The New Undergraduate Experience:

A Vision for Dismantling Barriers, Recognizing Students' Cultural Wealth, and Achieving Racial Equity in Public Higher Education in Massachusetts

January 14, 2022

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Executive Summary

History shows that, like most US public higher education systems, the Massachusetts system was built to privilege White men at the top of a hierarchy that replicated the social and political order, including the systemic racism and other exclusionary practices of the rest of the culture. Though society has changed dramatically, the higher education system has changed much more slowly; Black and Latinx students, for instance, obtain college degrees at rates substantially lower than those of the general population, even when controlling for socio-economic status (see the Introduction section for more details).[i] The moral case for educating all students is self-evident and urgent, and powerful economic and democratic arguments exist for intervening in the way the system recruits, serves, and advocates for its racially minoritized students.[1] Data show that Massachusetts' Black and Latinx students are more likely to be in the lowest income groups with the lowest expected family contribution (EFC) of those applying for financial aid.[ii] If the Commonwealth does not focus on transforming itself to successfully educate its Black and Latinx students, local economies will suffer and it will risk larger numbers of excluded citizens. This is especially true as the Commonwealth's population grows more and more diverse. For these reasons, this report is deliberately focused on racial equity in the context of Massachusetts public higher education.

Current racial and social justice movements, in addition to the disproportionate impact of health and economic disparities seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, provided inspiration for this report and shaped the *New Undergraduate Experience (NUE)* authors'[2] recommendations.[iii] Additionally, the work of the *NUE* report was supported by a Lumina Foundation grant that focused specifically on increasing Black and Latinx students' higher education attainment. We are aware of the other groups that have also been marginalized and face barriers to accessing and completing higher education. These groups include Indigenous students, Asian students, international students, students from low-income families, LGBTQIA+ students, first-generation students, adult learners, and others. We also understand that many students have intersectional identities and are members of more than one of these minoritized groups. We believe that if the system transforms to successfully educate Black and Latinx students, it will also serve these other students and can point the way toward additional changes that will directly support all marginalized groups. Moreover, the NUE is a visioning document that is meant to lay the foundation for a 10-year statewide strategic plan focused on racial equity. All racially minoritized students will be included in the 10-year statewide strategic plan so that specific improvements can be highlighted for each group of students. The statewide strategic plan will also focus on the need for disaggregated data so that the system can better understand the needs of all students across all identities.

[1] Throughout this report, the term "racially minoritized students" is used to refer to Black and Latinx students who are the focus of this report. NUE authors chose this terminology based on the most recent language being used by the Massachusetts Department of Education. NUE authors believe this terminology to be the most representative at this time but understand that language and terminology evolve and, therefore, "racially minoritized students" may not resonate with all constituencies and may evolve over time.

[2] Throughout this report, "we" will be used to refer to NUE authors.

The *NUE* report is a declaration meant to clearly express Massachusetts education leaders' and students' collective vision for the cultural, curricular, pedagogical, and structural changes needed for a public higher education transformation. It also serves as a collective blueprint for policies and practices needed for all students to reach their goals at the Commonwealth's public higher education institutions. The *NUE* report provides recommendations that are meant to inspire the 10-year statewide strategic plan focused on racial equity. While the *NUE* provides ideas, the strategic plan will detail how to move these ideas and others to action to achieve racial equity in the Commonwealth's higher education system in the next decade.

A group of more than 60 diverse higher education practitioners and leaders from across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts informed the *NUE*'s content and recommendations. Additionally, the *NUE* authors held focus groups with students to ensure student voices and perspectives are central to the report's content and recommendations. Between January and May 2021, large *NUE* committees met monthly with smaller working groups meeting weekly or biweekly. The project culminated with a June 2021 retreat, during which feedback from the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Higher Education (BHE) was integrated into the final recommendations.

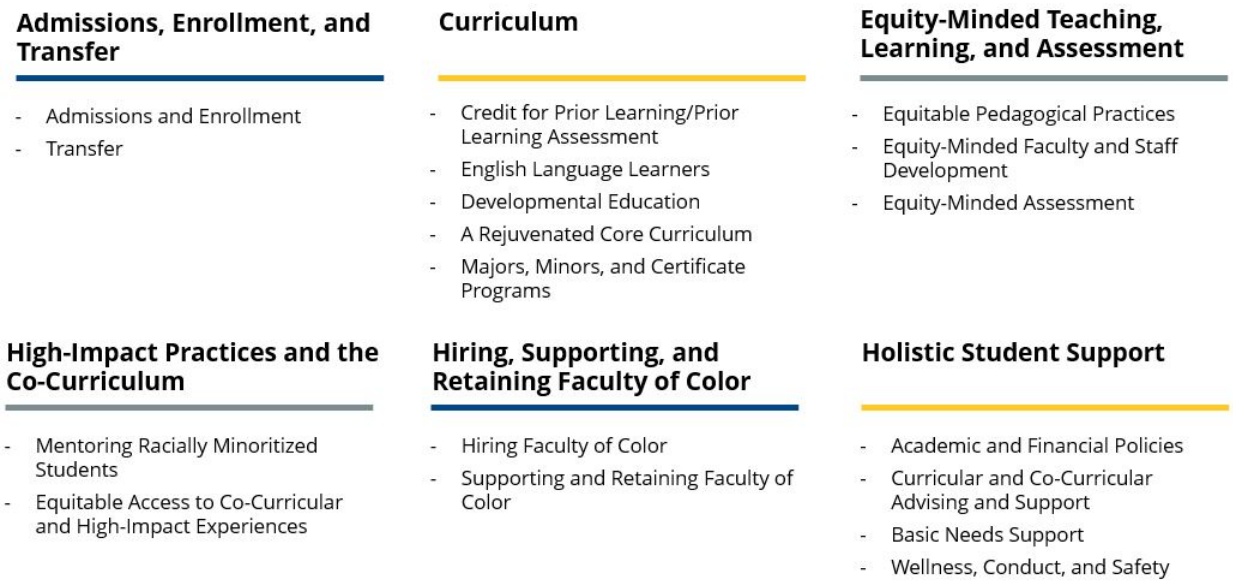
The report's recommendations are organized around a newly created Student Bill of Rights and cover seven broad categories:

	Category	Student Bill of Rights
1.	Admissions, Enrollment, and Transfer	Students have the right to clear, accessible, and understandable financial information, as well as affordable and predictable education costs
2.	The Curriculum	Inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies
3.	Equity-Minded Teaching, Learning, and Assessment	Inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies
4.	High-Impact Practices and the Co-Curriculum	Equitable access to experiential learning opportunities, in and out of the classroom
5.	Hiring, Supporting, and Retaining Faculty of Color	Diverse and supportive faculty and staff who are equity-minded higher education practitioners
6.	Holistic Student Support	Welcoming, inclusive, and safe campus environments and timely and relevant pathways to graduation and employment
7.	Student Voice	A voice in the decisions that impact their undergraduate experience

The report details opportunities for individual institutions, the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and the BHE to build upon efforts already undertaken by many public institutions to create a transformed, more equitable system. The BHE's recommendations for the FY22 budget affirm the system's commitment and signal interest to funding activities like those listed in the recommendations in this report to further racial equity.[iv] Funding streams such as investing in outcomes-based formula funding, as well as achieving additional funding recommended for the

Early College program, the Performance Management Set Aside, the expansion of the MassGrant Plus programs, and the newly funded SUCCESS program will provide necessary foundational support for the implementation of the recommendations in this report. However, because the *NUE's* recommendations are meant to provide a vision for racial equity—not a mandate—in the Commonwealth's higher education system, this report will not detail how the recommendations, if adopted, would be funded. Specific funding streams dedicated to this work will be a continued conversation between the DHE, BHE, and institutions.

The following graphic outlines the areas in which this report will make recommendations. We are aware that the implementation of this vision document will require significant resources beyond what are currently available. Further, as explained above, a detailed plan for implementation will be addressed by the 10-year strategic plan for racial equity.



(See Appendix B for a list of consolidated recommendations.)

Through the recommendations, *The New Undergraduate Experience: A Vision for Dismantling Barriers, Recognizing Students' Cultural Wealth, and Achieving Racial Equity in Public Higher Education in Massachusetts* aims to serve as a 21st century foundational document for public higher education in Massachusetts, and an integral document to ensuring racial equity and justice in the Commonwealth's public higher education institutions.

Introduction

History

In 1989, the Board of Regents of Higher Education[3] issued *The Undergraduate Experience (UE)*, a nearly 60-page document detailing recommendations to define the student experience at Massachusetts public institutions.[v]

The *UE* report was created in response to then Chancellor Franklyn Jenifer's charge in 1987 that "access to higher education…is meaningless unless the educational experience itself is one of high quality." The Chancellor[4] considered the "quality of our students' educational experiences" to be the "basic responsibility" of the Board and of the *UE* report. Broadly, the *UE* was concerned with standards, standardization, quality, and excellence. The attention to these themes was framed at the outset of the report as the logical next step, since the Commonwealth had devoted substantive effort to making public higher education more accessible and more affordable. The *UE* is long overdue for a comprehensive update that acknowledges and responds to today's vastly different times. The following report—*The New Undergraduate Experience*—does just that.

For Whom Was Higher Education Designed?

In today's public higher education system nationally and in Massachusetts, the first-time, full-time, B.A.-pursuing 18-year-old high school graduate is no longer—and perhaps never was—the norm, and yet many institutions are still designed for this student. Despite the last two decades of energetic diversity efforts at most colleges and universities, American higher education's fundamental structures, originally designed for young, economically privileged White men and further shaped by the industrial age, have remained largely unchanged.[vi]

Massachusetts students take many trajectories through higher education, possess multiple identities, and articulate multiple expectations for their college experiences. Massachusetts public higher education institutions educate adults, parents, workers, part-time students, transfer students, career-changers, certificate students, and students who return to higher education after interruption. Massachusetts students are first-generation, low-income, LGBTQIA+, English language learners (ELL), and racially, religiously, and neurologically diverse. These intersectional identities of race, class, gender, gender identity, ability, sexuality, nationality, place of origin, and religion profoundly shape how students engage with higher education and should be thought of as assets that they bring with them to enrich institutions.

Although this vision document was developed by the DHE, the policy structure of the education secretariat in Massachusetts operates across three education agencies to ensure a continuum

[3] The Board of Regents of Higher Education is the name of the predecessor agency of the Board of Higher Education.

[4] The Chancellor position is now known as the Commissioner of Higher Education.

that begins at birth and runs into PK-12 and through post-secondary, higher education credentials and competencies. The focus of education has to begin at birth. Overwhelming research indicates consistently that gaps are constructed long before children enter public school, and they become larger as children move through systems. Higher education is the end of the continuum. Greater coordination and collaboration across all education agencies (i.e., Department of Early Education & Care (DEEC), Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE), and DHE [and including Department of Public Health/Early Intervention]) and more holistic, primary prevention policies and strategies are needed. While some institutions work in very close partnerships with community school districts and the third sector (i.e., EEC), this is not consistently applied in influential ways that positively affect outcomes for racially minoritized students. This dissonance can be made more realized and further amplified from the differentiated replication of the successful approaches and strategies, resulting in current, real-time success for students. The outcome of this work must be the distinct characteristic and signature of success in Massachusetts.

