simultaneously justice-centered and equity-advancing. To achieve this goal, department chairs must work to foment a culture where:

- An intersectional analysis of race, gender, power, capital, etc., is championed.
- Critical practices that are equity-advancing, liberatory, and justice-centered are implemented.
- Educators are encouraged to enter into, or go deeper in, work that holds the potential to disrupt deeply-entrenched macrostructural inequity in higher education.^{6 7}

We do not contend that this is *the* guide for educators committed to equity-advancing work; there are many worthwhile resources and tools that illuminate and recommend best practices for equity in higher education. It is not a comprehensive handbook, but a place to start having conversations around how academic departments can work toward equity and justice in their curricula and teaching.

6 Sims, J.J. (2018). *Revolutionary STEM Education: Critical-reality pedagogy and social justice in STEM for Black males*. New York, New York: Peter Lang.

7 Sims, J. J., Taylor-Mendoza, J., Hotep, L. O., Wallace, J., & Conaway, T. (2020). *Minding the Obligation Gap in Community Colleges and Beyond: Theory and Practice in Achieving Educational Equity*. *Educational Equity in Community Colleges*. Peter Lang Publishing Group.

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About the Sponsoring Organizations



Every Learner Everywhere is a network of twelve partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. Our collaborative work aims to advance equity in higher education centers on the transformation of postsecondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institution practices and market trends. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit www.everylearnereverywhere.org.



Intentional Futures is a Seattle-based design and strategy studio. We work closely with clients across the public and private sectors to solve hard problems that matter and make big, ambitious ideas come to life. Our core offerings include human-centered strategy, data-driven storytelling, intentional, collective learning, and product design and prototyping. To learn more about iF or see our past work, visit www.intentionalfutures.com.

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Introduction

Since the founding of the United States, the history of American education has been shaped by racism, sexism, and many other inequities. Class-based and racialized resource allocation in public education creates a system in which not all schools are equal. This funding system sets some students up for academic success, and others for academic struggle. Education has long been the vehicle to upward mobility in the United States, but the poverty millions seek to escape is the most significant barrier to educational attainment.¹ Further, when students from under-resourced schools move on to college, they are often viewed by educators through a deficit lens, as lacking preparation or a serious commitment to education, when the reality is they have been systematically underserved by public education.

Many higher education academic support programs, while well-intended in their efforts to provide additional resources, place a burden on students who have been systematically under-resourced due to decades of intentional state and federal government sanctioned policies and practices (i.e. Redlining and Jim Crow). As a result, students already facing systemic inequities are harmed by several institutionalized practices. Some examples of these burdensome practices include: requiring students to enroll in non-credit bearing remedial courses² and hiring faculty with little or no training in teaching.³

Further, racially minoritized and poverty-affected students face curricula that do not represent them or their history, faculty who may be unaware of their own implicit biases, and a gate-keeper culture baked into colleges and universities that has led us to normalize disproportionate rates of progression and degree completion between student groups defined by race and socioeconomic status.

RESOURCE

A glossary of terms can be found in [Appendix A](#).

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- 1 Cahalan, M., Perna, L., Yamashita, M., Ruiz, R. & Franklin, K. (2016). Indicators of higher education equity in the United States: 2016 historical trend report. Washington, DC: Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) and Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy of the University of Pennsylvania (PennAHEAD)
 - 2 Bailey, T., Wook, D., & Cho, S. (2009). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges. *Economics of Education Review*, Volume 29, Issue 2, April 2010, Pages 255–270.
 - 3 Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). Unequal opportunity: Race and education. Brookings Institute, accessed at <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/> on 4/15/2021.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Ideally, your institution is providing ongoing opportunities for administrators, faculty, staff, and students to learn about and apply the lessons of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Before engaging in the work of leading others in getting started with equity, department chairs should undergo training themselves. With that said, many DEI initiatives in higher education offer broad theories and detailed histories, but little in the way of practical advice on what academic leaders can do to create a more equitable departmental culture. For that reason, this guide is centered on practical advice based in learning science with links to research, resources, and further reading to help department chairs support equity-minded teaching around four guiding principles:⁴

1. Recognizing the ways in which systemic inequities disadvantage minoritized people in a range of social institutions or contexts (education, employment, healthcare, the criminal justice system, etc.)
2. Reframing outcome disparities as an indication of institutional underperformance rather than students' perceived deficits based on their identities, life circumstances, or capabilities
3. Not comparing the performance of minoritized and poverty-affected students against an arbitrary standard set by resourced students, thus framing the academic progress of the former as deficient
4. Critically reflecting upon their own role and responsibilities in creating equity at the institution⁵

As stated above, academic leaders can better position their efforts to make their departments more equitable by first participating in training targeted at both interpersonal bias and systemic inequity. Not doing so may prevent their ability to collect, analyze, and act on data with an equity mindset. While such training is out of the scope of this guide, some resources are available below.

RESOURCES FOR DEI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

-  [Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education](#)
U.S. Department of Education
-  [Center for Urban Education](#)
University of Southern California
-  [Diversity, Equity, & Inclusive Excellence Resource Hub](#)
Association of American Colleges & Universities
-  [Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege](#)
University of Southern California
-  [Socially Just Design in Higher Education: A Series](#)
The Gardner Institute

4 https://cue.usc.edu/files/2016/01/Bensimon_The-Mediational-Means-of-Enacting-Equity-Mindedness-among-Community-College-Practitioners.pdf The guiding principles of this guide are founded in the *Equity for All* framework, developed by nationally celebrated equity educator Dr. Estella Bensimon, former director of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California and Professor Emeritus of higher education at the USC Rossier School of Education.

5 Drs. J. Luke Wood and Frank Harris; “[Employing Equity Minded & Culturally Affirming Teaching Practices in Virtual Learning Communities](#)” and quoting from Bensimon, E. M., Harris III, F., & Rueda, R. (2007). The meditational means of enacting equity mindedness among community college practitioners. *Diversity Research*, 7(1,2), 14 -15.

