IV. Promoting Higher Education Access and Inclusion for All Students: Leadership Examples

Practices for Promoting Higher Education Access for All Students in Institutions of Higher Education in Institutions of Higher Education

As noted earlier in this report, at too many institutions, underrepresented students of color face far lower odds of graduating than other students, far higher chances that they will struggle to afford a higher education, and significant academic obstacles. Many states and institutions have taken extraordinary and significant steps to increase access for underrepresented students of color, and to improve the educational experiences and academic success of students of color and low-income students.

States that are committed to advancing campus diversity and inclusion in higher education can contribute in many ways, for example, by creating goals toward this end and providing support to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs). The state boards of education can work in conjunction with IHEs to create more diverse and inclusive campuses. For example, Delaware has committed to increase college access through its Delaware Goes to College initiative, a goal to have zero college-ready students who do not apply to college. This initiative encourages all high schools to make time for students to apply to college, assist families with completing FAFSA applications, create a College Acceptance Day, as well as provide outreach to families to ensure that students attend and remain in college. Colorado's School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) awards funding to eligible school districts to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling. The program's goal is to improve the high school graduation rate and increase the percentage of students who appropriately prepare for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. Approximately 60 percent of students served participate in the free and reduced price lunch programs. SCCGP schools increased their matriculation rates by approximately 13 percentage points with the first year of funding and were able to maintain that increase during the next two years.

This section includes some publicly available examples of institutional practices, and highlights them as possible models for other institutions seeking approaches to expand access and promote safe and welcoming campus environments, including for students of color. While many more noteworthy practices at institutions across the country could be cited, the examples that follow are provided to show a variety of approaches in different institutional settings. This publication also contains hyperlinks and URLs for information created and maintained by outside third parties. As indicated at the beginning of this report, information to such outside sources is provided for the reader's convenience. The inclusion of these examples is not to be construed as an endorsement by the Department of Education or the federal government. The Department of Education does not guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of the outside information contained at hyperlinks or URLs. Further, the inclusion of this information or a hyperlink or URL does not reflect the importance of the organization, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered.

Institutional Commitment to Promoting Student Body Diversity and Inclusion on Campus

Research shows that colleges and universities seeking to implement programs to promote campus diversity identify how it relates to the core institutional mission and unique circumstances of the educational institution. Often, core institutional documents inform goals, objectives, and priorities that can lead institutions in turn to allocate necessary funds and resources to those purposes. For example, the institution could adopt a mission statement describing how the institution intends to promote student body diversity and inclusion as well as the necessary climate and conditions to do so.[126]

In turn, campus leaders could consider aligning policies and practices across the institution with this mission statement.[127] These steps could be connected to the institution's overall strategic plan and vision for student learning and success. Implementation of the campus diversity plan need not be considered the sole responsibility of a single designated diversity committee.[128] Institutions could also build their capacity to collect and analyze the data required to set and track their diversity and inclusion efforts in order to facilitate assessment of the plan's effectiveness.[129] The joint Department of Education and Department of Justice [Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity in Postsecondary Education](#) provides a checklist of key steps for colleges and universities, including reasons for a plan and considerations when implementing the plan.

❖ **The University at Albany (UAlbany)**, part of the State University of New York (SUNY), includes diversity and inclusion as a part of its strategic plan, reinforcing the system-wide Diversity Vision and Mission Statement. The [2010 Strategic Plan](#) sets forth a key strategic goal "to enhance the quality of undergraduate education at UAlbany and attract and serve a highly qualified and diverse group of students." (Planning is underway during the 2016–17 academic year to update the strategic plan.) In an effort to fulfill that portion of its plan, the university has established the [Diversity Transformation Fund](#), which provides funding to faculty and staff for development of new and innovative initiatives that model inclusiveness and impact campus climate. Among other campus resources, the university funds the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#), which is charged with promoting and furthering the university's commitment.

