

GUIDE TO EQUITY, INCLUSION AND TRANSFORMATION AT SLCC



Why should SLCC have an Equity compass?

Our board of trustees in their effort to ensure that we are thinking about equity, diversity and inclusion ask executive cabinet to support them by identifying tools to help them hold themselves and our institution accountable in our efforts to become and equitable, inclusive, transformative college. Cabinet identified the Utah State of Higher Education (USHE) *Equity lens framework* as a tool comprised of shared beliefs, definitions, and critical questions through which an organization commits could continually evaluating any existing or new strategy, policy, or initiative.

We adapted the framework to guide our institution and the individuals working at the institution to have a shared guide for approaching the work that we do to ensure that we are guided by our mission, vision and values. This tool helps ensure the organization comes from a common understanding, setting the groundwork for all efforts to be focused on asking questions about the work that we do to support our students' success, creating a good work environment, and collaborating with the communities around us. In order to create and inclusive process this compass will be shared over the 2022-2023 year with the entire SLCC community in order to create a compass that has been tested and reviewed by as many as are able to provide feedback.

It is our goal to support and build on our equity and inclusion efforts, and to hold ourselves accountable to ask how we are meeting our equity and inclusivity strategic goals. The five sections below are areas that senior leadership and other directors and managers should incorporate into their work. Frontline workers and other support staff may not do all five areas but should examine which areas fit their particular role. The goal is that all across SLCC that we will begin to collect information, qualitatively and quantitatively to show how we are supporting our values and our strategic plan and create a learning and working environment built on our SLCC values of collaboration, community, inclusivity, learning, innovation, integrity, and trust.

SLCC Equity Compass

Is a tool comprised of shared beliefs, definitions, and five areas to ask critical questions through which we at SLCC commit to continually evaluating any existing or new strategy, policy, or initiative.

The compass will be used to:

- ensure understanding across our organization of the connections between our mission, vision, and values and the role that each of us has at the organization;
- establish processes that promote clear accountability; and
- focus our college efforts towards student success and completion are attainable regardless of identities.

SLCC Equity Compass Questions

The following questions should be used as a guide to help form question and develop a way to keep equity and inclusion at the forefront of our minds. Depending on your role at the college you may not use every section. This guide is a suggestion of questions. You may need to create questions that match your job at the college. These questions should serve as a jumping off place for questions but are not exhaustive or need to be considered all at once. These questions will guide trustees and at the our internal community through decision-making to ensure equitable action in all the work that we do at SLCC.

In addition to the five areas the following considerations should be a part of each section.

Considerations:

People: Are we considering people over tasks or processes? Are there people that we need to ensure are a part of the decision process from beginning to end.

Professional Development Needs- What are the professional development needs of the group that will carry out or develop whatever is being done? Are there professional development needs for those that will be receiving the outcome?

Policy, Guidelines Practice, or Procedure: Is there a policy, guideline, practice or procedure that will be impacted by this? Or will new policy, guideline, practices or procedures need to be created to support this?

Assess

Considerations		
People-centered	Professional Development Needs	Policy guidelines, Practices, or Procedures

How does this help us achieve our values at SLCC?

- How does this help us achieve our equity and inclusion goals or strategic plans?
- Does the action maintain, sustain, or intervene any existing educational disparities? Does it produce other unintended consequences?
- What is the impact of this decision on eliminating attainment gaps, increasing completion, helping our student and faculty numbers match the local demographics?
- How does the policy, initiative, resource allocation, or strategy, etc. advance opportunities for historically underserved students and communities?

Examine Data

Considerations		
People-centered	Professional Development Needs	Policy guidelines, Practices, or Procedures

How can the data be used to tell the whole story? (i.e. Equity gap, opportunity gap, retention)

- What does the current data tell us about representation among students, staff, and faculty groups? Check the source of the data for quality and impartiality.
- Where do current data collection methodologies fail to measure the extent of underrepresentation?
- Does the data infrastructure support forward-thinking, accurate measures of representation?
- What data sources will you use to understand the impacts of race, ethnicity, gender, income, legal status, and native language?
- Is qualitative data needed to support and better understand impacted communities more holistically?
- What stories have we not considered?

