

Taking a Stand: Higher Education Leadership for the 21st Century

The Issue

The successful development and implementation of access and diversity policies depend on many interrelated factors, none of which is more important than the strength of the institutional leadership at the helm.

Institutions of higher education have many items competing for their attention: academics, budgets, personnel, campus safety, athletics, and more. Stakeholders seeking support in each of these areas (and others) clamor for the institutional leaders' time and attention. With a finite amount of available resources, leaders must limit their agenda to the most important and timely items. Having an understanding of the vital contribution that student diversity may make to the institution's overall success is, therefore, a vital point of focus.

Leader's Checklist

Five fundamental foundations indicative of effective leadership relating to institution-specific access and diversity goals are:

1. Enrolling and educating a diverse class of students is central to the institution's educational mission.
2. Policy statements that articulate the precise benefits associated with a diverse student body, including with respect to race and ethnicity, are developed and effectively implemented.
3. A well-managed, annual process for evaluating institutional access and diversity goals, as well as the ways in which institutional policies are designed (and actually work) to achieve those goals, is firmly in place.

SELECTED RESOURCES

1. Coleman, Palmer, Rippner, and Riley, *A 21st Century Imperative: Promoting Access and Diversity in Higher Education* (The College Board and American Council on Education, 2009) at www.collegeboard.com/accessanddiversity

2. Kezar and Eckel, *Leadership Strategies for Advancing Campus Diversity* (American Council on Education, 2005).

4. In cases where those policies reflect consideration of race or ethnicity when making enrollment-related decisions (such as selection in admission and awarding scholarships), the institution ensures that:

- ♦ The consideration of race and ethnicity is demonstrably necessary to achieve its access and diversity goals.
- ♦ The consideration of race and ethnicity materially advances the achievement of its access and diversity goals.

5. Institutional leaders, policymakers, and faculty members are equipped to talk to internal and external stakeholders about the importance of access and diversity to their institution's core goals.

“On the Record: Higher Education's Mission

“[A] university ... must attempt to interpret the times in which it lives in order to meet the developing needs of the society which it serves. ...[I]t must be a comprehending observer of the present and, in so far as possible, a vehicle of understanding for the future. This is the great social mission of education in a free society. In the language of Disraeli, ‘A university should be a place of light, of liberty and of learning.’”

JAMES P. ADAMS

University of Michigan Provost, June 1950 speech, quoted in *Defending Diversity: Affirmative Action at the University of Michigan* (University of Michigan Press, 2004).

3. Williams and Wade-Golden, *The Chief Diversity Officer: A Primer for College and University Presidents* (American Council on Education, 2007).