❖ **Southwestern University**, a faith-based private university in Texas, builds on its Core Values with a [diversity statement](#) that commits to "continuing the development of an increasingly diverse community of students, faculty, and staff." The [Strategic Plan](#) identifies actions to advance the objectives outlined in the Mission, Core Values, and Diversity Statement. A chief diversity officer leads the Office of Diversity Education and supports the [Coalition for Diversity and Social Justice](#), an umbrella organization for eight cultural, identity, and social justice groups. Also, under the auspices of the office, the [Diversity Enrichment Committee](#) provides funding for programs that further diversity on campus.

❖ The **University of Mississippi** not only supports diversity in its [UM 2020 Strategic Plan](#) but produced a stand-alone [Diversity Matters](#) plan in which key actions and metrics for measuring progress are outlined. The university funds the work of the [William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation](#) — which works in communities and classrooms on campus, in Mississippi, and

beyond, to support a movement of racial equity and wholeness — and the Critical Race Studies Group.

❖ The Mission and Goals Statement at the **University of Maryland, College Park** sets forth a number of objectives, among which are those to "reduce the achievement gap for African American/Black, Hispanic, and low-income students" and "expand the diversity of the graduate student body through collaborations with University System of Maryland partner institutions that focus on recruitment, academic success, professional development, and the creation of a supportive work environment for all students." The university implements these objectives in part through a holistic admission review process and review factors.

❖ At the **University of Michigan**, the Campuswide Strategic Plan focuses on three strategic areas to address inclusivity. Strategy 1 aims to create an inclusive and equitable campus climate; Strategy 2 aims to recruit, retain, and develop a diverse community; and Strategy 3 aims to support innovative and inclusive scholarship and teaching.

Diversity Across All Levels of an Institution

Promoting diversity and inclusiveness across all levels of the institution, including the institution's administration and faculty, can be an important way to achieve a diverse and inclusive campus climate. Institutional leadership that focuses on diversity and inclusion, such as a chief diversity officer assigned the duties of overseeing the development and implementation of the institution's commitments to diversity, can spearhead these efforts. These administration and faculty challenges are not insignificant, as people of color are often underrepresented among institutions' leadership: in 2013–14, seven times as many faculty were white as were either black or Hispanic (see appendix C for statistics on faculty).

Campus leadership, including a diverse faculty, plays an important role in achieving an inclusive institution. Faculty's curricular decisions and pedagogy, including their individual interactions with students, can foster inclusive climates. Also, students report it is important that they see themselves reflected in the faculty and curriculum to which they are exposed to create a sense of belonging and inclusiveness. Research suggests that greater representation of underrepresented groups among faculty may increase students' sense of academic validation.[130] Research at the K-12 level, for instance, demonstrates that teachers of color may hold higher expectations for students of color and employ a deeper cultural understanding of their students.[131, 132, 133] Faculty creates the curricula and, therefore, has the responsibility and discretion to select the educational content to which students are exposed and the educational experiences fostered in the classroom. The curriculum and classroom interactions greatly impact all students — including students of color.

Institutions may wish to consider how historical and current policies and practices may serve as barriers to diversity goals. They could also consider various parts of the pipeline, including how they may expand the hiring pool for administrators and faculty, as well as programs that support and retain diverse administrators and faculty.[134]

Mentoring programs, for instance, can help address relatively high rates of turnover among underrepresented minority faculty.[135] The campus climate can affect the success of both students *and* faculty.[136]

❖ For example, the **University of Illinois at Chicago** in 2011 created the [Cluster Initiative to Increase Diversity and the Interdisciplinary Culture at UIC](), a faculty hiring initiative that was designed to develop diverse academic leadership and enrich the student learning experience.

❖ At **The University of Texas at Austin**, the [Thematic Faculty Initiative]() incorporates a three-tiered approach to prepare, recruit, and retain faculty. First, the university hires graduate research assistants who are mentored and exposed to the value of working in an academic environment committed to diversity and inclusion. Second, the university recruits intellectually and culturally diverse faculty members, providing a line of funding through the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement for these hires. Finally, the university provides fellowships to faculty members across the university whose research, teaching, or special projects focus on diversity and community engagement issues.

❖ In tandem with efforts to expand college access to low-income, first-generation, and historically underrepresented students, **Columbia University** has invested $85 million to support the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty. The Provost's [Grant Program for Junior Faculty Who Contribute to the Diversity Goals of the University]() provides awards, of up to $25,000 each, to support new or ongoing research and scholarship, seed funding for innovative research for which external funding would be difficult to obtain, and curricular development projects. The [Dean's Faculty Diversity Research Awards Program]() at Teachers College supports faculty research projects related to diversity for one semester.

Outreach and Recruitment of Prospective Students

Institutions committed to enhancing student diversity can take steps to improve outreach and recruitment to a diverse array of students. For instance, institutions often work to proactively develop relationships and provide support to the elementary and secondary schools that are located within the communities surrounding the institution. Institutions could consider how they target their financial aid resources and how their admissions processes — such as early decision procedures — may act as a barrier to groups of students, including low-income students.[137] There are many ways institutions can promote diversity through their financial aid and admissions, including transfer or articulation agreements with other institutions, such as with community colleges; recruitment or additional consideration for community college transfer applicants; targeted financial aid; and holistic application reviews.[138] As the joint Department of Education and Department of Justice [Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity in Postsecondary Education]() describes, postsecondary institutions may develop admissions procedures designed to achieve diversity, including procedures that involve admissions preferences for certain groups of students.

As a recent review of rigorous research on college access strategies suggests, institutions may most effectively expand access when they employ strategies to address multiple barriers to college access *together*, instead of in isolation.[139] Students encounter many barriers in accessing higher education, such as the complex process of identifying appropriate institutions, applying for financial aid, and completing paperwork to matriculate on-time, or difficulties filling gaps in financial aid.[140, 141, 142] Some strategies supported by research include providing comprehensive, ongoing support from administrators and peers; advising from peers near the students' age; targeting support for elements such as FAFSA completion and test prep; and exposing students to college-level work while they are in high school.[143, 144, 145, 146] The joint [Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity in Postsecondary Education](#) sets out examples of mentoring, tutoring, retention, and support programs postsecondary institutions might consider in pursuing diversity.

Examples of institutional outreach programs include the following:

❖ The [LIFT College Access Mentoring program](#) at the **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign** provides access and exposure to college for the community's underrepresented youths in tandem with mentoring.

❖ At **The University of Texas at Austin**, the [Neighborhood Longhorns](#) program partners with local elementary and middle schools that have a high proportion of low-income students to improve academic performance. The university's [Math Masters](#) program prepares students from underrepresented Texas high schools with the skills necessary for successful completion of college-level math courses.

❖ At the flagship campus of **Rutgers University**, the Office for Diversity and Academic Success in the Sciences (ODASIS) aims to increase the recruitment and academic success of underrepresented students, as well as educationally and economically disadvantaged students, who are interested in pursuing careers in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions. The Summer Preparatory Program in chemistry and calculus, one example of an ODASIS program, involves intensive academic support during the summer prior to students' freshman year in order to strengthen and articulate the foundation of course content necessary to excel in future gatekeeper courses within a science curriculum.

Support Services for Students

As this report describes, students of color face disproportionate barriers to completing higher education. One significant challenge is helping students transition academically when they have attended schools with fewer resources, less-qualified teachers, and limited college prep coursework, as well as "college knowledge" regarding the rigor of coursework in higher education.[147] In general, student support services are associated with improved academic outcomes throughout the student's college experience.[148] A Department of Education analysis found that a variety of student support services are related to improved outcomes, such as peer tutoring, labs, workshops, counseling, and referrals to outside sources — and that what may be most important is that students receive an appropriate

package of student-centered services from the institution.[149] Promising academic support strategies include the following:

❖ **Well-designed Course Placement Strategies**: Many institutions require entering students to take screening exams and, if they do not pass the cutoff, take remedial or developmental courses. Although half of all undergraduates take at least one developmental course, research indicates that many of the tests are poor predictors of success in college-level courses and may not be a good use of students' or institutions' time and money.[150] Evidence suggests that emerging strategies could help, such as using computer-adaptive placement testing; basing placement on high school transcripts, not tests; and having high school juniors take placement exams so they can address academic gaps during their senior year.[151, 152, 153] Also, research indicates Statway — a new pathway for developmental math that addresses complex problems affecting student success, along with the companion Quantway pathway — may improve credit-earning for all students, including students of color.[154]

❖ **Mentoring or Coaching:** These programs help college students identify strategies to overcome both academic and "real-life" barriers.[155] Rigorous evidence indicates that individualized mentoring and coaching — distinct from academic advising — can increase the odds that college students remain enrolled in school.[156] Mentoring and coaching might be particularly helpful for first-generation students who are less familiar with the institutional structure of higher education.

❖ **On-campus Support and Summer Bridge Programs:** First-year experience programs, which support the academic performance and social development of college students and also increase students' sense of campus community and connection to their institutions, can improve academic achievement and credit-earning.[157] Summer bridge programs, which ease students' transition to college and help students develop academic skills and social resources to succeed, can also improve persistence and completion for participants.[158] For example, the Center for Academic Reinforcement at **Howard University** identifies academic difficulties experienced by students who enter the university, providing a pre-summer college preparation program, a pre-college orientation program for entering freshmen, individualized peer mentoring and tutoring in mathematics, mini courses in areas such as critical thinking and essay writing, and intervention courses for students who do not pass the Graduate School's Expository Writing Examination.

❖ **Challenges Outside the Classroom:** Many American students also encounter challenges outside of the classroom that may affect their success in school, such as housing insecurity, hunger, transportation to school, and affording textbooks.[159] A recent study of more than 4,000 undergraduates at 10 community colleges, for instance, found that about half of respondents struggled with either food or housing insecurity.[160] As with other barriers described in this report, students of color may disproportionately encounter these issues. Institutions have experimented with various strategies to support students with housing insecurities and living

costs, such as establishing a campus single point of contact, connecting students with federal benefits, and providing emergency aid or micro grants.[161] Rigorous research demonstrates that one program in particular, **City University of New York**'s [Accelerated Study in Associate Programs](#) (ASAP), nearly doubled graduation rates among participating low-income students after three years.[162] The ASAP program covers the gap between students' financial aid and their need and provides an array of services such as free transportation MetroCards, a program advisor with a small caseload, and free textbooks to borrow.[163]

Inclusive Campus Climate

Institutions may take steps to foster inclusive campus climates for all members of their communities. Many factors can affect campus climate. Campus composition makes a difference: underrepresented students tend to experience less frequent discrimination at more compositionally diverse institutions, compared to less diverse institutions.[164] Also, students report less discrimination and bias at institutions where they perceive a stronger institutional commitment to diversity.[165] As a foundation, institutions could perform an assessment of their campus climate related to diversity in order to identify areas for improvement — for instance, ways different groups of students perceive discrimination on campus. These assessments can inform a continuous process of planning, implementing, and reflecting on progress made and lessons learned. Performing assessments that address unique aspects of the campus community can ensure they align with institutions' efforts to improve their campus climates and student outcomes.[166]

The level of experience and exposure to different races and ethnicities varies for all persons in campus environments. As a result, institutions may wish to develop and facilitate programming to increase the cultural competency of leadership, faculty, staff, and students by implementing training. Promising evidence suggests that diversity training and workshops can influence the behavior and attitudes of academic leaders and faculty, including acting inclusively and engaging in fair hiring practices.[167] Research indicates that trainings for both leaders and students can be more effective when they involve active learning techniques, not just lectures, so participants engage with the course content, and when the trainings avoid assigning blame or responsibility to participants for current diversity issues.[168]

Research suggests that, for faculty to develop cultural competencies, it may be helpful for training to include an orientation, as well as an ongoing and developmentally sequenced curriculum such as Cultural Competency Training (CCT). CCT is designed not only to teach learners about cultural differences and ways in which to engage respectfully with persons of other cultures, but also to provide implicit bias training to increase learners' awareness of the unconscious and subtle associations made between groups of people and stereotypes attributed to the group. Some institutions offer this training and provide certificates and recognition to faculty and staff upon completion. Cultural competency is a life-long learning endeavor; thus, earning a certificate does not constitute mastery of the subject, but rather demonstrates a willingness to learn.