Engage and Plan

Considerations		
People-centered	Professional Development Needs	Policy guidelines, Practices, or Procedures

What is the plan to ensure equitable participation?

- What is your timeline to ensure equitable input and collaboration? (Nothing for us without us)
- Do we allow time to ask who is missing, and who needs to provide input? Are there questions about commitment especially where there may be contradictory policy, initiatives, resource allocation, or strategy?
- How will you modify or enhance your strategies to ensure the needs of the community and of each learner’s individual higher education and career goals are equitably supported?
- What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What resources are you allocating for training that includes stakeholder instruction?
- How have campus and community stakeholders, who may be affected by this potential course of action, been purposefully involved?
- What resources exist that could be leveraged to challenge these barriers? These might include political, emotional, financial, programmatic, or managerial resources.

Implement

Considerations		
People-centered	Professional Development Needs	Policy guidelines, Practices, or Procedures

What type of implementation plan would ensure equity and inclusion?

- Who will be a part of the implementation plan?
- Are there enough resources for implementation? (i.e. time, financial, buy-in, emotional, etc.)
- How did you ensure that the plan is clear to those implementing the plan?
- Has your approach or decision changed after looking at this topic through the Equity Lens?
- What action is taken, if any?

Measure Success

Considerations		
People-centered	Professional Development Needs	Policy guidelines, Practices, or Procedures

What steps were taken to create equitable outcomes?

- List the steps that were taken
- What is the plan for measuring success?
- Have you broken down outcomes to ensure equitable outcomes? (gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, age, immigration status, etc)
- Do success measures equitably evaluate the success relative to underrepresented populations?

Underlying Shared Beliefs Regarding Equity and Opportunity

The SLCC Board of Trustees establishes the following set of shared beliefs:

We believe every person in our community should have access to education, and the SLCC has an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure optimal learning and workplace environments exist on SLCC campuses for all students, faculty, and staff.

We believe as the community's college we are a part of the community education. We work with individuals, families, and communities to support their learning goals. SLCC must meet students where they are and work to build on and improve each student's educational outcomes.

We believe that speaking a language other than English is an asset for participating in a growing global economy and workforce. We celebrate those qualities and are committed to culturally-responsive support and academic pathways for students.

We believe we must be inclusive in all facets, including accessibility services, by providing appropriate accommodations through the Americans with Disabilities Act, and celebrating diverse populations, including those with disabilities.

We believe that ending disparities and gaps in college attainment begins in the delivery and quality of college and career readiness programs, initiatives, and policies. These efforts are best coordinated through the SLCC P-20 Alliance.

We believe that underrepresented communities have unique and important solutions for improving educational and career outcomes. Our work will only be successful as we sincerely learn and partner with local communities.

We believe every learner should understand the broad array of college and career pathways available at SLCC, the importance of advanced course-taking while still in high school (e.g., Concurrent Enrollment, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate coursework), and other career-focused opportunities such as apprenticeships.

We believe SLCC provide students with the best educational outcomes when students, faculty, and staff reflect the growing diversity in Utah and across the nation.

We believe each student's history and culture is a source of pride that we should embrace and celebrate. Our ability as a community college to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population is critical to achieving state attainment and other strategic goals.

We believe that all students should graduate from college having better cultural awareness and a greater understanding of why diversity, equity, and inclusion are important values that will help them be better workforce participants, community members, and global citizens.

Finally, we believe in the importance of instruction, processes, policies, goals, and strategies that adapt to the changing global society. An equitable education system requires we provide faculty and staff with the tools and support necessary to meet the needs of each student.

SLCC Shared Definitions

The SLCC Board of Trustees recognizes the following definitions of common equity, diversity, and inclusion terms:

1. **Anti-racism:** We define *anti-racism* in accordance with the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre:

Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.ⁱ

2. **Opportunity and Attainment Gap:**

We define the *opportunity gap* as:

The lack of opportunity that underserved groups face, due to systemic barriers, when seeking educational advancement or gainful employment.