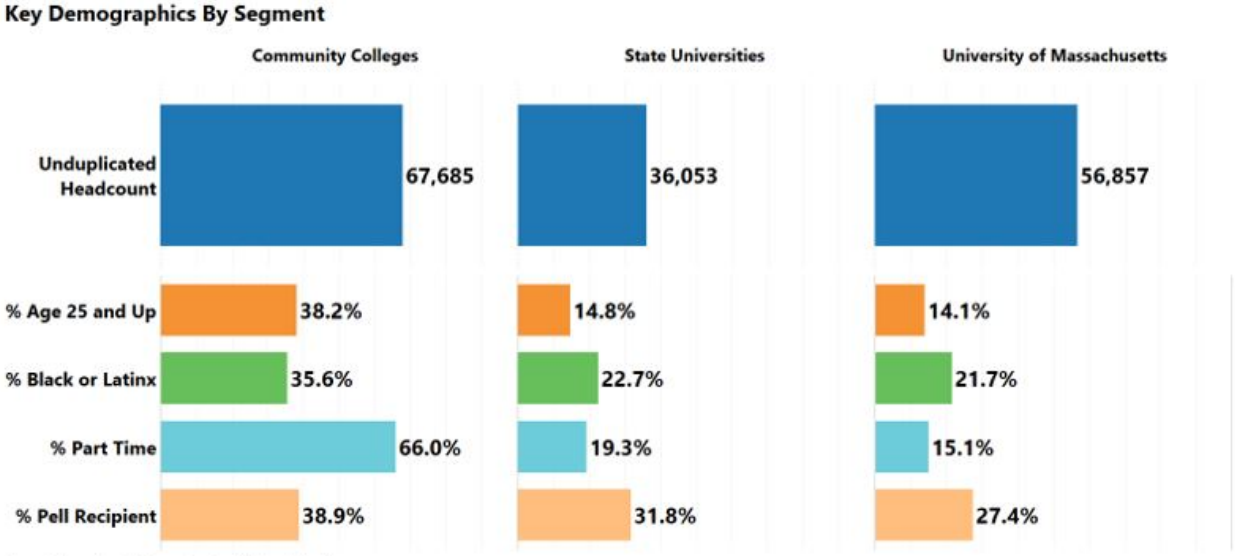
Additionally, Massachusetts students are managing many competing priorities and demands, and their expectations for their college education are similarly complex. They are aware of the need for higher education, but skeptical about its value. They are digital learners, but prefer in-person interaction. They are both idealistic—passionate about equity, diversity and inclusion, social and climate justice—and pragmatic—focused on affordability and career readiness, with a consumer-informed approach to their education. Students are flexible, lifelong learners and are interested in re-tooling, micro-credentialing, and unbundled or competency-based education.[vii][5]

The present moment contributes urgent socio-historical context and opportunity. We began our work together on the *NUE* in the midst of racial reckoning the summer after the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and many other unarmed Black people, and we were prepared to answer the call for racial justice through strengthening the Commonwealth's higher education system's policies, programs, and strategies. At the same time, the world was immersed in the COVID-19 pandemic that exposed the human cost of racial inequities and injustice, rising income inequality, environmental injustice, democratic institutions under siege, the digital divide, and neglected state infrastructures.[viii] And in Massachusetts, the pandemic contributed to a more than six percent drop in enrollment among the Commonwealth's Black and Latinx students, threatening to further entrench stark inequities.[ix]

Massachusetts is often touted as the education state due, in part, to its many higher education institutions and their significant academic reputations and longevity. Yet, data show that the citizens who benefit from the Commonwealth's educational opportunities are determined largely by one's zip code and race. It is also important to note that institutional segments educate vastly different student populations. As the below data show, community colleges serve a larger population of racially minoritized students compared to the state

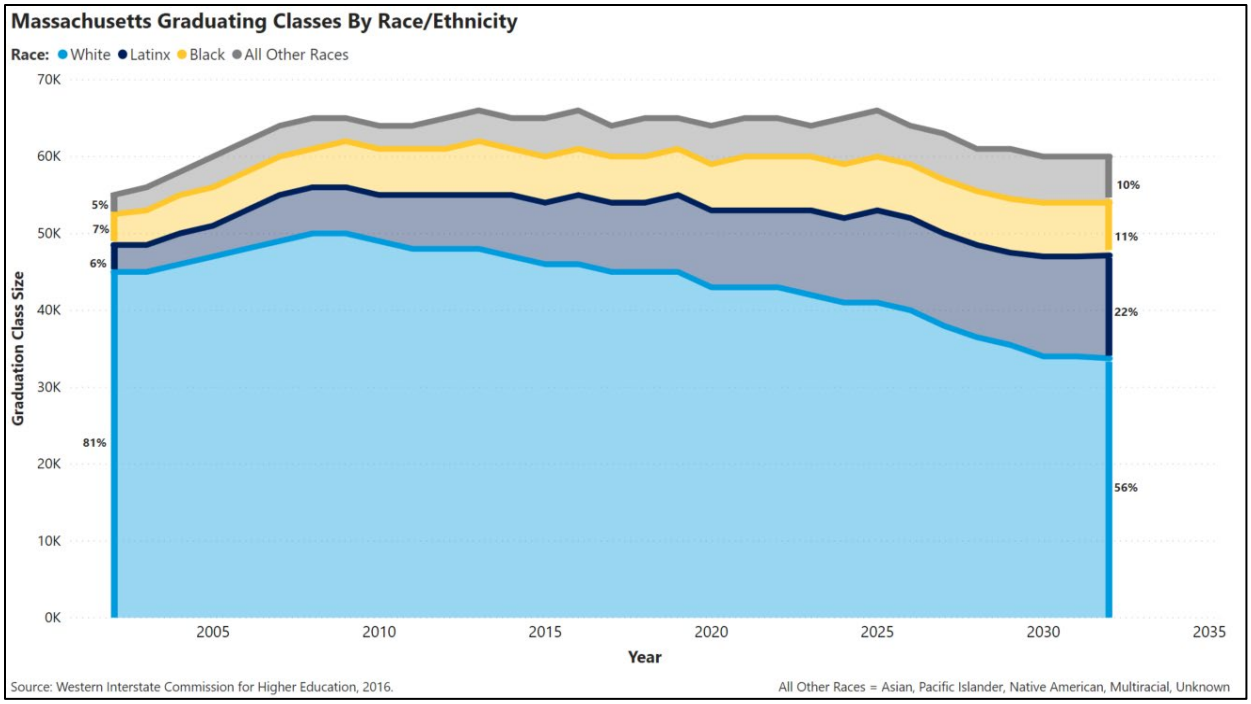
[5] NUE report authors acknowledge that there is no characteristic type of student.

universities and the UMass system. Additionally, the typical community college student is nontraditional in age, background, and experience.

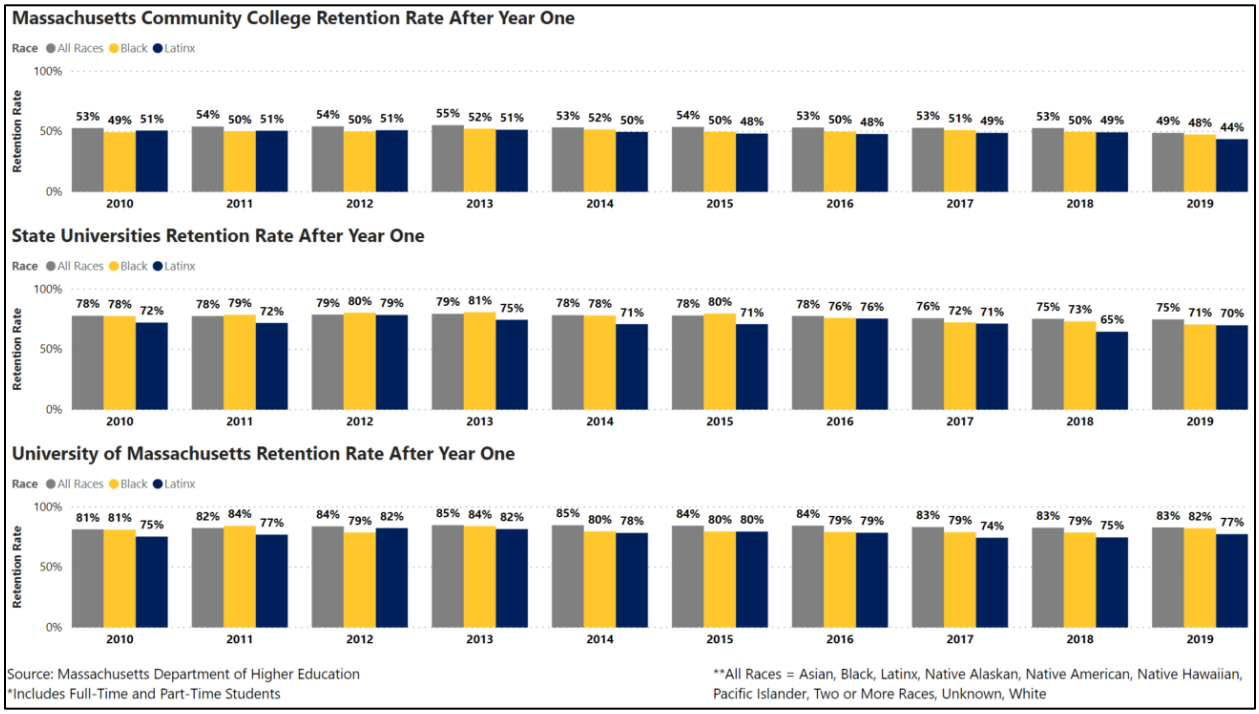


A 2019 report found that Massachusetts led the country in high school graduation, college enrollment, and overall degree attainment, yet the attainment levels of White students were drastically higher given their historical advantage.[x] The gaps persisted in every success metric tracked in public higher education—showing that, while overall completion rates may be improving, the equity gap is widening.[xi]

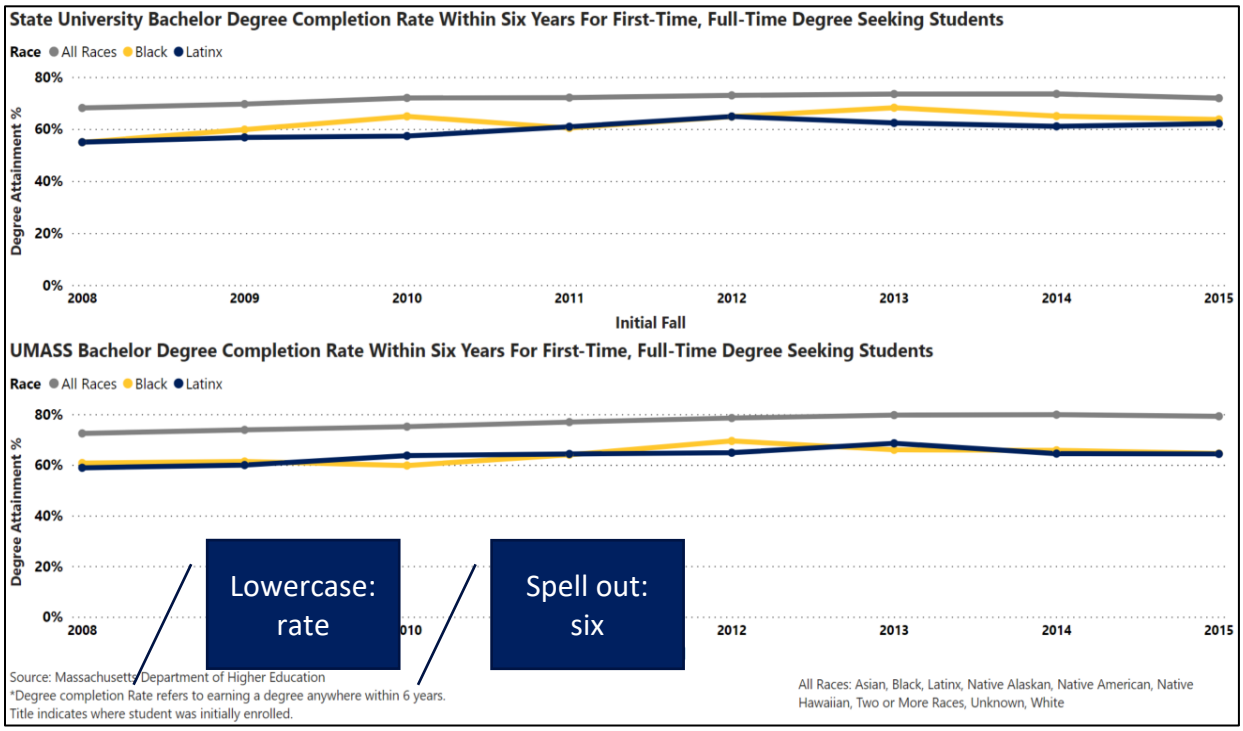
These trends are particularly troubling when considering the Commonwealth's overall population trends. As the data in the chart below show, while the percentage of White students in Massachusetts high school graduating classes will decline from 82 percent to 56 percent by 2032, notable growth will be evident among racially minoritized students.[xii] In particular, Black and Latinx populations—the focus of this report—will begin to claim a greater share of high school graduating students in Massachusetts. By 2032, the Latinx high school graduating population will represent nearly one-quarter of the potential college-going population, increasing from a base of six percent currently.