Much of the dialogue around diversity and inclusion in higher education suggests that curricula to which students are exposed can greatly impact the way in which they view and engage the world. Research suggests this begins with institutions' orientation and induction of new students into the campus

environment.[169] Many IHEs include cultural competency training in new student orientation, and also require that students take coursework in diversity as freshmen. These programs can create opportunities for students to have positive interactions with diverse peers, which research demonstrates can lead students to feel a greater sense of belonging to their college or university.[170] Examples of institutions implementing such strategies include the following:

❖ **Southern Methodist University** in Dallas requires all graduating students to have taken a [human diversity co-curricular course](link). A variety of courses in disciplines ranging from anthropology to English to religion are designated as courses that can satisfy this requirement.

❖ The **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign** offers an [I-Connect Diversity and Inclusion Workshop](link) for first-year and transfer students, which uses collaborative exercises and discussion to build participants' communication skills and their ability to collaborate, learn, and work in diverse environments. The university's year-long [Learn, Envision, Navigate, and Synthesize (LENS) Diversity Certificate Program](link) enables students to build the skills necessary to engage on the multicultural campus and global society. Participants take courses, attend workshops and cohort meetings, and design their own action project.

❖ The **University of Mississippi** University Police Department requires "Hate vs. Bias Training" for all new officers and has employed additional diversity training within the department for existing officers. The university provides a ["Welcome Home"](link) onboarding program to new employees that emphasizes the university's commitment to racial reconciliation. New students are required to attend the ["Respect the M"](link) orientation session to facilitate a more inclusive and diverse campus climate. ["MPower"](link) is an optional, first-year summer program for students to instill appreciation for university culture and for cultural differences and inclusivity.

In addition, institutions may incorporate diversity training into broader campus programs and training. Research suggests that coupling diversity training with larger initiatives, such as new student orientation or broader professional development efforts for university employees, as opposed to holding standalone trainings, may be more effective.[171] Similarly, institutions also could consider how best to support student-, staff-, and faculty-led initiatives that incorporate conversations about diversity and inclusion into campus life.[172] For example, some institutions support discrete components of student government, such as a diversity affairs council, that promote diversity and inclusion. Many institutions engage students in the decision-making process on matters involving diversity and efforts to improve campus climate.

❖ At the **University of Illinois-Chicago**, the [Chancellor's Status Committees](link) are advisory groups comprising staff, students, and faculty that collaboratively monitor the needs of underrepresented and underserved groups and proactively make policy recommendations to improve the climate for these groups on campus. The [Diversity Advisory Committee](link), which includes student representatives, provides counsel to the provost and vice provost for diversity on diversity policy, procedures, and strategy.

❖ The Multicultural Programming Council at **Georgia State University** functions as the advisory board to the Multicultural Center and its programs. The Council comprises student leaders of multicultural groups who provide input on events and initiatives developed and supported by the Multicultural Center, as well as provides workshops, advisement, and funding to student groups.