We define attainment as:

The inability to attain access by marginalized groups due to income, housing, access to food, transportation, clothing

This framing shifts the attention from the current emphasis on individuals to more fundamental questions about social, systemic, and structural access. In the State of Utah and SLCC, students of color are disproportionately impacted by lower rates of enrollment and completion.ⁱⁱ The same is true when socioeconomic status is factored in for rural and urban students.

3. **Culturally Responsive:** We define *culturally responsive* as:

Recognizing the diverse cultural characteristics and knowledge of learners as assets. ⁱⁱⁱ Culturally responsive teaching and advising empower students intellectually, socially, and emotionally by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.^{iv}

4. **Equity:** We define *equity* in line with the Lumina Foundation's Equity Imperative:

Equity is the recognition and analysis of historic, persistent factors that have created an unequal [higher] education system. ^v

This includes assessing, identifying, acknowledging, and addressing System policies, and initiatives supporting and/or sustaining inequity and disparities.

5. **Intersectionality:** A term originally coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw;^{vi} we define *intersectionality* consistent with the <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>:

Intersectionality is simply a prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia – seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges.^{vii}

Students who are underserved based on multiple identities (e.g., race, gender, class, etc.) may face additional discrimination and marginalization.

6. **Marginalization:** We define *marginalization* as:

The process through which persons are peripheralized based on their identities, associations, experiences, and environment.^{viii}

LGBTQIA+, veterans, students with disabilities, previously incarcerated, and students facing food, housing, or technology insecurity are all examples of marginalized student groups. These students or student groups may be treated or feel as insignificant or unseen on a college campus.

*see #10 *Underrepresented*

7. **Privilege:** As defined by racialequitytools.org/glossary.

Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.^{ix}

These special rights, advantages, or immunities may be granted by a state, system, or another authority to a restricted group, either by birth or on a conditional basis.

8. **Race:** As defined by the National Museum of African American History and Culture:

The dictionary's definition of race is incomplete and misses the complexity of impact on lived experiences. It is important to acknowledge race is a social fabrication, created to classify people on the arbitrary basis of skin color and other physical features. Although race has no genetic or scientific basis, the concept of race is important and consequential. Societies use race to establish and justify systems of power, privilege, disenfranchisement, and oppression.^x

Racial or Ethnic groups are generally recognized in society and often by the government. When referring to such groups, we often use the terminology *people of color*, *students of color*, or *communities of color* (or name of the specific racial and/or ethnic group), and *white*. Because race is a social construct, we also understand that racial and ethnic categories differ internationally, and that race and ethnicity categories and hierarchies differ globally and internationally. We recognize many local communities come from other international communities. In some societies, ethnic, religious, and caste groups are oppressed and racialized. These dynamics can occur even when the oppressed group is numerically in the majority.

9. **Underserved:** We define *underserved* as:

Any group or individual that has been denied access and/or whom systems have marginalized due to operationalized deficit-based thinking.

Deficit-based thinking is the focus on a community's needs, deficits, or problems rather than its assets, strengths, or opportunities.^{xi} Operationalized systemic barriers can create a disproportional representation of certain groups based on identity characteristics.

*see #10 *Underrepresented*

10. **Underrepresented:** We define *underrepresented* as:

Any student group that has traditionally held a disproportionately lower percentage of the total higher education population. These are student groups who are disproportionately underrepresented in comparison to an equivalent counterpart.

Including but not limited to students facing economic barriers, students of color, and English Language Learner students are all examples of student groups who historically and presently continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in their higher education pursuits.

Both underrepresented and marginalized groups are underserved students who face unique challenges in accessing and completing college certificates and/or degrees due to the systemic barriers that exist.

Methodology and Context

Developing a SLCC Equity Compass

To increase equitable higher education outcomes, the Utah Board of Higher Education created its own equity lens framework, modeled after the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's Equity Lens,^{xii} which was further developed by USHE Chief Diversity Officers and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. The USHE Equity Lens employs an anti-racist, equity-focused framework. SLCC has adapted the USHE framework with adjustments to fit the localized institutional needs of our student population, our employees, and our external community and is based on our values, mission and vision.