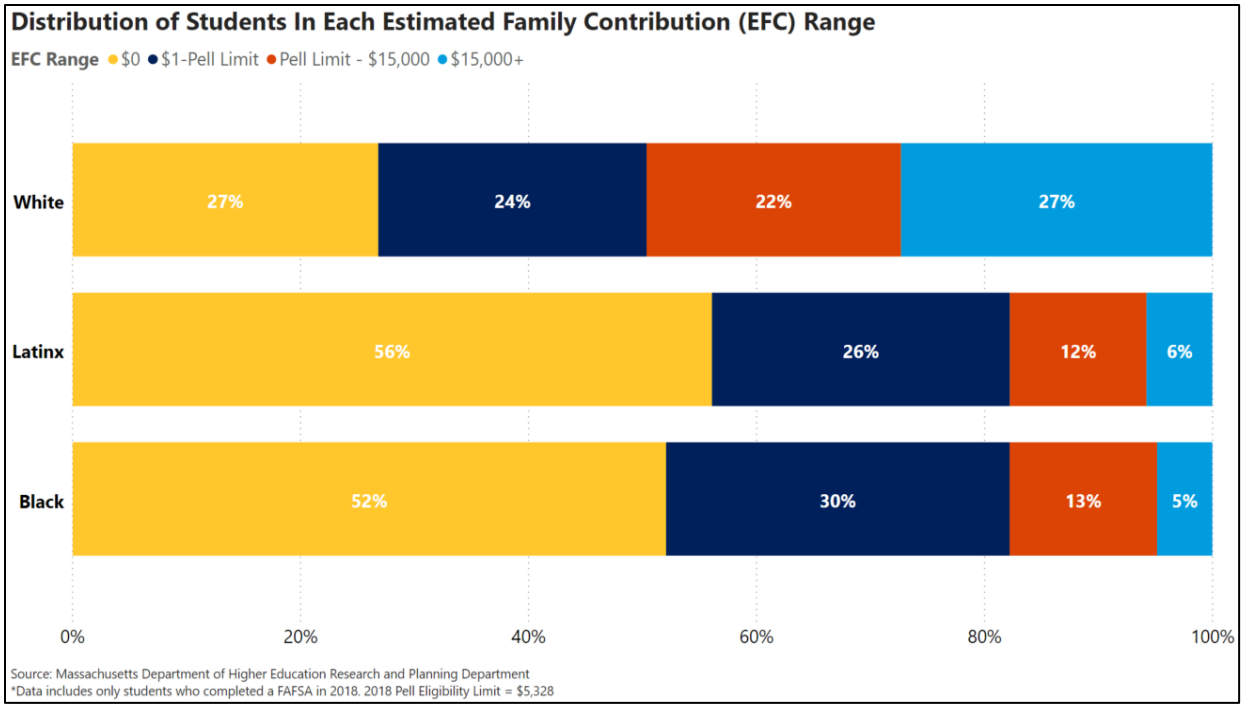
The institutional equity gap begins early. As the below data show, community colleges and UMass and state universities retain Black and Latinx students after completing their first year of study at lower rates than the overall student population.



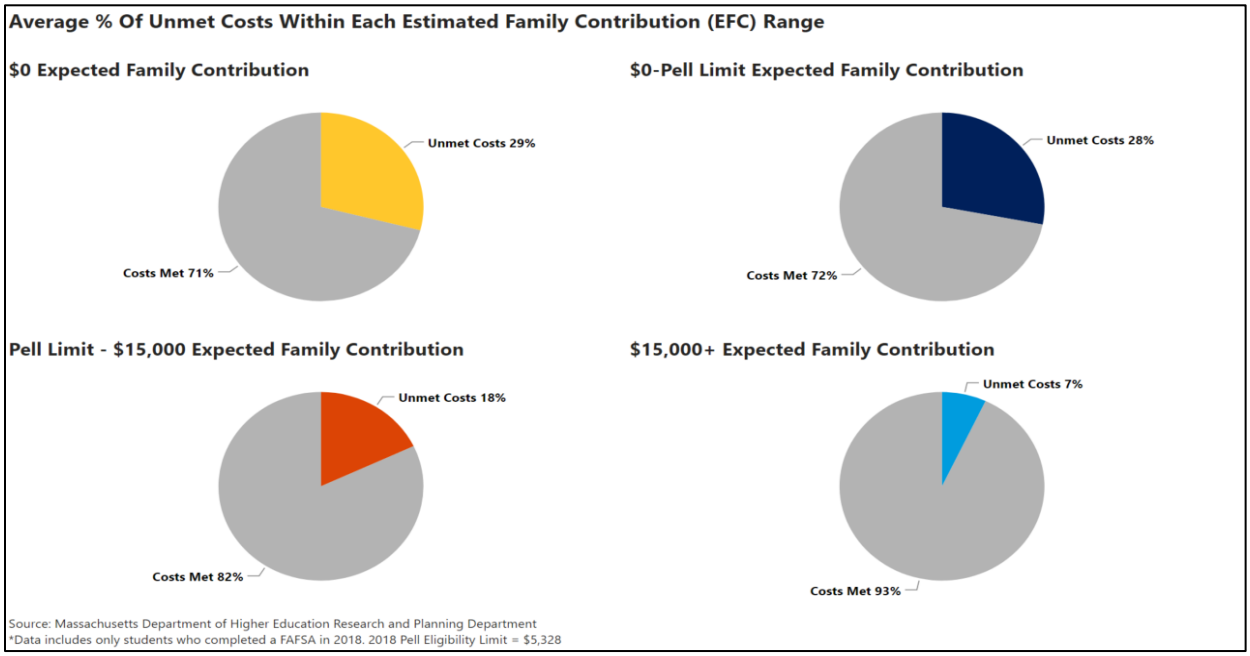
These trends are further exacerbated when compared to whom Massachusetts institutions of public higher education award degrees. The below data show that the system graduates the overall student population who begin their undergraduate journey at UMass and state universities at higher rates than Black and Latinx students.



At the same time, due to racialized poverty, Massachusetts Black and Latinx students are more likely to be in the lowest income group with the lowest EFC (as calculated by FAFSA), requiring the state to reconsider its financial aid investment.

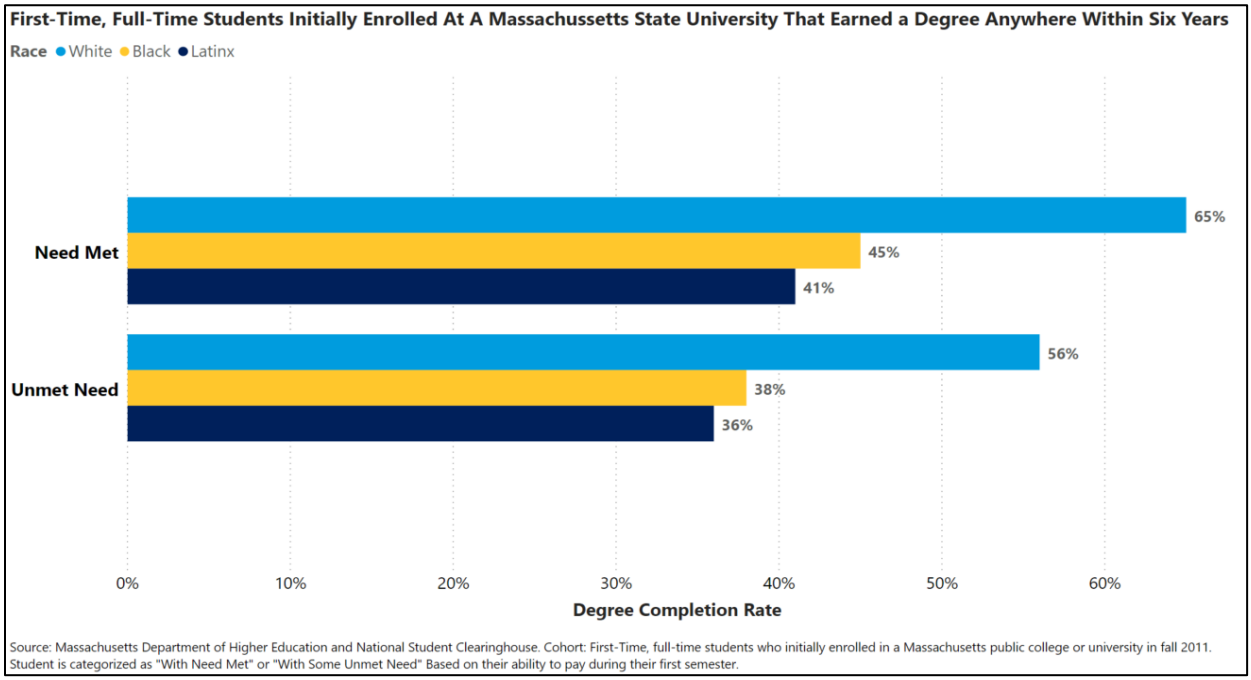


Additionally, for those students without any EFC or only $1-Pell Limit, they have the greatest share of unmet annual financial aid costs, further highlighting institutions need to make greater investment in financial aid.



Moreover, local data show that racially minoritized students are more likely to be first-generation, low-income, adult and/or part-time students, student-parents, experience food or housing insecurity, and have unmet mental health needs.[xiii] Indeed, inequitable outcomes are

not attributable to socio-economic status alone. Controlled for socio-economic status, Black and Latinx students still have inequitable access to and outcomes in Massachusetts public higher education.



We argue that the cause of these discrepancies is historic and systemic racism that has long shaped the higher education system and limited access to education, generational wealth, and social mobility to a select few. Moreover, creating a more equitable higher education system will not only improve the system for racially minoritized students, but will improve offerings and outcomes for all the Commonwealth's students, including all racially minoritized groups and White students and with consideration for intersectional identities.

While the moral impetus to confront these inequities and create systemic solutions to address them is clear, the economic motivation is compelling, too. If gaps closed between Black and Latinx students and their White peers starting in high school (persistence and graduation) through college (enrollment, retention, and completion), the number of Black graduates between 2025 and 2038 would increase by more than 30,000 and the number of Latinx students with degrees would increase by more than 75,000. Even if the gaps were halved, that would still supply the Commonwealth with the requisite number of degree-holders needed to meet workforce demands.[xiv]

A New Vision

Looking at the 1989 *UE* from the vantage point of 2021, it is clear that the seemingly race-neutral policies the *UE* advocated had exclusionary principles that created inequitable access to higher education and inequitable outcomes for racially minoritized students. The report's

stance on developmental education that mandated a basic skills assessment for entry into college, for example, has since shown to have demonstrably inequitable impacts as indicated by the Massachusetts DHE's revised Common Assessment Policy, which initiated reform at many institutions in Massachusetts in accordance with evidence from within and outside of the state.[xv]

The above is one example of the shift from the 1989 *UE*'s emphasis on "excellence" to the 2021 *NUE's* foundation of what the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) calls *inclusive* excellence, which calls for uncovering inequities in student success, identifying effective educational practices, and building such practices organically for sustained institutional change.[xvi] Other experts have taken it a step further to replace the term *inclusive excellence* with *expansive excellence*, arguing that the term inclusive presupposes a group with power and ownership over what defines excellence, thus reproducing existing privilege and hierarchy. Expansive excellence, by contrast, breaks down the notion of hierarchy and ownership of excellence to embrace the diversity of ways that excellence can be defined.[xvii] *The New Undergraduate Experience: A Vision for Dismantling Barriers, Recognizing Students' Cultural Wealth, and Achieving Racial Equity in Public Higher Education in Massachusetts* was created in this spirit.

Commissioner Carlos E. Santiago urged that the *NUE* be unmistakably grounded in racial equity and justice, and explicit and deliberate in dismantling barriers and creating access pathways for racially minoritized students. This means that the ways through which student cultural wealth is valued and racial equity and justice are realized must be quantified in the currency of academic credit and a formalized exchange rate for competencies and skills learned outside of the classroom. Pedagogies and structures for delivering content must be culturally proficient, readily accessible, and intentionally student-centered. Thus, the *NUE* boldly strives to provide fully equitable opportunities and to compensate for the impact of racism and other forms of discrimination and unequal treatment in public higher education prior to this moment in history. Reforming the system for racially minoritized students in these ways will not only create a more equitable system, but it will improve the system for all students including all racially minoritized groups and White students and with consideration for intersectional identities.

Importantly, the *NUE* will also inform the development of the 10-year statewide strategic plan for racial equity by delineating the implementation time horizon (i.e., short, mid, or long term) and indicating the recommendations best addressed at the institutional and/or system-wide level. The recommendations in this report are meant to inspire the content of the strategic plan. The purpose of the *NUE* report is not to detail how the recommendations will be implemented or the metrics for which the BHE, DHE, and/or institutions will be held accountable. The strategic plan will provide specific details about implementation and accountability for the recommendations from the *NUE* that are included in the plan.

While the values and principles guiding the *NUE* have evolved since 1989 from "excellence" to *expansive excellence*, and from establishing academic "standards," to *dismantling barriers and creating access pathways for racially minoritized students*, the collective sense of where practitioners in higher education should focus their energies in order to produce transformative change in the student experience has remained notably consistent. The core curriculum, assessment, faculty development, and student academic support are "burning platforms" in 2021, as they were in 1989.