Centering equity requires us to be constantly reflective and reflexive in our practices so we are listening to and supporting students. Equity-centeredness means acknowledging that poor, ethno-racially minoritized students of color (PERMSCs) are capable of academic success, and that opportunity gaps are the result of a lack of equitable educational opportunities rather than the innate ability or educational motivation of PERMSCs.⁶

Of Special Note

Antiracist, justice-centered, and equity-advancing work is not easy, but it is necessary to better serve students and to begin to undo and redress the disproportionate harm that inequity does to racially minoritized and poverty-affected students. As you read and take action on the content of this guide, please keep the following in mind:

- While this guide is focused on teaching, course design, and curriculum, building a robust culture of equity within a department will require sustained efforts to achieve greater diversity in hiring, continuous professional learning, pay equity, and equitable processes for tenure and promotion.
- We also recognize that academic departments exist within the context of a larger institution, which in turn exists within the educational system of the United States, both of which were built to support a specific, small subset of the population. Post-secondary institutions have different resources available to them, different student populations, and different institutional goals.
- We acknowledge that your institution's specific context will affect which aspects of the guide are most actionable for your department. However, the importance of professional learning and faculty development cannot be overstated for supporting academic departments to develop cultural competence in the form of awareness building, identity work, courageous conversation, and anti-deficit thinking.
- The work of equity can be uncomfortable and exhausting, especially when the work is relegated to a handful of champions, and when the work calls into question long-standing traditions, policies, and practices. Not every strategy will be actionable right away, but we have to do something. There is no safe middle ground in this work. Doing nothing is as much of a choice as taking action.

Getting Started With Equity is a "living document" in the sense that we will continually be adding discipline briefs, examples of departmental equity plans, and other content requested by our readers. If you have suggestions for additional content, please email everylearner@wiche.edu with the subject line: Getting Started With Equity.

6 Sims, J. J., Taylor-Mendoza, J., Hotep, L. O., Wallace, J., & Conaway, T. (2020). *Minding the Obligation Gap in Community Colleges and Beyond: Theory and Practice in Achieving Educational Equity*. *Educational Equity in Community Colleges*. Peter Lang Publishing Group. Pg. 230

Part I: The Departmental Equity Audit



Improving equity requires acknowledging where the inequities exist in the department and actively working to address and expel those inequities. Designing a department to be equitable will require intentional steps to identify and analyze institutional practices and policies that may be driving inequitable outcomes for racially minoritized and poverty-affected students. Often the policies, practices, and procedures of a department that prove most pernicious for PERMSC are, by and large, unquestioned institutionalized practices precisely because higher learning in this country is inherently white supremacist and, by default, anti-Black and anti-BIPOC. Because of this, the most harmful policies, practices, procedures, and pedagogies may not be obvious, which is why we contend that a Departmental Equity Audit is not only helpful – it is urgent. When we fail to acknowledge the harm caused by our own institutionalized policies, practices, procedures, and pedagogies, the locus of academic struggle is foisted upon these students, so that it appears that their academic struggles are at best happenstantial or worse, endemic.¹

This section will describe the process and guiding questions as academic department chairs and department stakeholders conduct data collection, analyze the data, and develop action plans around the insights concluded from the data.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How do you support educational equity in your leadership?
.....
- 2 How do you create equitable educational opportunities for your traditionally minoritized students to develop and hone their academic identities?
.....
- 3 How will you create opportunities for students to fight back against oppression while also facilitating the learning of the canonical material necessary for educational advancement?
.....

1 Sims, J.J. (2018). *Revolutionary STEM Education: Critical-reality pedagogy and social justice in STEM for Black males*. New York, New York.: Peter Lang. pg. 44.

1 Collect baseline and historical data to understand the nature and scope of potential equity issues

Data from an equity audit can reveal in which areas a more pressing need for change exists. The data may also reveal areas where systemic barriers and inequity exist for racially minoritized and poverty-impacted students that need to be corrected through deliberate changes in policies, practices, or departmental norms. Finally, results from an equity audit can aid department chairs to create measurable and actionable goals centered on designing an equitable learning experience, while providing the right amount of training, resources, and support to department faculty and staff. We recommend analyzing 5–10 years of data for patterns to emerge.

Student Learning Outcomes

We must continually assess student learning outcomes (SLOs). This is vital. Focusing only on the gap between SLOs of white and minoritized students normalizes whiteness and continues to measure minoritized students against whiteness. If we hope to move beyond a conceptual paradigm that overdetermines the achievement gap and, necessarily, deficit model thinking, we have to reimagine SLOs. Instead of narrowly focusing on SLOs, we need to think through Collaborative Learning Outcomes (CLOs); that is, how we are learning from our students regarding their needs, levels of expertise, etc., in ways that facilitate greater learning for them and for us. We must be introspective. If poor, ethno-racially minoritized students of color are not succeeding in our courses and/or at our respective colleges proportionate to the most successful student groups, then work must be done both individually, as educators, and collectively, as a campus community, to figure out why this is.



We cannot teach the way we have always taught if the same kinds of students continue to fail.

Data is limited in the stories it can tell.

Quantitative data alone does not reveal the opportunity and outcome gaps that persist in an academic department around teaching and learning. Further, data points gathered from sources such as institutional research, course dashboards, and end-of-year surveys may have a linear view of student identities.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

- 1) When possible, disaggregate data points such as retention, persistence, DWI rates, and enrollment status (full-time vs part-time) by race, gender and income;
- 2) Be mindful of students' intersectional identities of gender and race that may be revealed only after having discussions with the students themselves; and
- 3) When possible, collect qualitative data by centering students voices and experiences in the design, evaluation, and interpretation of data points.

Identify gateway courses among the departmental offerings

Ideally, gateway courses introduce students to a particular discipline while providing them with foundational skills and knowledge they will need more broadly in their pursuit of a post-secondary credential. In practice, however, gateway courses can act as barriers that slow or stop degree progression, particularly for racially minoritized and poverty-impacted students². A study by the U.S. Department of Education found that students, and in particular minoritized and poverty-impacted students, who earn fewer than 20 credits in their first calendar year of college are far less likely to stay in college than those who attain that benchmark.³ Researcher Andrew K. Koch of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education explains this trend: "While they might not lack the cognitive wherewithal to learn and succeed, they often lack the cultural capital and sense of social belonging their more advantaged counterparts possess. A single failure can confirm preexisting attitudes that 'I'm just not college material' or that 'I don't belong here.'"⁴

-
- 2 Koch, A.K. (2017). Many thousands failed: A wakeup call to history educators. *Perspectives on History*, May 2017 volume, accessed at <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2017/many-thousands-failed-a-wakeup-call-to-history-educators> on 4/16/2021.
 - 3 Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
 - 4 Koch, A.K. (2017). Many thousands failed: A wakeup call to history educators. *Perspectives on History*, May 2017 volume, accessed at <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2017/many-thousands-failed-a-wakeup-call-to-history-educators> on 4/22/2021.

Gateway courses tend to fall into three categories:

1. They are the first credit-bearing college-level courses in a program of study. These courses generally apply to the requirements of a degree program and may also be called introductory courses or prerequisites.
2. Gateway courses also include general education or core classes that are required in order for students to earn a post-secondary degree.
3. Finally, gateway courses can be prerequisites to higher level courses required to take introductory or general education courses.