Cultural and socio-emotional support systems are helpful for all students to thrive on campus and can be important for students who do not comprise a racial or ethnic majority. Institutional leaders in these areas create visible, easily accessible support systems and resources customized to students' needs. Successful institutions also make available financial support to close the need gap for students who are economically disadvantaged. Research shows that, in general, fostering involvement outside of the classroom, such as in extracurricular activities, can play a critical role in diverse students' academic development and persistence — but students of color tend to have lower rates of engagement in campus organizations, potentially due to negative campus climates or because available activities do not reflect their cultural interests.[173] Safe spaces that reflect students' cultural backgrounds can help reduce feelings of isolation or alienation among students of color, and can provide a sense of meaning and validation.[174] Examples of institutions providing such support systems include the following:

❖ The Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers at **California State University-Fullerton** offer workshops and trainings designed for students to become self-aware, culturally competent, civically engaged, and critical thinkers. The African American Resource Center, Asian Pacific American Resource Center, Chicana/Chicano Resource Center, LGBTQ Resource Center, and Titan Dreamers Resource Center (for undocumented students) operate under its umbrella and strengthen the integration of diverse populations of students into the university.

❖ **Brown University** provides multiple socio-emotional resources that can be helpful for students of color and their allies with its Center, which serves as a gathering place for communities of color. Students are encouraged to build meaningful relationships across differences, develop racial and ethnic consciousness, and enact change at Brown and beyond. In collaboration with student organizations and academic departments, the center also offers a variety of forums and events through the Heritage Series. Other resources include alumni of color affinity groups, the newly-launched Social Justice Peer Education Program, Black Student Initiative, Latino Student Initiative, and Asian American Student Initiative.

❖ **Santa Fe College** in Florida similarly provides multiple resources. The College Achievement Program provides the opportunity for students from diverse backgrounds to enhance their academic, professional, cultural, personal, and overall college experience, reinforcing behaviors that embrace compassion, civility, justice, social responsibility, and mutual respect. The Global Roundtable for Academic Development (GRAD) offers students an opportunity to broaden their learning outside of the classroom, brainstorm student success strategies, and promote better understanding about how to succeed in college and in the global economy. The Multicultural

[Student Center](#) supports approximately 2,000 international students, including those who are first generation.

❖ Beyond the usual array of multicultural student organizations, the **University at Albany** has established the [Office of Intercultural Student Engagement](#), which sponsors activities and events that increase the cultural competency of students, faculty, and staff. The [Multicultural Resource Center](#) enhances the university's commitment to social justice and diversity by supporting students of all backgrounds and cultural identities. The center features the Asian Heritage Suite and the African Heritage Suite, affinity group spaces that also provide opportunities for dialogue about the history, culture, obstacles, and achievements of people of African or Asian descent. The [C.H.A.R.G.E Peer Educator Program](#) provides the opportunity for students seeking leadership experiences related to diversity and inclusion to receive training to facilitate cultural competency discussions. Peer educators assist students in residence halls to create an environment where faculty, staff, and students understand, embrace, and model respect for diversity.

A Multi-Pronged Commitment to Diversity

The institutions referenced in this section have in most cases managed to increase diversity in student enrollment, graduation rates, and faculty. [†] While it may not be possible to definitively ascribe this success to a particular diversity effort, the broad range of activities in which these institutions engage suggest that a multi-pronged commitment to diversity can have a discernible impact.

❖ At **California State University-Fullerton**, enrollment of black and Hispanic students increased from 27 percent in 2001 to 41 percent in 2014. During this same time frame, graduation rates for black students increased from 29 to 43 percent, and for Hispanic students from 39 to 49 percent.

❖ At **Georgia State University**, black and Hispanic enrollment increased from 38 to 50 percent between 2001 and 2014. Graduation rates for black students increased from 25 to 56 percent, and for Hispanic students from 38 to 55 percent. The percentage of non-white, full-time faculty increased from 15 to 24 percent between 2001 and 2011.

❖ At **University of Illinois at Chicago**, black and Hispanic enrollment increased from 26 to 34 percent between 2001 and 2014. Graduation rates for black students increased from 27 to 43

[†] Graduation rates refer to graduation rates within 150 percent of normal time for first-time, full-time students. Enrollment refers to undergraduate certificate/degree-seeking students. Faculty refers to full-time instructional staff (the percentage of non-white faculty is calculated with the race unknown and nonresident alien categories included in the denominator, but not the numerator). SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Human Resources Survey," "Fall Enrollment Survey," "Graduation Rate Survey." Available at http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/.