The authors of the 1989 *UE* took care to say that the report was not comprehensive, and that the report's focus on "academic matters" meant that other dimensions of the undergraduate experience, such as, back then, transfer of credit, admissions, disabilities services, student services broadly, the teaching of English as a Second Language, and adult basic education, would be examined by subsequent advisory groups and reports. In 2021, however, the *NUE* emerges out of a broad consensus among equity-minded higher education practitioners that admissions and transfer policies and practices, the co-curriculum, and holistic student supports, must be examined alongside classroom experiences as actively shaping historically underrepresented students' access to and success in college and beyond. Commissioner Santiago explicitly charged the *NUE* committees with considering, discussing, and formulating recommendations that will guide public institutions in:

- Creating or updating policies and practices designed to serve all students who attend them; and
- Sustaining a culturally engaging environment that recognizes the assets students bring to higher education.

(For the Commissioner's full charge to the NUE, see Appendix C.)

NUE's Structure and Process

The DHE's Equity Action Plan consists of three prongs, in which the *NUE* joined the internal, equity-based program and Policy Audit and expanded data-collection efforts to inform and launch the DHE's strategic planning process.[xviii] The *NUE* serves as the visioning document for the statewide strategic plan focused on racial equity. While the *NUE* provides ideas and recommendations, the statewide strategic plan will detail implementation and accountability metrics. Similar to the *UE's* process, a group of more than 60 diverse higher education practitioners; students; and community, civic, and business leaders from across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts informed the *NUE*'s content and recommendations. *NUE* used an inclusive process for engaging stakeholders broadly, including students. The *NUE* group was split into three committees: the Steering Committee; Teaching and Learning Committee; and Student Ready Colleges and Universities Committee. Membership was made up of the following:

- Two college/university presidents
- One UMass chancellor
- Two BHE members

- Nine students
- 38 faculty and staff members
- Community and state government partners from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, King Boston, the Urban League of Springfield, LEAP (Learn Explore Aspire Pursue) for Education, The Partnership, Inc., Coaching for Change, and uAspire Massachusetts
- Area employers including Berkshire Innovation Center, General Dynamics Missile Systems, and MassHire North Shore Workforce Board
- Representatives from the Boston NAACP and the American Association of Colleges and Universities

(See Appendix D for a full list of NUE members.)

To ensure that student perspectives were accurately captured, the *NUE* group also organized six student focus groups with both *NUE* student members as well as student members of the BHE's Student Advisory Council. Thirty-two students participated representing six community colleges and five universities. The participating students represented the diversity of undergraduates in the Massachusetts public higher education system ranging in age, race, and past experiences. Most participants were racially minoritized students including students who identify as Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander and multiracial. Approximately five students in the focus groups identified as White.

Between January and May 2021, large *NUE* committees met monthly with smaller working groups meeting weekly or biweekly. The project culminated with a June Retreat in which feedback from the Academic Affairs Committee of the BHE was integrated into the final recommendations.

The authors of *UE* concluded that "despite its issuance of a 'final' report, the study of the undergraduate experience is a task that should never be thought of as concluded, since enhancing the quality of that experience requires continuous examination, discussion, refinement, and change." The creators of the 1989 document were thus presciently mindful to provide the occasion for future revisionary projects such as the *NUE*.

NUE's Guiding Principles and Values

The *NUE* emerges from the awareness that the current system of public higher education is not serving the Commonwealth's racially minoritized communities, as articulated most urgently in the DHE's Racial Equity Principles noted below. The "problem" lies with higher education—not its students.

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Racial Equity Principles[xix]

Racial equity:

- Will be achieved **when race no longer determines one's outcomes** in the Massachusetts public higher education system
- Is the **top policy and performance priority** for the DHE
- Must be **embedded** system-wide and permeate the Department's structure, culture, and policies
- Requires the use of **asset-based language** to minimize the threat of harm, deficit, and stereotype reinforcement
  ("Asset-based language" defines people by their aspirations and contributions, rather than the systemic barriers and challenges they face.)
- Requires **acknowledgement, remedy, and repair** of policies and practices that have excluded or created barriers

We must:

- Recognize that **clarity** in language, goals, and measures is vital to racially equitable practices
- Promote **culturally sustainable campus climates** in which all students can thrive and are regarded in the totality of their human dignity
  (*"Culturally sustainable" means recognizing, maintaining, and developing cultural identity and diversity, as they are assets, not weaknesses [Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris 2012].)*
- Create and cultivate an **inclusive environment** to encourage the support and participation of relevant stakeholders
- Acknowledge the **experience and knowledge** of people of color, and seek to engage people of color in the pursuit of racial equity in meaningful ways
- Incentivize the development and support the implementation of **equity-minded, evidence-based solutions**

The DHE's Equity Action Plan and the *NUE* promote that the mission of public higher education, as an engine of socio-economic mobility and critically engaged civic participation must be realized through a commitment to advancing racial equity and justice in higher education. Central to the project of advancing racial equity and justice is a relentless belief in the strengths, assets, and cultural wealth of all our students, as well as a recognition that our academic structures, policies and practices have functioned as barriers to student success. Therefore, the *NUE*'s recommendations focus on building the capacity of administrators, staff, and faculty to recognize the assets students bring with them, to facilitate their learning and success, and to redesign our institutions, systems, and structures rather than remediating students. The *NUE* aspires to be bold, visionary, and transformative.

Like the authors of the 1989 *Undergraduate Experience*, we strive to create a living document that sustains ongoing feedback and transformation, reflecting the dynamic and flexible institutions that must be created to ensure success for racially minoritized students. The report's recommendations are data-informed and grounded in qualitative and quantitative evidence. At the same time, the recommendations will push institutions to redefine measures of success, moving beyond completion, retention, and graduation rates to measure student engagement, belonging, post-graduate success, and individual and community impact; and above all to move into expansive excellence that increases racially minoritized students' success—and thereby the success of all students including all racially minoritized groups and

White students and with consideration for intersectional identities. We also recognize that elements of this vision document will require working with faculty and their respective labor unions to achieve the goals that we all seek, and we recognize we can only achieve these goals by working collaboratively with faculty and staff.

I. Student Bill of Rights

The idea for a Student Bill of Rights emerged from a series of focus group discussions conducted with student members of the *NUE* committees and with student representatives on the BHE's Student Advisory Council. Four distinct themes emerged from these discussions. Students expressed the desire for the following:

- **Additional Support at Important Moments of Transition**

Student focus groups revealed several significant moments of transition where all students need extra support, including applications for college, summer bridge programs, orientation, first weeks/semester transition, transfer, scholarships, financial aid, choosing or changing a major, and withdrawing from classes. But adult, immigrant, and first-generation students reported being particularly in need during these critical junctures. Additionally, students who had the support of programs such as Gear Up,[xx] TRIO,[xxi] or a multicultural center named that wraparound support as crucial to their success.

- **Their Identities to be Reflected and Valued in the Curriculum and on the Campus**

Racially minoritized students wanted diverse campuses where other students and faculty looked like them and who they felt they could trust to "have their backs." They talked about the difficulty of engaging with a curriculum where their histories, cultures, and identities were not represented, and with White faculty who did not seem to see or value them. They stressed the barriers and biases they encountered in the classroom.

- **Representation in Student Government and to Have a Voice in Decisions that Affect Them**

A key quote that emerged from focus groups was "don't talk about us, without us," a common theme heard from activists' groups throughout history and a stance that has deep connection to the DHE's civic learning and community engagement work. Students expressed the need for student governments and other decision-making entities to fully represent racially minoritized students, and they talked about their desire to work in partnership with administration to improve institutions. Too often, they said, they were not consulted at all in policymaking that affected them, or they were used to "rubber-stamp" decisions that had already been made.

- **Transparency and Accountability from Institutions Implementing the Equity Agenda**

Students talked about the need for bias-reporting mechanisms, Ombud offices,[6] and other resources for seeking out advocacy and mediation. They asked for racially just policing and transparent investigations. They wanted institutions to be accountable for implementing the Equity Agenda and transparency in how they were going to enact that accountability.

NUE student members, the BHE's Student Advisory Council, and the *NUE* Steering Committee used the above themes from the student focus groups to craft the Student Bill of Rights.

The Massachusetts Public Higher Education Student Bill of Rights

Students have the right to:

1. Clear, accessible, and understandable financial information, as well as affordable and predictable education costs
2. Inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies
3. Equitable access to experiential learning opportunities, in and out of the classroom
4. Diverse and supportive faculty and staff who are equity-minded higher education practitioners
5. Welcoming, inclusive, and safe campus environments
6. Timely and relevant pathways to graduation and employment
7. A voice in the decisions that affect their undergraduate experience

We envision these seven rights as promises—not a guarantee—that the Massachusetts public higher education institutions make to all students. However, to fulfill promises to all students, the system must center efforts on racially minoritized students—the students who are not being served well. Through doing so, the bar of achievement and excellence will be raised for all. Additionally, the above Student Bill of Rights serves as the frame for the NUE's recommendations for achieving racial equity and justice detailed throughout this report.

II. Cross-Cutting Recommendations

The *NUE's* recommendations are grounded and aligned to the Student Bill of Rights, and many of the recommendations are specific and meant to drive results. At the same time, they are rooted in the below Cross-Cutting Recommendations that help to shape the broader commitments and actions needed by the Commonwealth's public higher education system and individual institutions to create a system focused on racial equity and justice.

[6] The term "ombud" often refers to the professional staff in the Office of the Ombuds who provide problem-solving resources at institutions of higher education.

Make racial equity and justice the guiding paradigm of Massachusetts' curricular and co-curricular undergraduate experience

Higher education in the United States is characterized by universalism and whiteness in ways that many White higher education practitioners find difficult to see and define.[xxii] As experts note, instead of being aberrations into contemporary society, whiteness and white privilege are woven into the fabric of higher education and US society.[xxiii] Naming racial equity and justice as the guiding paradigm for policies, practices, and culture development in all of Massachusetts' public institutions of higher education ensures that higher education leaders continually work to make visible what has been invisible. Moreover, research shows that equity-minded practices clearly support the success of students from an array of lived identities and help to close educational equity gaps.[xxiv]

Prioritize the access, success, retention, persistence, and graduation of the Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized students attending Massachusetts' public higher education institutions

Educational equity remains higher education's unmet promise.[xxv] Nowhere is this truer than for Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized students.[xxvi] For these reasons, priority must be placed on ensuring the success of racially minoritized students attending public institutions in Massachusetts. Colleges and universities need to align admissions and retention strategies to ensure that an infrastructure of support and care exists to help those who are admitted to succeed.

Ensure that data is both disaggregated and intersectional at both the campus and system level

Educational equity interventions need to be informed by disaggregated, equity-minded quantitative and qualitative data and rooted in the cultural wealth and assets of the students served. On the system level, the Massachusetts DHE's Performance Measurement Reporting System has dramatically enhanced the equity-oriented data available to campuses. The Commonwealth's DHE should also begin to look at the data from an intersectional lens to help ensure that all of the Commonwealth's institutions have the information needed to engage in equity-minded inquiry and action. Data collected must be made actionable. Next steps should include ensuring that campuses have the culture and competencies to understand the data and use it to create equity-minded interventions. This area should be a focus in ongoing professional development, which is described below.

Offer ongoing racial educational equity professional development for all public higher education trustees, leaders, and employees to ensure they have the competencies needed to translate the values of the Equity Agenda into action

The American Public Health Association has named racism as a public health crisis[xxvii] and as such, racial equity and justice competency development should fall under institutions'

prioritized training provisions for employees. Topics to be addressed in this professional development should include culturally responsive pedagogies and advising, racially equitable and just student service provision, decentering whiteness and centering racial equity, obtaining and making actionable equity-oriented data, and infusing the cultural wealth of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and other people of color into our institutional ethos. To make this charge actionable, requiring this training should be prioritized in future contract negotiations.

Institutionalize equity-based policy and program audits at every level of the system

Essential to educational equity work is teaching campuses how to conduct equity audits. Equity audits are used to identify institutional practices that produce discriminatory trends and to address systemic barriers that inhibit all students' full participation in and access to education. Additionally, campuses should engage in ongoing equity-minded action planning and implementation tied to the Equity Agenda and each campus' strategic equity priorities and goals. At the beginning of spring 2021 and in advancement of the Equity Agenda, the DHE launched a three-year policy and program audit, in which staff recommend policy changes necessary to ensure racial equity across public postsecondary education in Massachusetts, and, more specifically, to better serve racially minoritized students attending institutions of public higher education in the Commonwealth. More than 20 DHE staff are engaged in the Policy and Program Audit. Policies and programs that were audited in 2021 include, but are not limited to, admissions, developmental education, dual enrollment and Early College, and financial aid. The work of this policy and program audit will also serve to inform the broader generative work of the DHE, allowing staff to experience a reorientation toward racial equity in concrete ways as related to the various aspects of the work of the agency. Fundamentally, given the stark racial disparities within public postsecondary education in Massachusetts, those policies within the purview of the BHE—those that already exist, and those that will be developed and implemented—must be evaluated by the DHE to ensure that they are anti-racist and grounded in racial equity.

Create accountability structures to ensure that progress toward racial equity and justice is being made at every level of the institution

Every institution's strategic plan should include racial equity and justice goals. These should be supported with clear, publicly available goals intended to close educational equity gaps and enhance campus climates while attracting and retaining students and employees of color. Role-specific racial equity job responsibilities should be integrated into existing and new job descriptions, in partnership with collective bargaining units, and supported by ongoing professional development.

Partner with students, cultural and community-based organizations, and industry leaders

Creating a plan to transform the public higher education system to focus on racial equity and justice will require involving all the Commonwealth's key stakeholders. First and foremost,

students should be represented in all decisions that will affect their education. Additionally, the perspectives of cultural and community-based organizations should be included, as well as industry professionals who can speak to the Commonwealth's evolving job-readiness needs and priorities. These partnerships should be forged with the goal of adopting programs and formal collaboration to push the work forward. The goal should be building a mutual relationship with these constituencies so that both are educating and supporting the other as they meet a common goal.

Attention to these cross-cutting recommendations will provide a framework for all higher education leaders, policymakers, and key stakeholders as they create the systems necessary to implement the recommendations found in the rest of the *NUE* report.

III. Admissions, Enrollment, and Transfer

Student Bill of Rights
#1 Students have the right to clear, accessible, and understandable financial information, as well as affordable and predictable education costs.

The recommendations in the Admissions, Enrollment, and Transfer section focus on eliminating barriers in application and enrollment processes in addition to creating clear and seamless transfer pathways. Steps taken to prioritize these goals will provide a more equitable structure and support system, which will ensure that more racially minoritized students have access to Massachusetts public higher education institutions. The result will be a more diverse student population that more closely reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth's population.

Admissions and Enrollment

Data show that Massachusetts universities do not enroll racially minoritized students at rates that reflect the racial composition of the Commonwealth. According to the *Education Trust's State Broken Mirrors* report, the Black population of Massachusetts is approximately nine percent and the Latinx population is approximately 15 percent.[xxviii] But, the Massachusetts public institutions' student enrollment demographics do not match the diversity of the Commonwealth's overall population. At the Commonwealth's flagship campus, University of Massachusetts Amherst, for example, fall 2020 enrollment was just under six percent Black and eight percent Latinx. Massachusetts earned a B+ grade for Black enrollment representation across all public universities and a D- in Latinx representation.

There are many possible reasons the students enrolled in the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education do not match the diversity of the Commonwealth's population. These reasons include, but are not limited to, a confusing and demoralizing college application process as noted by *NUE*'s student focus group discussions, a lack of college counseling in the Commonwealth's high schools, deficient recruitment of students of color, and adult college applicants lacking the support needed to complete the application process at many institutions. Institutional relationships with K-12 districts and community-based organizations that are grounded in anti-racist values can help remedy some of the confusion and stress disproportionately experienced by racially minoritized students.

Institutions of higher education should also examine the information they ask applicants to provide so that racially minoritized students do not feel threatened throughout the application process. Applications that request information about citizenship, siblings, who students live with, permanent home address, armed forces status, countries lived in, religion, parents' marital status, highest degree intended to earn, and standardized test scores can be barriers to application and contributing factors that lead to racial inequities in enrollment.

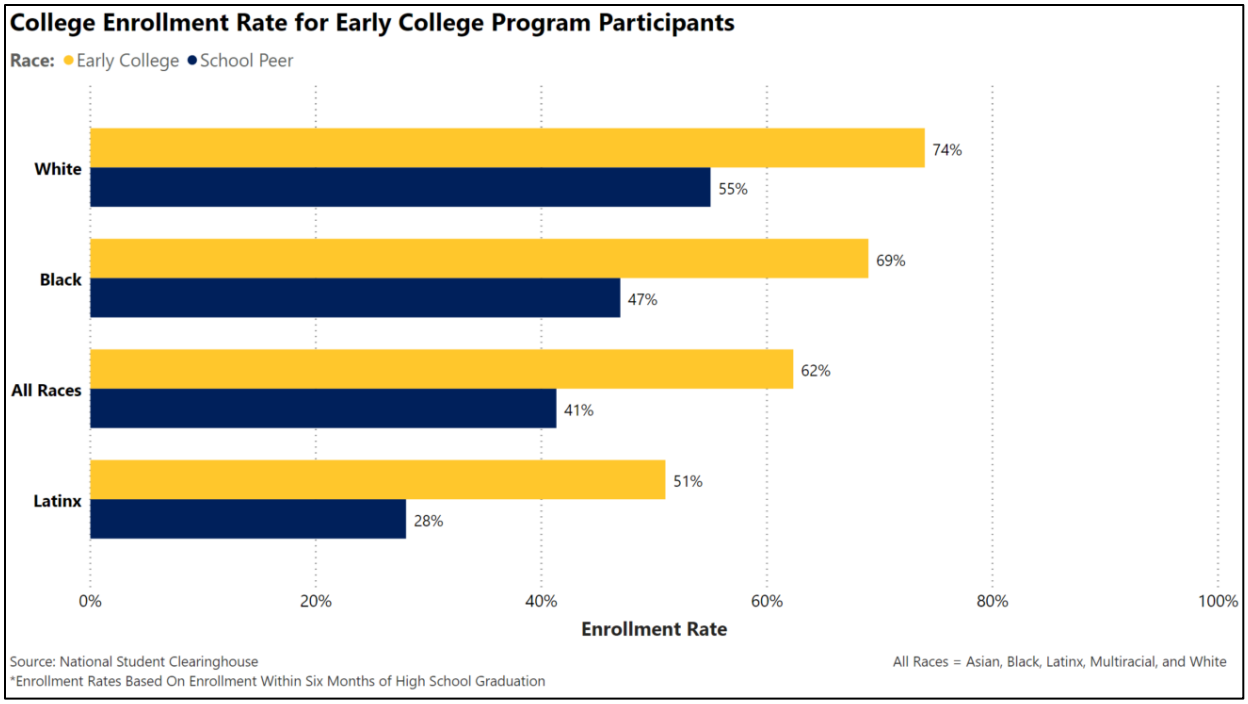
Additionally, Massachusetts should examine the use of the SAT. The state initiated its SAT optional pilot program in 2016 and is collecting data to analyze its impact on student enrollment and success.[xxix] If Massachusetts adopts a shift in policy, it would be following the lead of the state of Colorado (see sidebar), the University of California system, the California State University system, and the University of Oregon, all of which no longer require standardized test scores in an effort to improve equitable access and enrollment for students.

Another area the state should focus on amplifying and providing more opportunity for participation is the highly successful Massachusetts Early College program. As the data below show, since launching in 2018, the program has accelerated college enrollment for students who participate as compared to their peers. What's more is that two-thirds of students enrolled in Early College programs identify as Black or Latinx.[xxx]

Colorado SAT/ACT and Legacy Admissions Policies

Massachusetts could look to the state of Colorado as an example for radical admissions policy changes. As of 2021, the state's public colleges and universities are no longer required to consider SAT or ACT scores for first-time freshman during the admissions process. Additionally, a separate policy change made in 2020 banned public higher education officials from looking at legacy preference or familial relationships to alumni of the institution in the admissions process. Both policies are meant to create a level playing field in the admission process at state institutions.

Sources:
Alex Burness, "Colorado lifts SAT and ACT requirement at public colleges, becomes first state to ban legacy admissions," *The Denver Post,* May 25, 2021;
Patty Nieberg, "Colorado ends "legacy admissions" for public colleges and universities, SAT/ACT requirement," *The Colorado Sun*, May 26, 2021.

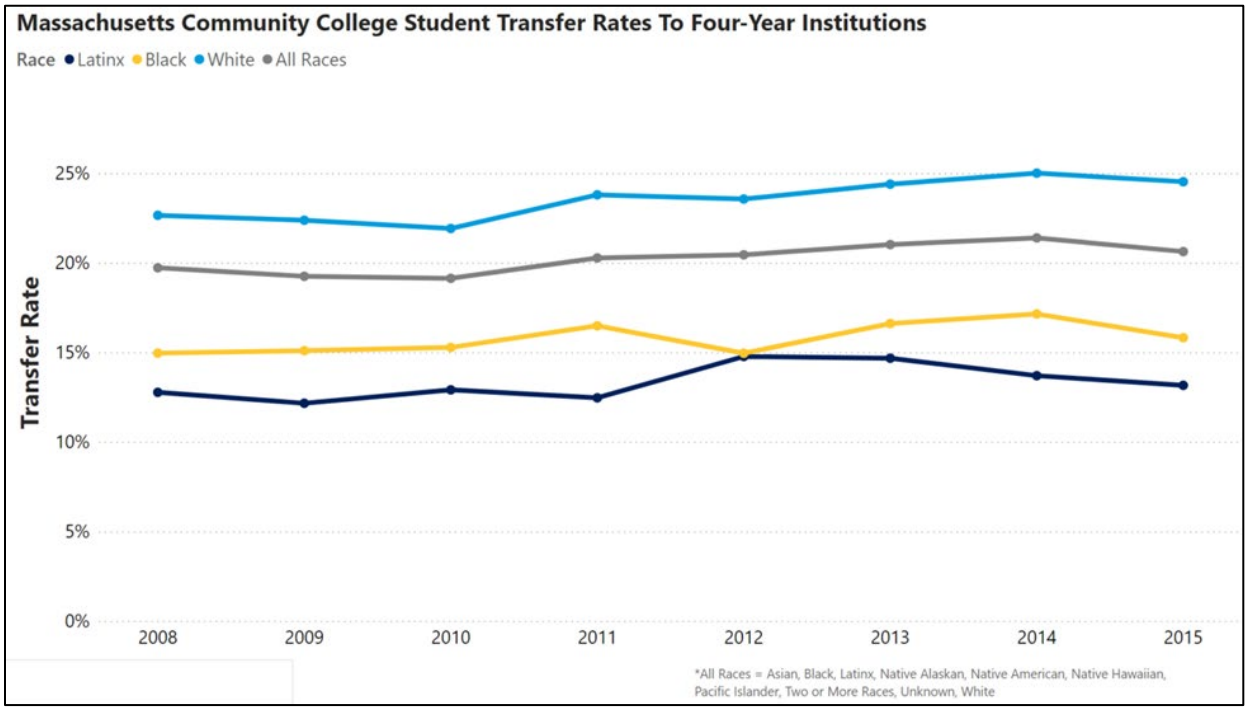


Admissions and Enrollment Recommendations:

- Examine admissions practices through a racial equity and justice lens to ensure that all students feel supported in the application and enrollment processes.
- Develop and implement recruitment, admissions, and enrollment policies and practices that increase the enrollment of racially minoritized students.
- Establish practices that support students in understanding and accessing financial aid.
- Develop admissions policies that automatically welcome and accept all high school seniors who live within a regional catchment area to attend their institution, without students needing to go through any application process because racially minoritized students are often undermatched and are not always encouraged to apply to universities. This approach must be piloted, and data-gathering to support it must be scaled up.
- Partner with community-based organizations that provide counseling and services to college applicants of all ages.
- Work with high schools across the Commonwealth to establish quality Early College programming through its public institutions and increase enrollment in designated Early College programs.
- Establish Early College funding models that are flexible and inclusive including art and design pathways.
- Create programs to ensure that every Early College student in the Commonwealth is automatically accepted to their local community college or state university without needing to submit SAT scores or complete enrollment paperwork.

Transfer

The Massachusetts public higher education system has developed several policies and structures, dubbed "MassTransfer," designed to ease transfer from community colleges, which enroll the highest percentage of Black and Latinx students, to universities. These policies and structures include Associate's to Bachelor's degree (A2B) maps in more 40 disciplines, the General Education Foundation, Reverse Transfer, and other A2B Pathways.[xxxi] However, state data show that students are not transferring at equitable rates. As the data below reveal, there is an opportunity to improve transfer rates for all students, but particularly for racially minoritized students.



Additionally, the *NUE*'s student focus groups revealed the many ways in which barriers, complexity, and confusion still exist, disproportionately affecting racially minoritized students at community colleges. Institutional barriers include too many electives taken at the community colleges, credits that are not accepted in the major by universities (even if they are detailed in MassTransfer or A2B pathways), and inadequate resources for equitable transfer advising. These barriers at best extend students' time to completion and burden them with the cost of paying for unnecessary credits. At worst, these barriers cause students to leave before earning a degree. Many institutions have developed local agreements designed to deepen the partnership between community colleges and universities, such as Massasoit Community College and Bridgewater State University (see sidebar).[xxxii] The success of these efforts inform our recommendation to scale up dual admissions programs.

Transfer Recommendations:

- Develop a statewide dual admissions program between community colleges and universities to reduce the uncertainty and barriers of transfer that disproportionately affect racially minoritized students
- Require institutions to use the MassTransfer course-equivalency database to facilitate the smooth transfer of courses
- Develop a system that will automatically contact qualifying transfer students to complete the Reverse Transfer/FERPA release form when eligible for an associate's degree

MCC2BSU

The partnership between Bridgewater State University (BSU) and Massasoit Community College—MCC2BSU—admits students to both institutions simultaneously. This model provides an affordable, streamlined, near-automatic pathway between the institutions to make the transition easier for students. In addition to guaranteed admission to Bridgewater, Massasoit students who meet guidelines will attend Bridgewater at frozen tuition and fees throughout their remaining two years of study. Massasoit students can also take advantage of several other benefits, including collaborative and intensive academic advising with a BSU advisor on the Massasoit campus and participation in a summer residential program for qualifying students.

Source:
Massasoit Community College, "Massasoit and Bridgewater State University Announce MCC2BSU to Streamline Transfer Process," press release, accessed January 4, 2022.

IV. The Curriculum

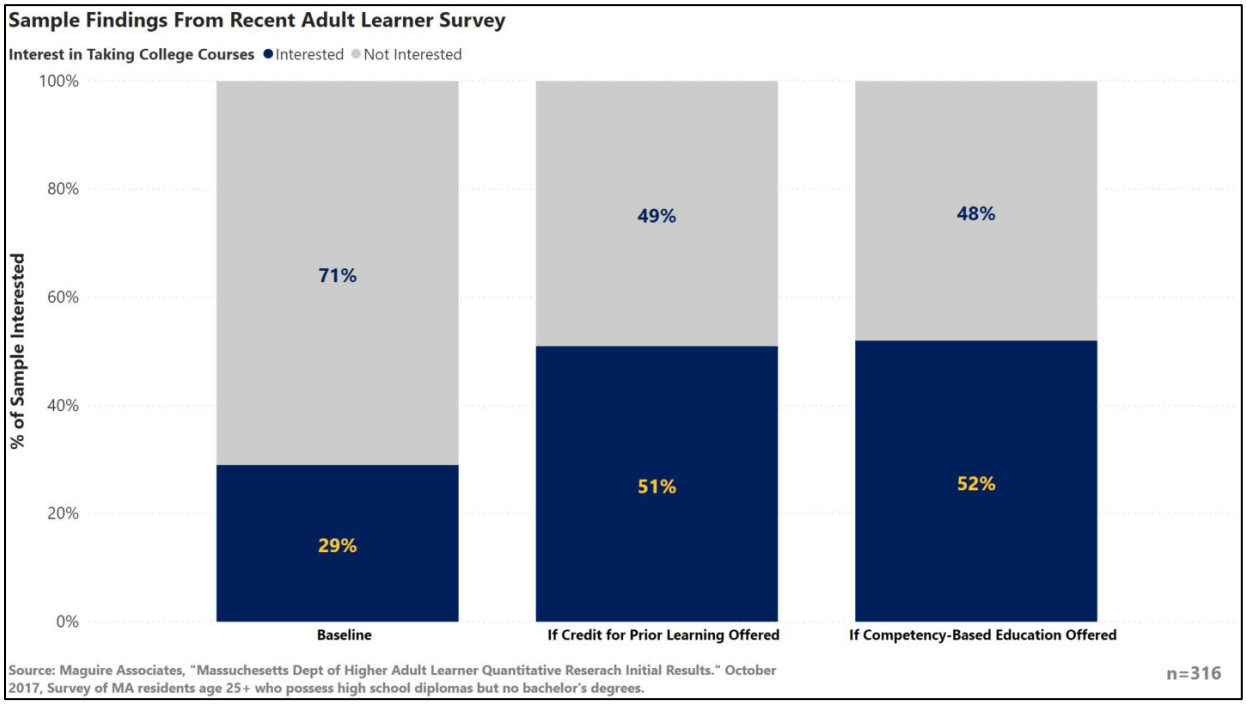
Student Bill of Rights

#2 Students have the right to inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies.

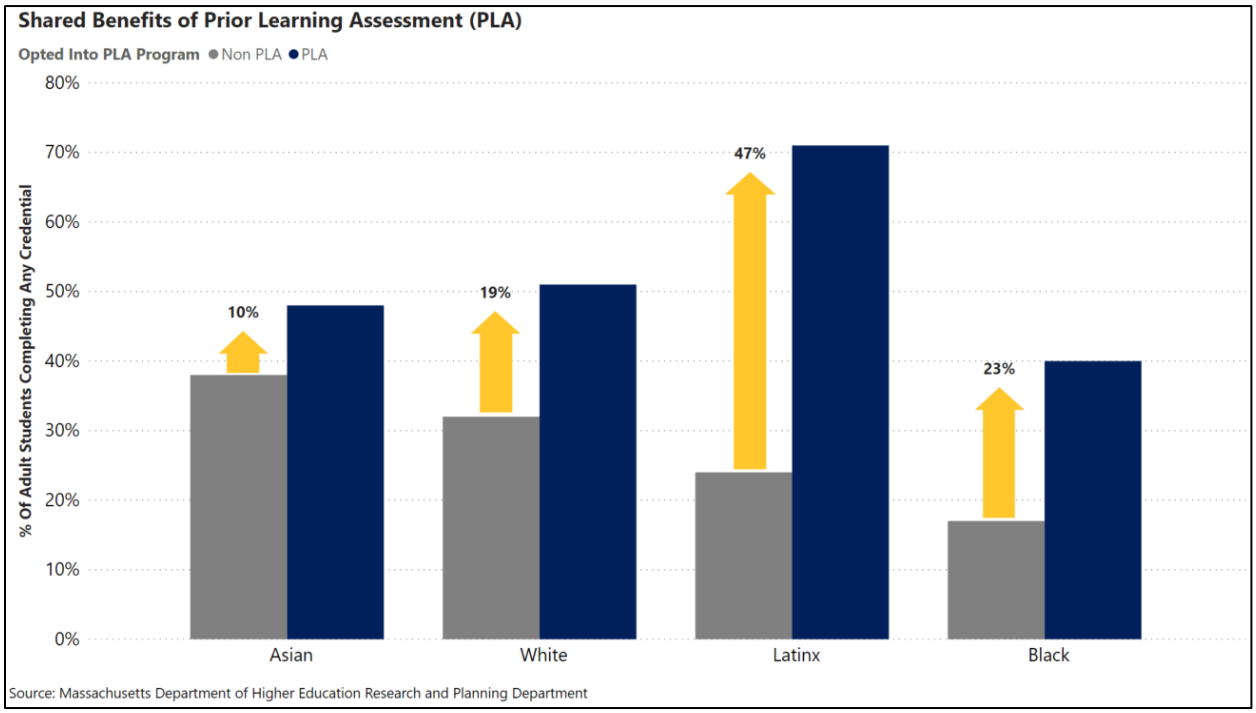
The recommendations in this section are targeted at the first semesters of the undergraduate experience, ensuring an asset-based and equity-minded approach. Recommendations are provided in the following areas of the curriculum: Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)/Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), ELL, and Developmental Education. This section also addresses General Education—which the *NUE* refers to as Core Curriculum—as a fundamental and central element of the undergraduate experience and a primary site for racial justice education.

Credit for Prior Learning/Prior Learning Assessment

According to a 2017 DHE survey of Massachusetts adults 25 and older who have high school diplomas but no bachelor's degrees, the percentage of those interested in attending college increases if CPL is offered:



These data make it clear that CPL positively affects the recruitment of nontraditional students and helps with the retention and graduation of racially minoritized students, as well. According to the data collected by the community college PLA consortium, implementing opportunities to award credit for work or industry credentials that students bring with them has improved college-attainment rates for all students, and especially racially minoritized students.[xxxiii]



While Massachusetts community colleges are working hard to coordinate and systemize CPL, universities are not coordinated or aligned. University Without Walls (UWW) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst is an example of a program that recognizes and awards up to 30 credits for prior learning.[xxxiv] Many community colleges and universities do not have partnerships around recognizing the transferability of CPL, which causes complications for community college transfer students who are awarded CPL credit that is not recognized at universities.

Credit for Prior Learning/Prior Learning Assessment Recommendations:

- Strengthen the PLA consortium by including universities
- Create a transfer policy and partnership among all universities to recognize CPL awarded by community colleges
- Ensure equity-minded oversight of CPL, including the creation of equity-minded assessments and reviews of practices to ensure that racially minoritized are benefitting from CPL

English Language Learners

In fall 2019, 5.5 percent of Massachusetts community college students were enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Of the approximately 5,000 ELL who graduated from Massachusetts high schools in 2018, just slightly under one-half went on to enroll in college. This does not consider an adult ELL population that can be recruited through credit for prior learning opportunities and curricular redesign. In 2020, faculty from the North Shore

Community College ESL program convened an informal collective of all ESL programs at the community colleges to share resources, research, best practices, and align curricula. They joined the Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (MATSOL) group of mostly K-12 educators, which currently constitutes a "special interest" subgroup. The MATSOL group worked on the "Seal of Biliteracy," an official recognition of high school graduates as dual language speakers, with the goal of having the Seal of Biliteracy recognized at colleges for credit, similar to Advanced Placement scores.[xxxv]

Research on ESL best practices nationally is lacking. California is at the leading edge of ESL design, moving ESL away from a deficit mindset to a strengths-based approach. This work includes renaming "English as a Second Language" programs to "English Language Learning" programs, affirming the value of multilingualism, and recognizing the value of ELL students as highly skilled. Other emergent practices include integrated and accelerated courses, awarding credit for ELL courses, offering core and gateway courses in multiple languages, and dual language degree and certificate pathways.

There is, therefore, a great deal of opportunity for colleges to come together to create a shared ELL design, and for the state system to facilitate the process. However, the effort will be challenging. Below are considerations for creating a shared ELL design.

- **Ensure the Right Placement:** Each institution uses different instruments to assess students' levels and cutoff scores. Additionally, standardized tests are an insufficient way of measuring student capacity. What might multiple measures or self-placement look like for ELL?
- **Validate Expertise:** Many ELL students are trained professionals, just in another language. A credit evaluation of their previous degree would help reduce the number of hurdles they encounter.
- **Recruitment and Enrollment:** ELL are a growing population of Massachusetts residents who may not consider college an option. Therefore, careful attention must be paid to thoughtful recruitment and partnership with communities and agencies.
- **Alignment and Standardization of all ELL Programs Across the Commonwealth:** There is currently no shared evaluation process for students moving between institutions, and credit awarded for ELL courses also differs across institutions. This means that if the student transfers to a university, the destination institution may not recognize awarded credit. Additionally, program structures and curricular design vary from school to school.
- **Impact of Other Student Progress Policies on ELL Students:** Some schools are experimenting with offering dual language pathways, certificates, or offering dual language General Education classes, but the credit load is considerable.

English Language Learners Recommendations

- Formalize a DHE-supported, statewide working group to create integrated courses, share resources and best practices, standardize system and design, recommend non-

credit to credit pathways, and create a rubric for awarding credit to multilingual students
- Collect comprehensive and intersectional data on post-secondary ELL enrollment: age, full- or part-time status, demographics across the state, retention, completion, transfer, and employment
- Provide more ELL resources to community colleges through existing budget streams
- Adopt the Seal of Biliteracy to provide credit to multilingual students in order to receive credit, similar to Advanced Placement scores

Developmental Education

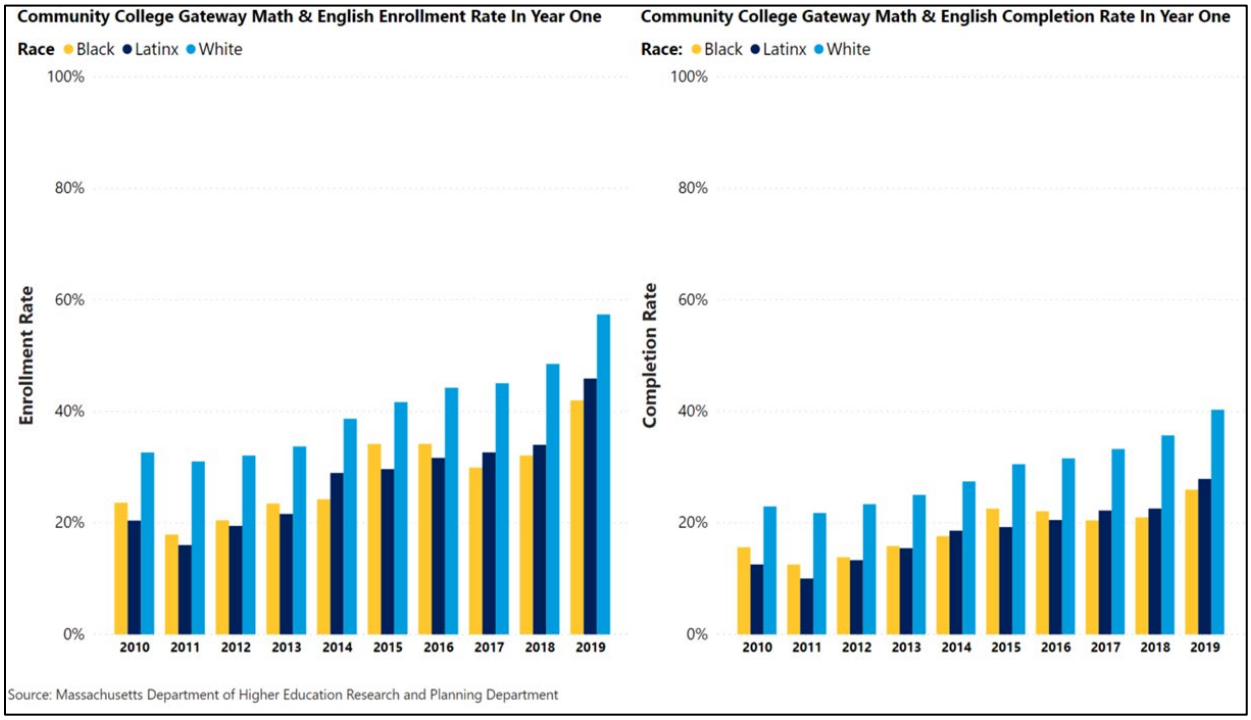
Data from the Community College Research Center show that nationally, Black and Latinx students are much more likely to be placed into developmental education and more likely to be affected by negative outcomes.[xxxvi] Developmental education's negative impacts include the direct cost of taking courses that do not contribute to a degree; the cost of spending additional time in the classroom and delayed access to credit-bearing courses; the potential of dropping out before completing the developmental sequence; and finally, the psychological stigma of the message that a student is "not ready" for college. Developmental education, in short, is a barrier to student success.

Institutions of higher education need to redefine what "college-ready" means and move from the deficit model that has shaped developmental education and create strength-based and assets-based approaches. Reforms that have been taking place nationally and in Massachusetts include co-requisite courses where developmental support is attached to a credit-bearing class, accelerated models where students can spend less time in developmental education, and course placement using multiple measures instead of relying on one standardized test. Massachusetts data clearly demonstrate both the inequities of developmental education as well as the effectiveness of the reforms that have been put into place. In fall 2018, for instance, institutions placed twice as many Black students in developmental mathematics compared to White students across all Massachusetts institutions. Twenty-five percent of Latinx students were placed into developmental mathematics.[xxxvii] Nationally, we know that only about 20 percent of developmental mathematics students pass a college-level gateway course.[xxxviii]

In 2019, the DHE implemented a system-wide updated assessment and placement policy. The revised Common Assessment Policy (CAP) requires[xxxix]:

- Revised placement standards, featuring multiple measures (in addition to Accuplacer, for refining placement); math pathways (taking the right math for one's major); and co-requisite support (maximize credit-bearing courses that can count toward a degree)
- Updated goals for completion of Developmental Education courses and gateway college courses
- Institutional submission of placement guidelines to DHE for review
- Re-assessment every three years to determine its effectiveness
- Revised metrics and regular disaggregation of data

Early data for the revised placement policy indicate that enrollment and completion rates for Black and Latinx students at community colleges placed into gateway, credit-bearing math and English courses are increasing, but White students are still better supported through completion at public institutions.



Recent revisions to developmental education in Massachusetts have included the creation of more integrated, co-requisite, and accelerated courses, following national trends in best practices. However, this is not universal across Massachusetts community colleges and universities that offer nearly the entirety of ELL and Developmental Education pathways. Models of best practice include Bunker Hill Community College (co-requisite courses), Massachusetts Bay Community College (free two-week summer bridge programs), Roxbury Community College (student stipends for developmental education courses), and Middlesex Community College (student self-placement).

However, in other states' institutions, standalone developmental education courses have been eliminated and graduation rates have increased. At Guttman Community College in New York, for example, there are no non-credit-bearing Developmental Education courses (see sidebar). Instead, all new students take an interdisciplinary "City Seminar" and if multiple measures indicate they need support in English or mathematics, they are enrolled in a co-requisite English course or a credit-bearing statistics course, both of which fulfill core requirements. Guttman is rated the best community college in New York and the student two-year graduation rate is more than 30 percent, compared to about 13 percent nationally.[xl]

While the revised CAP has Massachusetts on the right path—encouraging multiple measures, including self-assessment and self-placement; establishing diverse math pathways (thus more individualized learning); and developing co-requisite models—*NUE* calls for a more transformative and radical shift. Ultimately, non-credit-bearing standalone developmental education needs to be eliminated.

Developmental Education Recommendations

- Redirect financial resources to support students in Developmental Education, through existing budget streams such as Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) grants and institutional aid.
- Align college curricula with feeder high school content in partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure that students do not repeat and pay for courses unnecessarily.
- Revive the statewide Developmental Education Advisory Board and charge it with phasing out non-credit-bearing standalone developmental education courses system-wide and supporting community colleges and universities in developing credit-bearing courses designed to support students in their learning, including co-requisite, integrated, and accelerated options, in alignment with the New England Commission of Higher Education accreditation standards.

Guttman Community College's Credit-Bearing Developmental Education Process

Since spring 2020, Guttman students who do not meet benchmark scores are no longer administered a placement test; rather, CUNY uses a proficiency index to determine developmental education assignment. The proficiency index combines overall high school grade point average with SAT and/or Regents Exam scores. There are separate proficiency indexes for English and math. Proficiency index scores that fall below the benchmark scores indicate students need developmental support. Students who do not meet the index score for English are enrolled in a co-requisite English course; for math, students are enrolled in our two-semester credit-bearing statistics course.

Source:
Guttman Community College, "Office of Academic Testing: CUNY Proficiency Requirements," accessed August 12, 2021.

A Rejuvenated Core Curriculum

To start this section, we emphasize the need to reframe "General Education" as a "Core Curriculum" that is learning outcomes-driven rather than content-driven. Such an approach is both student-centered—which is itself a form of educational justice—and also interrupts the disciplinary boundaries, produced by Western forms of knowledge, that need to be questioned in efforts to decolonize curricula. Recommendations in this section address a vision for a rejuvenated core framework generally, as well as the need for racial justice education within that framework. Building knowledge and capacity in reparative justice work should be a focus for all students, staff, and faculty.

There is a great deal of diversity in how the general education curriculum is addressed at the institutional level. Some institutions center the disciplinary breadth of the required curriculum, others organize the requirement around learning outcomes. Very few institutions map their Core or General Education learning outcomes onto institution-wide learning outcomes. Some institutions have implemented "diversity" or "multicultural" requirements within General Education, which tend to use the language of recognition, appreciation, or celebration of human or global diversity. This approach is used instead of describing the histories of power, representation, racialization and minoritization, and the organization of knowledge that have produced the systemic inequities of our society and of higher education. Moreover, racial justice education is not integrated into most major courses of study.

Individual institutions must balance their own approaches and mission-based learning outcomes with the MassTransfer General Education Foundation. The general education core was originally created in 1974 for the purpose of facilitating course transfer from one public institution to another. In this sense, the MassTransfer General Education Foundation does well what it was originally intended to do. From the perspective of epistemic justice, the MassTransfer General Education Foundation neither prioritizes cultural competence as a learning outcome, nor does it promote a culturally responsive and diverse curriculum. Thus, racially minoritized students do not see their identities, histories, and communities reflected in the curriculum, nor is the awareness of racial justice, necessary for true civic engagement and transformation, evident in the current structure.

The MassTransfer General Education Foundation consists of five content areas (Behavioral and Social Sciences; Humanities and Fine Arts; Natural or Physical Science; English Composition/Writing; Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning) for a total of 34 credits, accepted for transfer across all public higher ed institutions.[xli] As a result, at the state level, General Education looks like a content-driven menu of courses, with little coherence or continuity. However, there is no doubt that the smooth transfer process benefits Massachusetts students.

To summarize the current challenges:

- The content-driven, menu-based approach of the MassTransfer General Education Foundation exists in tension with the best practices in learning-driven, learner-centered

foundational education practices as defined by the AAC&U.[xlii] This prevents institutions from being innovative and transformative with their Core Curricula, including creating interdisciplinary approaches or capstone experiences that integrate core Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) or competencies into the major course of study.

- Ideally, the AAC&U's ELOs would integrate the co-curriculum, but this does not seem to be happening in practice at the institutional level.
- Racial equity and justice education are absent from the Commonwealth's General Education framework and are mostly absent on the institutional level as well, notwithstanding diversity or multicultural requirements.
- Advanced Placement exam scores often qualify students to skip General Education requirements, further undermining cohesion or purpose of experience.
- The prevalence of non-culturally competent faculty and systems (graduate training programs, hiring, tenure, and promotion) that do not prioritize cultural competencies furthers the lack of race, power, and justice being integrated into course work. This is in contrast with K-12 levers: teacher preparation, credentialing, and curricular frameworks (with local flexibility).

"The Latinx Studies major at Holyoke Community College is the interdisciplinary program that examines the development of people of Latin American descent within the United States. As a Latinx Studies major, I am learning to understand the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality and how they affect the lives of Latinx people. Being part of a program that emphasizes critical civic engagement, I have been able to thrive as an activist scholar. […] Programs such as the Latinx Studies major have proven to empower underrepresented communities in higher academia, as well as provide students with a wide range of opportunities and tools in continuing our academic journey." —Holyoke Community College student

Many Massachusetts institutions feature racial justice courses, and some, such as Bridgewater State University and Holyoke Community College, have created signature programs around racial justice education.[xliii] Another model comes from the University of Pittsburgh, which launched a new racial justice requirement in the 2020–21 academic year. In the University of Pittsburgh's model, first-year students are required to take an interdisciplinary anti-racism general education class, which is one-credit, asynchronous and online, and designed and driven by faculty of color. While it will take time to assess the impact of such a new requirement, the University of Michigan's assessment of its 30-year-old race and ethnicity requirement is another model that can be considered.[xliv]

Rejuvenated Core Curriculum Recommendations

- Create and charge a broadly inclusive working group with the examination and re-design of the Core Curriculum while maintaining the benefits of the MassTransfer General Education Foundation
- Create a Core Curriculum framework that is outcomes-driven rather than content-driven while still allowing for individual institutional flexibility
- Integrate racial justice education principles into the Core Curriculum framework

- Integrate racial justice learning outcomes throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum, woven into each institution's mission and mapped onto disciplinary and institutional learning outcomes

Majors, Minors, and Certificate Programs

The 1989 *Undergraduate Experience* focused its recommendations on the baccalaureate major; it did not address minors, certificate programs, or other programs of study. It considered the major as standing within a discipline, uniting all students in a shared understanding of the discipline's content, character, and aims. It recommended that majors account for between 25 percent and 50 percent of the courses required for the degree, and that general education abilities and knowledge be incorporated into the major as appropriate.[xlv]

At the same time, focus on majors could cause students to miss cross-discipline learning opportunities. Complex public problems, such as racial inequity and climate change, may be best understood by approaches that draw on multiple disciplines. Increased options for interdisciplinary majors, minors, and certificate programs will increase students' ability to develop the knowledge, intellectual skills, practical competencies, and values they need for informed and effective participation in public problem-solving. Well-formed, mutually beneficial, intentional, authentic, and deliberate relationships in the community, with employers, PK-12, third sector, and others will create high-value curriculum that helps students solve complex public and societal problems.

Academic programs, in addition to majors, include embedded micro-credentials, certificates, and stackable credits, which can support students as they work toward degree completion. Public higher education programs that promote agency and opportunity through equity-first learning strategies, require accessible, student-ready program design. Competency and project-based learning modules, learning experiences, and assessments that are highly integrated with them should be utilized to benchmark gains and monitor student progress with earned credentials, competencies, and certificates that build toward degree completion.

Interdisciplinary programs can enhance students' qualifications and amplify their cultural proficiencies. Programs that build upon certificate credentials and are "stackable" provide options especially for students with other primary responsibilities, such as work and family, in addition to pursuing college and professional development. Public higher education programs can meet this moment in multiple ways. Providing PLAs can document what students know and can do and assign credit-bearing value to knowledge and skill sets by mapping content onto credit-bearing micro-credentials and certificates and ensuring these earned achievements follow pathways and stack into degree programs. These same strategies can be used to qualify and quantify cultural and linguistic wealth, which racially minoritized students frequently bring into the academy and that add value across industries, organizations, and enterprises throughout the economy.