“Gateway courses are positioned as a part of the curriculum, but the funding required to take these additional courses is what discourages students who are affected by poverty from continuing to take them.”

- Asia Almares, Valencia College



GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 What are the high-enrollment courses that satisfy required general education or core curriculum requirements for graduation or transfers to four-year institutions for degrees outside of your department?

.....

2 Which introductory courses require prerequisites (often from students’ high school achievements) or baseline scores in the ACT, SAT, or placement tests for new students to be able to enroll?

.....

3 What, if any, courses limit students’ ability to enroll in any sequenced or higher-level courses by requiring students to satisfy a minimum grade requirement in order to proceed?

.....

Gather quantitative course-, department-, and institution-level data

The data may need to come from multiple sources, including the institutional unit that tracks student outcomes and progression.

Examples of quantitative data that could be included in an equity audit:

- Drop, fail, and withdraw rates in gateway courses disaggregated by race, gender, Pell-eligibility, first-generation, etc.
- Enrollment rates in gateway courses disaggregated by race, gender, Pell-eligibility, first-generation, etc.
- Persistence rates in gateway courses disaggregated by race, gender, Pell-eligibility, first-generation, etc.
- Transfer rates in gateway courses disaggregated by race, gender, Pell-eligibility, first-generation, etc.
- Demographic data on departmental majors
- Course-level data from digital learning tools such as adaptive courseware and the institution’s learning management system
- Drop, fail, and withdraw rates in gateway courses disaggregated by sections in multi-section courses

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Disaggregated by race, are there any groups of students who are not passing the prerequisite courses required for the gateway courses? What are these groups of students’ persistence, retention, and graduation/transfer rates?
.....
- 2 What is the historical enrollment, DFW, and progression for students, disaggregated by race and gender?
.....
- 3 How do the demographics of the students who take and pass those courses compare to the overall student population at this institution?
.....
- 4 Historically, who are the students who enroll and persist through graduation after taking gateway courses through the department?
.....
- 5 If at a two-year institution, who are the students who enroll and persist through graduation or transfer to a four-year institution after taking gateway courses through the department?
.....

Gather qualitative course- and department-level data

As previously noted, quantitative data is only a snapshot of understanding of the problem. Understanding student and faculty experiences and perceptions may help to provide additional insights to quantitative data.

Examples of qualitative data that could be included in an equity audit:

- Department policies for majors in satisfying major requirements
- Department policies for non-majors in satisfying general education or core requirements
- Course policies set by faculty including attendance, due dates, testing, resources students may use for help with assignments, communication, participation, academic dishonesty, grading, and other course expectations
- Policies for extra help including departmental tutoring, supplemental instruction, and office hours
- Surveys of faculty and students
- Focus groups of faculty and students
- Institutional student evaluations of instruction

RESOURCES FOR EQUITY AUDITS

Equitable practices, processes, and outcomes are essential for institutions of higher education to support and foster a diverse and just society. Equity audits are one way educational institutions can identify inequalities and ensure reforms are equitably successful. An equity audit is a comprehensive analysis of a school's culture, trends, practices, and policies to address systemic inequalities. The resources listed below provide further guidance and frameworks for how to organize the information collected during an equity audit.

Summary for Colleges and Departments

Natalie Hobson, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Statistics,
Sonoma State University

A Vision for Equity

Results from AAC&U's Project *Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence: Campus-Based Strategies for Student Success*

Strategic Planning Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity

University of California Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion

2 Interpret the data with help from campus partners, faculty, and students

While data may answer the “what” of a problem, data interpretation is required to answer the “why” of a problem. There are specialists on campus that can help the department interpret the data that has been collected from a non-deficit lens. Naturally, stakeholders will bring their own biases to data interpretation, which is why seeking a variety of perspectives is important. A key approach is to focus on actionable and equitable solutions such as teaching and assessment strategies rather than solutions over which you have no control such as student behavior.

Approaching the data with an equity mindset, rather than a deficit mindset, is also important. As explained by Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux, Associate Director for Research and Policy in the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California:

“Higher education institutions are accustomed to reporting and examining data, but making sense of that data in equity-minded ways is often less familiar to faculty, staff, and administrators. Equity-minded sensemaking requires a change in mindset, where inequities are viewed as a problem of practice and not as resulting from problem students. Equity-minded sensemaking also requires that practitioners have adequate time and space to examine data collaboratively and to pose critical questions about how current practices may contribute to the inequities observed in the data. When practitioners lack opportunities for collaborative and authentic engagement with data, data loses much of its power to inform change efforts.”⁵

Interpret with specialists

It is important to review your data with specialists whose institutional and professional perspective will provide context and who can help your department set measurable goals and develop a plan for achieving them.

- Data analysts in institutional research and effectiveness planning
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion specialists and trainers
- Pedagogy and learning science specialists
- Student support and student success professionals

5 Malcom-Piqueux, L. (2018). Making sense of data in equity-minded ways. In *A Vision for Equity*, AAC&U, 2018.

Interpret with students

As some of the data will include information about student outcomes and student learning, it is essential that students participate in the interpretation of the data. Student input can help prevent assumptions about their behavior, their capability, and their motivation. However, it is important not to ask a few students to speak for all students and especially not to ask minoritized students to speak for all members of a particular racial demographic. When gathering student feedback, consider who holds the most power in this scenario. Traditionally, faculty and administration hold the most power and may leave students feeling uncomfortable sharing their insights for fear of unknown repercussions. To navigate this process, department chairs can provide students with at least one avenue to provide anonymous feedback. They can also consider student listening sessions led by graduate students, or someone outside the department; for example, from the specialist groups listed above.

“Student groups on social media may also be a great way to collect student feedback or reflections about student experience in a course. This could reveal some great new insights on key issues.”

- Barbara Gooch, Volunteer State Community College



Interpret with faculty

Faculty need to be part of every step of the departmental equity audit process. Their experience teaching gateway courses, their expertise in course subject matter, and their relationships with students are key to understanding roadblocks to student success. They may also be able to provide pointed feedback on department policies and norms that may be hindering their ability to provide an equitable learning experience.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What training or professional development is needed to approach this data from a strengths-based (as opposed to a deficit-based) perspective?
.....
- 2 What department policies, practices, or norms may be exacerbating lower-than-anticipated outcomes for minoritized students?
.....
- 3 In which courses are students faring well? Do these experiences vary by race or gender?
.....

3 Act on the data by developing a departmental plan for equity

The first step to developing a departmental equity plan is to bring faculty and students together as co-creators. A collaborative plan will maximize buy-in and will mitigate the need for revision upon review. Equity plans should have clear and measurable goals as well as timelines broken down into short- and long-term steps to reach those goals. Equity plans can draw from the four-part approach to teaching [Part II: Teaching Practices for Educational Equity](#) for inclusion, but they should also include DEI training and support for faculty enacting these changes. Finally, equity plans should include equitable course design training and support for faculty who might be revising their courses to align them with equity goals.