This lens considers the following emergent, fluid, and intersectional identities as part of the Board's efforts to value the perspective and knowledge that each student brings to higher education learning spaces; this list is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive:

- Age
- Gender identity and expression
- Sexual orientation
- Religious affiliation
- Socioeconomic status
- Citizenship status and country of origin
- Ability/disability
- Veteran status
- First-generation student status
- Multilingual speakers
- Geographic location (including rural, urban, sheltered, and unsheltered).

The Equity Lens Framework was developed to achieve educational equity when collecting data, allocating resources, developing policies, engaging stakeholders, and implementing strategic initiatives.

Establishing a Set of Shared Beliefs

The Board recognizes the biases and barriers to accessing higher education that have existed throughout the state's history that have led to systemic disparities. Higher education in Utah was initially developed to serve a narrow slice of the state's population, namely white men of privilege, on the ancestral homelands of native peoples.^{xiv} As the state has progressed, education systems have been slow to change from this original framework. To eliminate these disparities, the framework must change.

Equity, as defined within this *new* framework, *re-examines* systemic barriers with an intentional commitment to empowerment and educational justice.

In the newly combined System, made up of all public technical and degree-granting colleges and universities in Utah,^{xv} the Board has the opportunity to reimagine spaces of higher learning that foster success, create pathways for economic mobility and a high quality of life for students and their communities. It is through this recognition and commitment that the shared beliefs included in the Equity Lens Framework were developed in collaboration with USHE's Chief Diversity Officers.

Knowledge, Data Collection, & Measuring Progress

Both qualitative and quantitative data are needed for SLCC, the Board, and the System to have a holistic view, and understanding of, equity disparities. These data inform how stakeholders are educated about the individuals, groups, communities, and institutions served by Utah's higher education System.

The questions within the Equity Compass will determine the need for qualitative and quantitative data to guide the development of new strategies, initiatives, and policies, and to measure progress made.

The SLCC Board of Trustees will direct the administration to work with the USHE office to develop a practical plan to collect institutional demographic and sociocultural data in the following categories:

1. Race and ethnicity
2. Gender identity and expression
3. Sexual orientation
4. Socioeconomic status
5. First-generation status
6. Language proficiency
7. Citizenship and residency status

By collecting this data, we can impact intersectional populations through our strategies, initiatives, and policies. We will incorporate these key metrics into the SLCC strategic plan.

Further Reading

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- iii Funds of Knowledge in Higher Education: Honoring Students' Cultural Experiences and Resources as Strengths. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2017. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Funds_of_Knowledge_in_Higher_Education/MRIwDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbp v=0.
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- viii Hall JM, Stevens PE, & Meleis AI (1994). Marginalization: A guiding concept for valuing diversity in nursing knowledge development. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 16(4), 23–41. [\[PubMed\]](#) [\[Google Scholar\]](#).
- ix "Privilege." <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary> Accessed June 2022
- x National Museum of African American History and Culture. Race and Racial Identity, 2020. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/race-and-racial-identity>.
- xi The University of Memphis. Comparison Between Asset and Deficit Based Approaches, 2019. <https://www.memphis.edu/ess/module4/page3.php>.
- xii Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Oregon Equity Lens, 2017. <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/Documents/State-Goals/HECC-Equity-Lens-2017-reformat.pdf>.
- xiii Tara J. Yosso * (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8:1, 69-91, DOI: 10.1080/1361332052000341006. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1361332052000341006>.
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- xv Utah System of Higher Education. The New Utah System of Higher Education, 2020. https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/reports/issue_brief/2020/2020_New_Combined_System.pdf.

SLCC Equity Compass

Directions: In order to ensure that equity and inclusion is part of the work that we do at the college you will use this worksheet to support you thinking about how you approach your work. Provide a narrative of how you approached the following five sections related to your project/presentation. Write a short narrative about the questions that were asked about each section and the decisions that resulted from those questions.

Considerations for the Sections Below				
People Centered?	Professional Development Needs?	Policy?	Practices	Procedures

Assess:

Measure:

Engage and Plan:

Implement:

Examine the Data: