session: 8

re-framing & re-thinking leadership in a state system of higher education

noe ortega
former secretary of education
pa department of education
reflection.

what is working and not working for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the utah system of higher education?
(pause) before we proceed, let’s do some norm-setting.
the following are a few agreements and assumptions that will help guide today’s session.

distinguish between “i” and “we” statements.

assume good intent.

exercise forgiveness.

be present.
some goals for today’s session (“i” will...)

- share a few strategies and perspectives that will help you continue to employ the Utah Equity Lens Framework.
- suggest some next steps to help you move your audiences from awareness to understanding then commitment to action.
- introduce a change approach of “small wins” and “little bets” for making progress toward larger equity goals of the system.
dialogic model for change
awareness
action
commitment
understanding
awareness

understanding
awareness

action

commitment

understanding

so, what does this look like in practice?
Utah System of Higher Education Equity Lens Framework

An equity lens framework is a tool comprised of shared beliefs, common definitions, and critical questions through which an organization commits to continually evaluating any existing or new strategy, policy, or initiative. The beliefs and definitions ensure the organization begins from a common understanding and sets the groundwork for clear accountability, allowing all efforts to be focused on closing opportunity gaps for marginalized populations. Underlying this framework is how data is collected and synthesized to impact policy and systemic change.

USHE Equity Lens Framework

To guide the Utah Board of Higher Education in their implementation of strategies and initiatives, policymaking, and more, the Board must ask itself the following questions that make up the Equity Lens. These questions will guide state education leaders through the decision-making process to ultimately take action in essential areas.
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awareness

understanding

"the rider"

awareness
action
commitment

understanding

= “the elephant”

so, what does this look like in practice?
WHEREAS, the Board acknowledges its position and responsibility to continue facilitating dialogue and coordinated actions between state leaders, education leaders, researchers, and industry experts to eliminate educational equity gaps and to ensure all Utahns can access and complete higher education;

THEREFORE, the Utah Board of Higher Education resolves to advance equitable systemic change through the following priorities:

1. Establish a diversity, equity, and inclusion workgroup to catalyze collaboration and coordination among the Board and System leadership. The workgroup members shall include the Board executive committee, the Commissioner and his staff, institutional representatives, and community organizations. The workgroup will meet quarterly, starting in September, to update its members on each standing committee’s progress toward statewide goals and to align ongoing efforts to advance equitable systemic change. Additionally, the workgroup will be responsible for creating opportunities to hear from underrepresented students and communities to guide its work.

2. Create an equity lens framework for higher education leaders, in collaboration with institutional Chief Diversity Officers, community leaders, and System leadership, to better understand, identify, and address systemic equity issues as they establish priorities, set goals, revise System policies, and govern the Utah System of Higher Education. A draft of this document will be shared at the October Board meeting.

3. Ensure statewide attainment and performance goals include measures designed to close statewide inequities and are part of the System strategic plan. By the November 20 Board meeting, each standing committee will develop a set of aligned priorities, specific to their assigned areas of responsibility, that are equity-driven, measurable, and focused on creating meaningful progress toward removing statewide inequities.

Dated this 21st day of August 2020.

Harris I. Simmons, Chair
Utah Board of Higher Education

Dave R. Woolstenhulme
Commissioner of Higher Education

WHEREAS, the Board is responsible to advocate for Dreamers, undocumented, and DACA-eligible individuals and support their efforts to access higher education in the State of Utah, thereby broadening and enriching the higher education experience of all;

THEREFORE, the Utah Board of Higher Education resolves to advance changes within the Utah System of Higher Education by asserting the following:

1. We welcome Dreamers, undocumented, and DACA-eligible individuals at all colleges and universities in Utah.
2. We embrace and celebrate the diverse cultures, backgrounds, and insights Dreamers, undocumented, and DACA-eligible individuals contribute, which elevate the experiences of all students, faculty, staff, and community. We must harness equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts across the System so that Dreamers, undocumented, and DACA-eligible students can persist and flourish.
3. We will collaborate with our colleges and universities and K-12 partners to expand dedicated resources and streamline processes, including but not limited to admissions and enrollment, that support Dreamers, undocumented, and DACA-eligible individuals.

Dated this 26th day of March 2021.

Harris I. Simmons, Chair
Utah Board of Higher Education

Dave R. Woolstenhulme
Commissioner of Higher Education
awareness
action
commitment
understanding

= "the elephant"

awareness
action
commitment
understanding
awareness
action
commitment
understanding
awareness
action
commitment
understanding
(pause) let’s do a quick check for understanding.
reflection.

which of these two characterizations most closely reflects your own approach? does it differ between work and home life?
so, how do we get unstuck and move toward commitment and action?
how can we impel the riders (minds) and the elephants (hearts) to move the work on diversity, equity, and inclusion toward action?

- direct and set a clear goal(s).
- motivate, trigger, or inspire a need for change.
- shape the path and create the conditions for success.

what does this look like in practice?
and how does it differ from what we are already doing?
The following perspective is informed by “i”, a former secretary of education from a state that is not Utah.
Utah Board of Higher Education member Shawn Newell, who is Black, said Utah’s public colleges and universities need to do more to ensure students of color and other underrepresented communities feel safe and welcome so they can achieve academic goals they currently perceive are not possible.

“They’ve never been welcomed into those spaces. So if we, as leaders, start to develop a system that creates those safe spaces, we’ll start to see that influence,” he said.

It starts with developing an understanding of each community’s barriers and working to eliminate them.

“That’s where the hard work comes in,” Newell said.
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awareness
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strategy: “small wins” and “little bets”

direct the riders.

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inspire a need for change.

strategy: “small wins” and “little bets”

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strategy: “small wins” and “little bets”

- direct the riders.
- shape the path forward
- inspire a need for change.
- action
- awareness
- commitment
- understanding

*focus on the bright spots.

(pause) let’s check for understanding, or clarity of information.
so, what does this mean for system level change?
what can "I" or "we" do?
awareness
action
commitment
understanding
system (the role of the board).

“the board is granted the power to control, manage, and supervise ushe. these responsibilities include selecting and evaluating institutional presidents, setting policy, reviewing programs and degrees, approving institutional missions, and submitting a unified higher education budget request to the governor and state legislature.”

source: ushe.edu, retrieved on may 20, 2022.
system (the role of the board).

(simply put) you create the conditions for change.
system (the role of the board).

(hence) you influence who is included and who is not.
system (the role of the board).
identity of the institution(s)
diverse composition of the students
institution
diversity efforts
diversity efforts
(pause) so, what is the student perspective of this work?
utah system of higher education
(pause) before you go, what might you suggest we do?
strategy: “small wins” and “little bets”

inspire a need for change.

shape the path forward

direct the riders.

*focus on the bright spots.

(pause) ask yourself the question, what are some of the areas where our inclusion and identity work is a success?
might “we” consider shifting our framework from inclusion to belonging?
thank you.
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