The authors of this guide researched department-level equity plans, but could not find any that aligned with its focus on teaching and curriculum. If you would like us to include your department equity plan among our resources, we welcome department leaders who have done this work to reach out to us at everylearner@wiche.edu with the subject line: Getting Started With Equity.

Establish a task force of faculty and students to develop an equity plan

As stated above, faculty and students need to be part of processes and plans that involve and affect them. A good rule to follow is attributed to disability activists in the 1990s and Eastern European political activists in the 1980s: “Nothing about us without us.”

Set equity goals and define how you will measure progress

Department leaders should not feel every equity issue needs to be addressed at once. An equity plan can be spread over several years, with some goals building on previous goals.

1. Set a goal that is measurable.
2. Determine the metrics for achieving the goal.
3. Outline the steps and timeline for reaching the goal.

Example of a departmental policy goal:

GOAL	METRICS	STEPS
<p>The department will provide scholarship access to required course materials not covered by tuition for up to 100 students each semester for all gateway courses.</p>	<p>We will track scholarship textbooks, access codes, lab materials, and any other course materials each semester.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up a tracking system using an Excel file. 2. Identify all course materials required for gateway courses not covered by tuition such as a lab fee or course fee. 3. Request scholarship access codes from courseware vendors. 4. Establish a scholarship fund to cover the cost of course materials. 5. Create an application for students to request scholarship funding. 6. Advertise scholarship funding to students through departmental website, syllabus and course website statements, departmental emails to students, and in the daily university newsletter. 7. Department will commit to learning more about replacing high-cost textbooks with open educational resources (OER).

Adopt strategies for teaching for inclusion that address your department’s most pressing equity concerns

See [Part II: Teaching Practices for Educational Equity](#) which outlines evidence-based strategies your department can adopt in four elements of teaching and learning. Choose the strategies agreed upon by faculty and student task force that align with the department’s most pressing equity concerns.

Provide ongoing training and support for faculty

While training and support of faculty around inclusive teaching and DEI are outside the scope of this guide, there are several options for ensuring faculty are trained and supported.

Campus resources

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion specialists and trainers
2. Pedagogy specialists, learning science specialists
3. Instructional designers and digital learning specialists

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

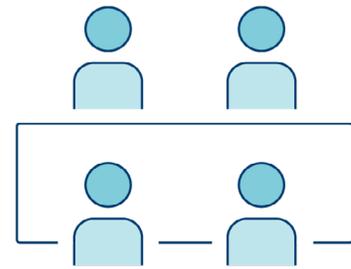
- ☰ [Equity Services at Achieving the Dream](#)
- ☰ [The Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California](#)
- ☰ [Teaching for Equity and Inclusion, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan](#)
- ☰ [Inclusive Pedagogy, part of the Teaching Effectiveness Framework, The Institute for Learning and Teaching at Colorado State University](#)
- ☰ [Lumen Learning Circles Fellowship, Belonging & Inclusive Teaching Foundation](#)

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How can we leverage data to make systemic changes to departmental practices with the goal of being more inclusive and equitable?
.....
- 2 How can we engage students in a continuous way throughout our planning and implementation processes?
.....

Part II:

Teaching Practices for Educational Equity



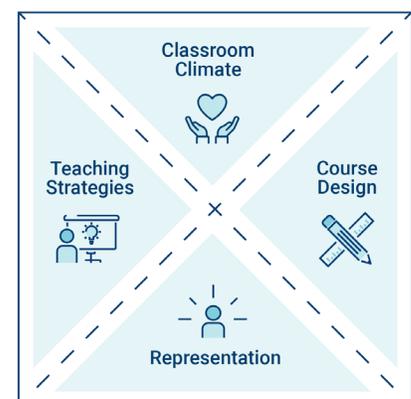
Educational equity is achieved through the intentional establishment of positive, nurturing educational spaces that empower, encourage, and equip students to succeed academically.¹ Beyond just goodwill and good intentions, educational equity demands that committed educators work hard to create spaces that are rigorous and culturally affirming for racially minoritized students. Teaching for educational equity involves valuing students' various identities and academic experiences instead of viewing them as obstacles to overcome. The orientation of educators needs to shift from gatekeepers or disseminators of content-level expertise towards that of facilitators of learning², knowledge creation, and meaning co-construction.

Departments can choose to adopt a mix of strategies that utilize learning science and educational research in course design and classroom teaching to improve students' sense of belonging and maximize learning.

There are four principles to keep in mind while implementing teaching practices for educational equity:

- **Encourage identity development**
Ask students to connect what they are learning to their lived experiences.
- **Commit to equity**
Assert that all students can learn, and do not settle for inequitable outcomes.
- **Teach the whole person**
Center the lived experiences of students and focus on their intellectual, psychological, and emotional development.
- **Form authentic student-teacher relationships**
Engage in ongoing professional learning and defer to students' lived experience when trying to understand how to best support their learning.

These principles remain relevant across each of the four facets of equitable teaching practices outlined in this section: **classroom climate, course design, representation, and teaching strategies.**



¹ Sims, 2018, p.26

² Ballou, J. (2012). Reshaping how educators view student STEM learning. *Science Education and Civic Engagement: An International Journal*. Winter 2012. 27-36. http://seceij.net/seceij/winter12/reshaping_how_e.html

1 Create a welcoming and supportive classroom climate

Research shows that students who feel emotionally supported by their teachers are more likely to stay engaged in class and are more likely to accept feedback from them.³ In addition, students who hear messages of encouragement from teachers⁴ and students who feel their identity is affirmed by teachers⁵ are more likely to engage, persist, and succeed academically.

Here are some practical ways instructors can create a welcoming and supportive classroom climate:

Communication

- Use students' preferred names and pronouns, and learn the correct pronunciation of student names.
- Write your syllabus with a warm and friendly tone, which will encourage students to seek help when they need it.⁶
- Avoid [culturally specific or idiomatic expressions](#) when delivering important information.
- Always avoid stereotyping, making assumptions about students, and conveying a lack of trust or respect for students or ethnic, racial, and cultural groups. [Linguistic inclusion guidelines](#) are a good place to start in inclusive communication with students.
- Identify your [pronouns](#) in your email signature, virtual meeting identification, and any other place your name might appear. Encourage students to practice the same norm while being explicit that pronoun disclosure is voluntary.
- With any online communication, especially between students, communicate the standards for [netiquette](#) or your institution's social media or civility policies.
- Be conscious of [dynamics that may make students feel intimidated to ask you for help](#), and convey to students you are approachable and welcome their questions.
- Be aware of the [emotional and cognitive toll of code-switching](#) for students whose native language or dialect is not standard academic English.

3 Gasser, L., Grütter, J., Buholzer, A., & Wettstein, A. (2018). Emotionally supportive classroom interactions and students' perceptions of their teachers as caring and just. *Learning and Instruction*, 54, 82-92.

4 Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.

5 Dee, T.S. & Penner E. K. The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal*. 2017;54(1):127–166.

6 Gurung, R. A. R., & Galardi, N. R. Syllabus tone, more than mental health statements, influences intentions to seek help. *Teaching of Psychology*. February 2021. doi:10.1177/0098628321994632

Validation

- Offer students the opportunity to tell you the name they wish to be called and their preferred pronouns.
- Share your own academic struggles, but avoid saying you understand what students are going through unless you too have experienced it.
- Acknowledge circumstances that make learning a challenge (i.e. a global pandemic, power outages, wildfires, caretaking, lack of reliable transportation, etc.) and build flexibility into your policies to accommodate those circumstances.
- Acknowledge that students may need adjusted due dates for assignments or exams to recognize culturally or religiously specific holidays that are not federally, regionally, or locally recognized as days off.
- Avoid assuming students are comfortable using technology. Always provide resources to onboard them to technologies used in your class and provide time for students to learn the technology, such as through a practice assignment.

Engagement

- Students value meaningful relationships with their instructors. Create opportunities for students to get to know you, and for you to get to know them.
- Allow for some anonymous participation to encourage engagement (polling, questions).
- Create opportunities for students to get to know each other.
- Create opportunities for honest and non-punitive discussion with instructors around course materials, course policies, etc.
- If possible, create peer mentoring/tutoring opportunities with former students or graduates.
- Do not assume students are comfortable seeking help through formal channels such as office hours, writing centers, tutoring programs, etc. When possible, provide informal means for students to ask for help such as email check-ins with students, engaging students in side conversations during class activities, and being available a few minutes before and after class.

Support

- Early on in the course, include an activity in which students share with you how they are doing, who they are, or what they wish every instructor knew about them.
- When sorting students into teams for collaborative work, randomize students to avoid self-selection into homogeneous groups and/or burdening a single outlier in a group to speak for that entire group.

- Convey to students that you want them to pass, you know they can learn, and you support them. Worst practice: Telling students on day one that half of them will fail.
- Not all students are going to be as excited about your discipline as you are, and many of them are not in your class to get an A grade but to satisfy a required course. These students need your attention, support, and encouragement as well as the A students.
- Let students know where they can find support services, including those that may not be academic but affect their lives nonetheless. Examples include the food bank, counseling center, health center, crisis center, etc.
- Invite various campus support services into the class for periodic informational sessions or share short videos that students can refer to on an LMS throughout the course.
- Identify and share out where students can get access to supplies they need to be successful in the course such as laptop loaners or graphing calculators.

Your students may not share your academic goals or experiences.

While 36% of American adults have earned a bachelor's degree, only 13% hold a masters degree, and only 2% hold a doctorate.⁷ Not all students in your class are striving for top marks; in fact, many just want to pass without doing damage to their academic standing. In addition to your students not sharing your academic goals, they also may not learn best under the conditions that you learned. While you may have soaked up knowledge through lectures and were driven to master content assessed in high-stakes exams, your students may not academically thrive under these conditions. Finally, more and more students today work full time or part time, have dependents to care for, and may be overcoming significant obstacles to attend college. Rather than maintaining policies and teaching methods to weed out these students, we need to be thinking about ways to support them in attaining a post-secondary degree.

⁷ <https://www.census.gov/content/census/en/data/tables/2019/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html>

2 Design courses for inclusion, access, and success

Good design is intuitive and allows users to focus on doing rather than how to do. Courses designed around the principles of consistency⁸, alignment of learning objectives with assessments⁹, the science of learning^{10,11}, and universal design for learning (UDL)¹² maximize the efficiency of the user experience so learners expend cognitive energy on learning rather than on accessing and navigating course content. Courses should be designed after analyzing disaggregated course level data to determine how content, delivery, and assessments are impacting students holding a variety of intersectional identities. Good course design is transparent, giving students a clear understanding of the course's content, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria.

DIGITAL LEARNING TOOLS

Digital learning tools such as adaptive courseware are a proven method for supporting and engaging students in their learning. However, before adopting a digital learning tool, departments should consider the following:

- Does this tool provide a benefit to students they cannot access through technologies the institution already licenses such as the learning management system, virtual meeting software, or other enterprise platforms such as Google, Outlook, and Adobe?
- Is the cost to students for the digital learning tool commensurate with the benefit of the tool?
- Is there a departmental plan for training students to use the digital learning tool and for training faculty or the IT team to support students in their use of the tool?
- Does the tool support evidence-based teaching practices such as interactive learning, low-stakes practice for mastery, and data analytics to give instructors real-time information about student learning and to give students information that helps them take control of their learning process, including tips for being a better learner?

Below are some common examples of the principles of good course design:

Access

- Consider any obstacles students may have when setting course policies and be prepared to be flexible. Obstacles can range from working students who can complete assignments only late in the evening to students experiencing homelessness and lacking uninterrupted access to reliable internet.
- If a physical textbook, e-textbook, or courseware is being utilized, ensure it is a course material students will need to use to pass the course. The cost of textbooks can create a financial burden on students impacted by poverty.

8 Mayer, R. E. (2009). *Multimedia learning* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

9 Wiggins, G. P., McTighe, J., Kiernan, L. J., Frost, F., & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (1998). *Understanding by design*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

10 Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L. III, & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

11 Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

12 Rose, D. Universal design for learning. *Journal of Special Education Technology*. 2000;15(3):45–49.

- Offer scholarship access codes for digital courseware and course materials for your students.
- Choose course materials that can be used offline or on a mobile device and are accessible to screen reader technology.
- To ensure full accessibility of your course and course materials, follow [UDL guidelines](#) for course design.

User experience

- House all course materials in the university's LMS, and organize learning modules into weekly folders that are all-inclusive (links to assessments, practice activities, etc.)
- Utilize LMS features that support student autonomy and grading transparency: announcements, course calendar, digital gradebook so students can track their progress.
- Set *due by dates* rather than due dates so students can submit assignments digitally at their convenience rather than printed out and handed in on a specific day and time. In your school's LMS or in the digital learning platform used for homework, pre-program reminders to students when assignments are due.
- Provide learning materials in multiple modes – visual, audio, text, video.
- Include digital learning tools that allow students to check their progress and self-remediate ahead of high-stakes assessments.

Cognitive load

- Chunk learning modules into short segments (no more than 5 minutes of video or 15 minutes of reading), and conclude each with some kind of low-stakes formative assessment.
- Put all important information in writing, and place this information in more than one location (i.e. email, digital announcement page, syllabus). Ensure all written information is accessible to screen reader technologies.
- Provide instructions for buying, logging on to, and using digital technologies.
- If using digital courseware products, create clear onboarding instructions for students.

3 Represent students in the curriculum and classroom

By developing curricula that represent minoritized students, not only do instructors tap into the benefits of a welcoming and supportive classroom^{13,14}, they also incorporate critical skills of cultural competence into the curriculum. In addition, being honest with students about how higher education and particular fields of scholarship have perpetuated systemic inequities reaps a host of benefits for students and the academy:

1. Students gain a historical perspective on the discipline and are encouraged to think critically about the scholarship produced by that discipline.
2. Students can leverage existing culturally-bound/culture-specific schema to enhance their learning when [culturally responsive pedagogy](#) is implemented.
3. Students who have historically been discouraged from studying a particular field will understand prejudice as a rectifiable problem in the field rather than as an inalterable problem of their identity.
4. Representation serves as a corrective to beliefs and behavior patterns that normalize white supremacy and patriarchal frameworks.

It is important that instructors utilizing “plug and play” digital learning tools such as adaptive courseware in their teaching vet them for cultural representation. Building your own course from content-agnostic courseware allows you to ensure your students are represented in the course materials. A good example of how two instructors of Spanish Language and Civilization did this can be found [here](#).

Below are specific ways to represent students in the curriculum and in the classroom:

Representation in course content

- Ensure the curriculum is not limited to the ideals, philosophies, and voices of a single demographic population.
- Ensure a variety of identities are represented in the entire curriculum (including assessments, practice activities, etc.).
- Evaluate the representation of marginalized populations in the curriculum for stereotypes and victimization; for example, are Black persons given voice only as enslaved persons? Are women depicted only as wives and mothers? Is every couple the same gender as every other couple, or the same race?
- Evaluate representation to ensure the experiences of underrepresented persons are not trivialized or marginalized; for example, their contributions are highlighted in call-out boxes rather than integrated in the primary narrative.

13 Dee TS, Penner EK. The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence From an Ethnic Studies Curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal*. 2017;54(1):127-166.
14 McNair, Tia & Bensimon, Estela & Malcom-Piqueux, Lindsay. (2020). *From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education*.

Critical analysis of the discipline

- Include lessons on how bias and stereotypes have shaped the discipline.
- Include lessons on how bias and stereotypes in the discipline have shaped the experiences of marginalized groups.

RESOURCE

The NYU Steinhardt Metro Center's [Culturally Responsive Curriculum analysis tool](#) for English Language Art (ELA) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) provide guidance for K12 curricula that can be adapted for higher education.

Classroom dynamics

- Find meaningful ways to make the curriculum relevant to students' intersectional identities and to current events.
- Avoid reducing issues of race to Black and white, issues of gender to male and female, issues of belief to opposing political parties, etc.
- Be aware of gender, race, and other dynamics in classroom discussions by monitoring and intervening when some students dominate the conversation or continually interrupt others.
- Offer students some degree of choice in how they prove mastery of learning objectives.

4 Adopt teaching and assessment strategies that benefit racially minoritized and poverty-affected students

Understanding how learning happens is essential to developing effective learning, practice, and assessment activities. Key strategies for iterative teaching and assessments involve the use of digital learning tools or digital courseware that gathers data on student performance and learning patterns. With the consent of students, instructors can use this data in real time to inform their teaching and engage in ongoing course adjustments to optimize student success. Digital courseware provides formative practice that allows students to practice, self-remediate, and utilize immediate feedback to achieve mastery. Finally, use of digital courseware promotes students' meta-cognition, self-regulation, and agency – practices that help them to be better learners and to take control of the learning process.

Here are five teaching strategies that have been shown to benefit all students: ^{15,16,17}

1. Active learning (especially when it involves movement)
2. Intentionally scaffolded collaborative learning (especially peer-to-peer learning)
3. Making learning relevant by triggering student curiosity
4. Learning from failure
5. Limiting cognitive overload

These additional strategies will particularly benefit minoritized students, and still be impactful and effective for all students: ¹⁸

1. Individualized, on-demand support, (personalized learning systems, adaptive learning courseware, searchable just-in-time resources on a website)
2. Undergraduate learning assistants (either as in-class support or out-of-class tutors)
3. Structural supports that ensure student engagement and progress (learning labs, task lists, digital nudges, early-alert interventions, automated and immediate feedback)

On the following page are several specific examples of these strategies in action.

15 Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L. III, & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

16 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *How people learn II: Learners, contexts, and cultures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24783>.

17 Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

18 Twigg, C. A. (2005). *Increasing success for underserved students: Redesigning introductory courses*. National Center for Academic Transformation.

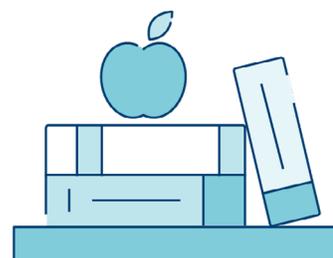
Classroom strategies

- Begin each class or each lesson with leading or hook questions to spark students' curiosity and clarify the relevance of the lesson.
- Announce main points of the lesson or the learning objectives of the lesson before the start of class, and summarize them at the end of class.
- Allow time during class for student questions and include asynchronous and anonymous formats for students to ask questions.
- Include activities that allow students to learn with and from each other by working on problems together or collaborating on projects, or short in-class activities such as pair-shares or virtual breakout rooms.
- Follow the 10:2 rule of not lecturing for more than 10 minutes without offering students a chance to process new information.

Assessment strategies

- Replace infrequent, high-stakes exams with frequent, formative, low-stakes assessments.
- Develop a rubric and examples of A-level work so students understand your expectations.
- Revise assessments so they measure student skills rather than short-term memorization.
- Allow class time for students to do the hard work with you and their classmates there to help.
- Cultivate a mastery orientation in learning by allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways, re-take quizzes after doing additional learning, or re-submit papers or assignments after receiving instructor or peer feedback.
- Allow students space to fail in formative assessments without risking failing the class, so they can learn from failure rather than framing failure as not learning.
- Divorce student mastery of learning objectives from a timeline, allowing students to retake failed assessments and learn from failure.
- Provide feedback on formative assessments that encourages student self-remediation or continued practice ahead of summative assessments.
- Increase opportunities for more oral expressions of learning, including presentations, before students are asked to write using conventional writing, so that their learning can be assessed independently of their mastery of academic writing conventions.

Part III: Equitable Teaching Practices in Specific Disciplines



The disciplines chosen for briefs represent gateway courses at four-year postsecondary institutions. While these briefs can be applicable at two-year institutions, we will continue to add to this collection of discipline briefs to capture the two-year perspective and experience.

Gateway courses are represented generally by each brief as this guide is aimed at departmental curricula and teaching, which often include several gateway courses. For example, the mathematics brief is written to be applicable to courses such as College Algebra, Statistics, Quantitative Reasoning, Calculus I, and Trigonometry, and the biology brief is written to include courses such as Environmental Biology, Biology for non-majors, Anatomy and Physiology I, and Human Biology.

Each discipline brief includes the following:

1. An overview of the equity issues in the discipline
2. Suggestions for implementing equity in the discipline
3. Links and citations for further reading



[Biology](#) 



[Psychology](#) 



[Chemistry](#) 



[Writing](#) 



[Mathematics](#) 

APPENDIX A:

Glossary of Terms

Some of the terms we use in this guide have been in use for decades, while others are relatively new. We suspect in a future time the terms below will be outdated. We particularly struggle with terms around race, which can be too vague, too specific, too outdated, too trendy, too exclusive, too inclusive, too complex, and too simple. Race is a socially constructed concept designed to other-ize and commodify human beings for their labor. How can we adequately term that which is both an artifice and a very real social and legal system of oppression?

We have two positions regarding terms describing race:

1. We honor the terms by which people wish to be called, with an understanding that these terms change over time.
2. We understand the debate over terms is sometimes a distraction. This is not to deny the power of words and of naming, but we remain focused on action, real change, and justice.

Achievement gap: Refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minoritized students, for example, or students impacted by poverty and students not impacted by poverty. The achievement gap refers to outputs – the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits – while opportunity gap refers to inputs – the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities.¹

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and other Peoples of Color

Deficit mindset/Deficit thinking: Holding individuals or groups of people responsible for the results of harmful or biased policies. In education, it may look like attributing students' failures to perceived individual, family, racial, gender, or ethnic traits rather than acknowledging inequities in the educational system.²

DFW: D grade, F grade, and course withdrawal.

Digital learning: Any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience, including a broad range of content and communication tools, curricular models, and instructional strategies.

¹ The Glossary of Education Reform, <https://www.edglossary.org/achievement-gap/>

² Davis, L.P. & Museus, S.D. (2019). What is deficit thinking? An analysis of conceptualizations of deficit thinking and implications for scholarly research. *Currents*, Volume 1, Issue 1.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.110>

Diversity: Diversity is difference. Our understanding, embracing and celebrating each other's individual differences including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, religious and spiritual beliefs, age, and socio-economic background, as well as the intersections of these identities is essential. Diversity enhances a community through mutual respect as we honor each other's lived reality.³ Diversity can (and does) exist in a community without inclusion or equity. For example, a term popular in the 1990s, "tolerance" captured how the decision to not exclude or harm minoritized persons was up to those in the majority.

DWI: Course drop, course withdrawal, and course incomplete.

Educational equity: Creating opportunities for equal access and success among minoritized populations by providing them with specific, targeted resources. Rather than placing the burden of "keeping up" on students, equity asks us to examine how higher education has developed its teaching, policies, funding, and curricula in ways that disadvantage some students over others.

Teaching with equity includes the following guiding principles:

1. Recognizing the ways in which systemic inequities disadvantage minoritized people in a range of social institutions or contexts (education, employment, healthcare, the criminal justice system, etc.).
2. Reframing outcomes disparities as an indication of institutional underperformance rather than students' underperformance.
3. Not attributing outcomes disparities exclusively to students or perceived deficits in students' identities, life circumstances, or capabilities.
4. Critically reflecting upon one's role and responsibilities (as a faculty member, student affairs staff, administrator, counselor, institutional researcher, etc.)⁴

Equity: Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. It is a form of justice that seeks to remove the institutional, ideological, interpersonal, and internalized barriers that prevent certain groups of people from thriving or from sharing power. Equity requires an understanding of all the systemic barriers minoritized groups experience.⁵

Equity-minded: Being equity-minded is a shift in mindset where educators recognize racial and socio-economic inequity in student outcomes and remove institutional policies and practices that contribute to educational inequity.⁶

Ethno-racially minoritized: A term that captures ethnic and racial marginalization, inclusive of ethnicities counted as white in census data, but who still experience bias based on their ethnic identity.

3 Tanya Williams www.authenticseeds.org and Bari Katz www.barikatz.com

4 Wood, Dr. J. Luke, & Harris, Dr. Frank. Employing equity minded & culturally affirming teaching practices in virtual learning communities. Bensimon, E. M., Harris III, F., & Rueda, R. (2007). The meditational means of enacting equity mindedness among community college practitioners.

5 Equity and Student Success. Center for Urban Education, USC. <https://cue.usc.edu/about/equity/>

6 Equity Mindedness. Center for Urban Education, USC. <https://cue.usc.edu/about/equity/equity-mindedness/>

Gateway course: A credit-bearing course typically taken in the first or second year of a student's undergraduate experience to fulfill general education or major requirements. These courses are almost always considered lower-division courses at both two and four-year institutions; sometimes referred to as 100 and 200 level courses. Click [here](#) to learn more about what these courses are and why they matter.

Inclusion: Inclusion is the conscious practice of actively engaging with diversity to move beyond celebration of difference. This practice requires the integration of individuals' experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. The intentional goal of an inclusive community is the full and equal participation of all.⁷

Inclusion can exist in a community without equity. According to the American Council on Education, the overwhelming majority of faculty, administrators, and department chairs across two- and four-year public and private institutions are white. Additionally, a Brookings Institute study found that although an increasing number of women are hired as faculty and administrators in higher education, they still tend to be lower ranking than their male colleagues and lower paid for the same work as their male colleagues. So, while higher education is inclusive of racially and gender-minoritized faculty and administrators, it is still not equitable.

Interpersonal bias: May shape one's approach to teaching and learning. While individuals may not intend harm, they often operate under institutional, societal, and political systems or belief systems that maintain an inequitable status quo.

Intersectional identities: A framework developed by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw for understanding how aspects of a person's various identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, etc. combine to create different manifestations of both discrimination and privilege.

LMS: Learning management systems. Examples include Canvas, Blackboard, and D2L

Minoritized: A term seeking to acknowledge the intentional marginalization of certain demographics rather than the normalizing term 'minority'.

Opportunity gap: The ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students. The achievement gap refers to outputs – the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits – while opportunity gap refers to inputs – the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities.⁸

People of color: A phrase attempting to improve upon the deficit term "nonwhite", but is problematic in that it conflates all persons who do not identify as white.

PERMSC: Poor, ethno-racially minoritized students of color.

⁷ Tanya Williams www.authenticseeds.org and Bari Katz www.barikatz.com

⁸ The glossary of education reform, <https://www.edglossary.org/opportunity-gap/>

Poverty-affected/Poverty-impacted: Students attending higher education institutions from a household that has been impacted by poverty due to systematic oppressive practices in housing, health, education, job attainment, and many more systems where the accumulation of generational wealth has been denied.^{9,10,11}

Students from poverty-impacted households may be eligible for federal financial aid programs such as the Pell Grant. Through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) students including citizens, permanent residents, refugees, asylum seekers, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients, other DREAMers, and similar undocumented students are eligible to receive emergency grants if they are enrolled on or after March 13, 2020.¹²

Racially minoritized: People who are Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, or Indigenous; who have been denied opportunities and access and suffered from systemic oppression that stems from a history of exclusionary policies in large systems, including education, housing, banking, criminal justice, and the job market. The creation of unjust practices and policies over time have made Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous people the “minority”, centering the blame on the systems of oppression.¹³

Systemic inequities/Systematic oppression: A result of policies, processes, and traditions supported by personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural biases.¹⁴

9 “Systematic inequality.” Center for American Progress. February 21, 2018. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2018/02/21/447051/systematic-inequality/>.

10 Inequality is the main cause of persistent poverty. January 8, 2014, <https://www.epi.org/blog/inequality-main-persistent-poverty/>.

11 Don’t blame the poor for the faults of our economy. May 20, 2015. <https://www.epi.org/blog/dont-blame-the-poor-for-the-faults-of-our-economy/>.

12 Ferguson, H.T., ED Issues HEERF III Guidance, All Grants Now Include DACA, Undocumented, and International Students. May 11, 2021, NASFAA, https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/25535/ED_Issues_HEERF_III_Guidance_All_Grants_Now_Include_DACA_Undocumented_and_International_Students.

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APPENDIX B:

Student Survey Example Questions

Questions to assess whether the course climate is welcoming and supportive.

All questions should include the following answer options: Yes, No, N/A, Not Sure.

- I was given the opportunity to tell my instructor the name I wish to be called.
- My instructor used my preferred names and pronouns with the correct pronunciation.
- I was invited by my instructor to share what I wish every instructor knew about me.
- There were opportunities for anonymous participation such as polling or asking questions.
- During group activities, minoritized students were not expected to speak for a particular demographic.
- During group activities, students were not expected to speak for a particular gender or sexual identity.
- My instructor frequently used culturally specific or idiomatic expressions when delivering important information.
- My instructor generally avoided stereotyping, making assumptions about students, and conveying a lack of trust or respect for students or any ethnic, racial, or cultural group.
- My instructor conveyed to students that they want us to pass, they know we can learn, and they support us.
- My instructor identified their pronouns.
- My instructor shared their own academic struggles in this discipline.

Questions to assess whether the course is designed for inclusion, access, and success.

All questions should include the following answer options: Yes, No, N/A, Not Sure.

- All course materials are housed in the university's LMS, and organize learning modules into weekly folders that are all-inclusive (links to assessments, practice activities, etc.).
- Learning modules are chunked into short segments (no more than 5 minutes of video or 15 minutes of reading) followed by some kind of low-stakes formative assessment.
- The course utilized the LMS features: Course calendar, digital gradebook, and announcements.
- Assignments had due by dates rather than due dates.
- I was sent reminders when assignments are due.
- The instructor was flexible with a course policy when I explained how it was an obstacle for me.
- All important information was presented in writing, and in more than one location (i.e. email, digital announcement page, syllabus).
- The course includes digital learning tools that allow students to check their progress and self-remediate ahead of high-stakes assessments.
- Instructions were provided for buying, logging on to, and using digital technologies.
- There are scholarship access codes for digital courseware and course materials that students cannot afford.

- I could access course materials offline or on a mobile device.
- Learning materials were offered in multiple modes – visual, audio, text, video.

Questions to assess representation of students in the curriculum and classroom.

All questions should include the following answer options: Yes, No, N/A, Not Sure.

- The curriculum is not limited to the ideals, philosophies, and voices of a single demographic population.
- Issues of race were not reduced to Black and white.
- Issues of gender were not reduced to male and female.
- Issues of belief were not reduced to opposing political parties.
- A variety of identities are represented in the entire curriculum (including assessments, practice activities, etc.).
- Marginalized populations were not represented as stereotypes or victims only.
- The experiences of underrepresented persons are not trivialized or marginalized.
- The course covers how bias and stereotypes have shaped the discipline.
- The course covers how bias and stereotypes in the discipline shaped the experiences of marginalized groups.
- The course content is relevant to my intersectional identities and to current events.
- The instructor intervenes when some students dominate the conversation or continually interrupt others.
- Students were given some degree of choice in how we prove mastery of learning objectives.

Questions to assess teaching and assessment strategies.

All questions should include the following answer options: Yes, No, N/A, Not Sure.

- The instructor presents the main points at the beginning of class and summarizes them at the end of class.
- The instructor allows time during lecture for student questions.
- The instructor uses some class time to let students work and ask for help.
- It is possible to fail an assignment or test and not fail the entire class as a result.
- The course includes activities that allow students to learn with and from each other.
- The instructor follows the 10:2 rule of not lecturing for more than 10 minutes without offering students a chance to process new information.
- Rather than infrequent, high-stakes exams, my grade is made up of frequent low-stakes assessments.
- The course included rubrics and examples of A-level work.
- Course assessments measure student skills rather than short-term memorization.
- Students are allowed to retake failed assessments and learn from failure.
- The instructor provides feedback on graded work.

APPENDIX C:

Every Learner Everywhere Network-Related Resources

- [📖 A Discussion of Anti-Racist Practices for Digital and Online Learning](#)
- [📖 An overview of equity- and student-centered frameworks that will help you redesign your course](#)
- [📖 Centering Identity as a Cognitive Tool: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Strategies in an Equitable Digital Learning Environment](#)
- [📖 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Trauma-Aware Teaching](#)
- [📖 Employing Equity Minded & Culturally Affirming Teaching Practices in Virtual Learning Communities](#)
- [📖 Improving Critical Courses](#)
- [📖 Inclusive Instruction with Adaptive Courseware](#)
- [📖 Strategies for Success Webinar Series](#)
- [📖 Student Speak: Equity Reality From Students Of Color, Low-Income, And First-Generation Students](#)
- [📖 Student Speak Survey GlobalMindEd](#)