In addition, pathways that enable students to pursue a minor course of study within a degree program highlight students' interdisciplinary knowledge and skills in a way that amplifies the qualifications and experiences of racially minoritized students and students who are bi- and multi-lingual with communitarian knowledge and experiences.

Additionally, courses can and should demonstrate how the field of study can contribute to understanding and addressing complex problems. They can also show how students in that field can use their learning for civic responsibility, and racial equity and justice. Biased behavior and patterns of belief can be found in every field, and, as students move from higher education into the postsecondary workforce, this exploration can prepare them to understand and confront these patterns in their work life when they encounter them. It can also prepare them to use their careers—whatever field it may be—to contribute to justice in their communities.

Lastly, every department should disaggregate the success data for its majors by race and analyze the findings with an equity mindset. If race-based equity gaps are uncovered, faculty should ask which of their courses are failing to serve racially minoritized students equitably, and what practices they can change to create more equitable learning environments.[xlvi]

Majors, Minors, and Certificate Programs Recommendations:

- Create interdisciplinary programs to develop students' abilities to address complex public and societal problems.
- Guide students into exploring the public dimensions of their field of study, including how the field can contribute to understanding and addressing major public problems such as racism, especially the General Studies area of study.
- Provide faculty in every program of study with student success data disaggregated by race that will enable them to analyze the points at which the institution is failing to serve racially minoritized students in their program and explore alternative practices that would better serve these students.
- When developing new programs or making changes to existing programs, ensure the design includes recruitment and marketing strategies; enrollment and retention; learning goals and objectives; and faculty, staff, and operational resource allocation, which are deliberate and intentional in serving racially minoritized students.

V. Equity-Minded Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Student Bill of Rights

#2 Students have the right to inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies.

This section focuses on equitable pedagogical practices, equity-minded faculty and staff development, and equity-minded assessment. The equitable pedagogical practices covered are Culturally Responsive (CR) and Culturally Sustaining (CS) Pedagogies, Trauma-Informed Pedagogy (TIP), Online Learning, Instructional Design, and Open Educational Resources (OER).

The equity-minded faculty and staff development section covers new faculty orientation, professional development framed around "Expansive Excellence," and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Overall, this section is meant to provide information and recommendations to create a more inclusive, anti-racist teaching and learning atmosphere at Massachusetts public higher education institutions.

Equitable Pedagogical Practices

Equity-focused pedagogies create classroom practices that validate the experiences and backgrounds of students who have been underserved and/or racially minoritized. The teaching and learning environment should be inclusive, engaging, connected to students' experiences, learning-centered, and acknowledge the social reality that marginalizes some students and advantages others.

Equity-focused pedagogies and best instructional practices related to these approaches within a higher education context are just emerging. As such, a model program does not exist at the scale or scope that would be necessary for a systemwide change of every classroom within Massachusetts public higher education.[7]

Culturally-Responsive (CR) and Culturally-Sustaining (CS) Pedagogy are student-centered approaches. They affirm students' personal, social, and cultural experiences by centering these as assets to academic success and personal growth. These approaches necessitate the development of a critical consciousness in both the student and educator. To these ends, CR and CS:

- Focus on multiple aspects of student achievement while sustaining their cultural identities and developing a critical perspective that challenges societal inequities
- Require that educators maintain high expectations for student learning and academic success
- Sustain student home language literacy, preservation, and development
- Honor student humanity and identity

[7] Nothing stated in this discussion on equitable pedagogical practices is intended to undermine or weaken academic freedom as espoused and codified in collective bargaining agreements with our faculty.

However, the adoption of CR and CS pedagogies within Massachusetts public higher education and public higher education nationally, has been limited in scope. In Massachusetts, the leading programs include Bunker Hill Community College's Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth; Massachusetts College of Art and Design's Office of Justice, Equity and Transformation; and UMass Amherst's Social Justice Education program in its College of Education (see sidebar). Nationally, the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education and the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching are also models.

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Trauma-Informed Pedagogy (TIP) is a pedagogical practice that prioritizes trauma, its prevalence, and how it affects an individual. These practices are very similar to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Many students bring experiences of past or ongoing trauma into their classrooms. Racially minoritized students bring experiences of discrimination and other trauma related to their racial identities. All students have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, and many have been impacted by it in negative ways. As opposed to the K-12 space, where trauma-informed practice is quickly becoming the norm, many faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education do not have the training or knowledge that will enable them to respond effectively to the burdens that students are carrying.

Social Justice Education at UMass Amherst

The Social Justice Education program at UMass Amherst, which is primarily a graduate program, offers two undergraduate courses which engage students in intergroup dialogue across differences in race and ethnicity, gender, or other elements of social identity. Students in the four-credit General Education course, "Social Issues in Intergroup Dialogue," or the one-credit intensive weekend course, "Issues in Intergroup Relations," learn to speak the truth of their own experiences and hear the truth of others' experiences across these differences in identity. UMass Amherst Professor Ximena Zúñiga, is a national expert on intergroup dialogue.

Source:
University of Massachusetts Amherst, "Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success: Intergroup Dialogue," accessed August 12, 2021.

Online learning broadly understood is part and parcel of the public higher education experience throughout the system and became the de facto baseline for instruction during the pandemic in many instances. An equity-minded approach to online learning will make it equally available to racially minoritized students, using open access materials and ensuring that all students have the technology they need. In addition, high-quality and research-based professional development for faculty and staff using the technologies and orientation and support of students in using them must also be available widely and with attention to equitable access and opportunities for all.

There are a variety of online learning technologies in use across public higher education in Massachusetts; this is particularly the case post-pandemic. These technologies may include virtual labs, developmental math software, lecture capture systems, and others. However,

access to these necessary tools is not equally available to all students due to social and systemic inequities.

Regardless of which technologies are used, the principles of UD are paramount to provide open and equitable learning environments for all students and provide improved access to racially minoritized students. UD principles support the creation of instructional situations that are universally and equitably accessible for all students regardless of learning preference, race, ethnicity, or ability. While UD is a goal of most institutions of higher education, actual application in the online learning environment is uneven. Many software systems and course delivery models have embedded assumptions about abilities, prior learning experiences, access to learning tools that are only true for narrow ranges of student populations (i.e., those with strong technical skills or independent learning skills) and, in some cases, not considering the requirements to accommodate certain disabilities.

Instructional Design (ID) is another key consideration for developing online learning models, but in particular for institutions hoping to develop models that address UD principles. For example, Quality Matters (QM) is one well-established ID framework for high-quality online instruction that provides specific guidelines. It also provides a structure for peer review and continuous improvement.

All students need to develop skills for learning online. Time and place flexibility provided through online learning is no longer a benefit for a specific student subpopulation, but rather, a requirement for all students whether they are “traditional” age and attending a university full-time, adults taking a short-term certificate at a community college, or anyone in between. It is crucial that higher education institutions provide equitable access for all students, but particularly for racially minoritized students who may not have the same benefits of prior experience with certain technologies, or access to them, as their White counterparts.

The new normal in higher education already includes more online and hybrid instruction that may reduce physical presence on campuses. The Commonwealth must create open, flexible, engaging, and accessible high-quality online learning environments for all students while eliminating opportunity gaps by aggressively addressing the digital divide in our urban and rural communities. Due to the demands of the modern workplace, especially post-pandemic, all students must become conversant learning in online and hybrid modalities. Instructional models must be developed to take advantage of existing college and university infrastructures while adhering to the best practices in order to provide engaging, effective, and accessible learning experiences with the necessary support systems for all students with a focus on racially minoritized students. At the same time, campuses as well as the system should monitor research on how to maximize the strengths of hybrid and online instructional modalities while paying attention to the need to uphold face-to-face learning, and teaching and support opportunities to meet the needs of all learners.

Teaching and instructional design should be grounded in research-based principles of effective learning and teaching including, but not limited to, flexible, student-centered learning environments for all, with an emphasis on eliminating disparities for racially minoritized students. Campuses, as well as the Department and other stakeholders, should work to elevate centers of excellence in inclusive ID and UD, share practices, and seek and deploy resources for faculty and staff engaged in online and hybrid teaching and instructional design. HyFlex course design is a model centered on the principles of student choice by combining in-person and online learning to create flexible learning experiences that can work to the benefit of racially minoritized students.[xlvii] Implementing a HyFlex instructional model at scale with the necessary technical, ID, professional development, and student support will create powerful learning for all students, despite varied needs and backgrounds, to be successful while developing crucial online learning skills.[xlviii] Again, HyFlex is one model to be explored. There are others. All should be studied further to identify the best solution for each institution and its students.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are foundational to the access and success of first-generation, low-income students, who are disproportionately racially minoritized students. Massachusetts is an OER exemplar, having created an OER Working Group in 2018 to conduct research and make recommendations on ways to increase adoption and utilization of OER across the Commonwealth. Since 2019, the DHE has convened an OER Advisory Council, comprised of members from all Massachusetts public higher education institutions to advise the DHE on OER policies and initiatives, to research and recommend the implementation of recommendations to the BHE, and to help respective institutions promote OER use and adoption. The benefits to students are clear: The Open Education Initiative at UMass has resulted in $1.8 million in student savings. The MA #GoOpen Project has resulted in $1.2 million in student savings.[xlix] Not only does OER reduce student expenses (textbooks are the third-highest expense behind tuition and fees and housing), but it also increases student learning, persistence, and completion. This is achieved by enabling students to have their learning materials on day one, as well as the use of culturally relevant instructional materials that faculty may adopt, adapt, or create at no or low cost for students. Our unique approach, which includes grassroots engagement with students and faculty along with the creation of an OER Advisory Council, has earned Massachusetts accolades from the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, a national OER advocacy group. Yet, there is much more to do to create more culturally relevant textbooks for high-demand courses (i.e., general education) and disciplines aligned with Massachusetts' growing labor market in areas such as health care, business, information technology, criminal justice, and early childcare.

Equitable Pedagogical Practices Recommendations:

- Develop and adopt campus-specific, data-driven equity-minded pedagogical approaches
- Prioritize trauma training and education, as well as universal design for assignments and curriculum, in strategic planning for Massachusetts colleges and universities
- Collect, analyze, and utilize data that portray the benefits of utilizing OER specifically for racially minoritized students

- Seek legislative support to obtain funding to create a competitive OER campus funds program to increase and encourage adoption (faculty members enacting OER), adaptation (faculty members remixing and revising existing OER to make it more culturally and disciplinary relevant), and creation (faculty members creating their own digital textbooks for their own and others' use) of OER, especially in STEM and core curriculum courses
- Implement recognition, financial and non-financial incentives, and faculty tenure and promotion to encourage the use and development of OER, community-engaged scholarship, and interdisciplinary pedagogies

Equity-Minded Faculty and Staff Development

New Faculty and Staff Orientation: The sooner new faculty and staff are oriented and onboarded, the more likely they are to be effective and successful at tasks and fulfilling the institutional mission. This is especially critical to improve the experiences of a more diverse faculty and staff and the resulting impact on a diverse student body. An ideal system-wide new faculty and staff orientation program would include a faculty mentorship component, funds for faculty release, and meetings on a regular basis throughout the academic year, ending with a culminating event. Additionally, all faculty and staff professional development should be designed and delivered with an anti-racist, socially just, holistic, and equity-minded lens with the integration of student input. Just as outcomes and assessments for student learning are developed, a new faculty and staff orientation program should be developed with learning outcomes, which will be assessed by faculty and staff, as well as student assessment of teaching, learning, and service delivery.

Professional Development Framed Around Expansive Excellence: According to the AAC&U's core principles of "Inclusive Excellence," inclusive excellence is designed to help colleges and universities integrate diversity, equity, and educational quality efforts into their missions and institutional operations. Through the vision and practice of inclusive excellence, AAC&U calls for higher education to address diversity, inclusion, and equity as critical to the well-being of democratic culture. Other experts have taken it a step further to replace the term *inclusive excellence* with *expansive excellence*, arguing that the term inclusive presupposes a group with power and ownership over what defines excellence, thus reproducing existing privilege and hierarchy. Expansive excellence, by contrast, breaks down the notion of hierarchy and ownership of excellence to embrace the diversity of ways that excellence can be defined.[l] Making excellence expansive is thus an active process through which colleges and universities achieve excellence in learning, teaching, student development, institutional functioning, and engagement in local and global communities.[li] Given the demonstrated effectiveness of equity-minded teaching practices on student success, professional development for faculty needs to be scaled to reach all faculty. The use of faculty learning communities is an effective approach to enhance faculty learning.[lii] Strengthening faculty members' teaching effectiveness in this way enables them to develop more culturally relevant teaching approaches through peer learning.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) produces reflective practitioners who engage in scholarly research for best practices in teaching. As part of the SoTL model, full- and part-time faculty engage in a Syllabus Review Guide as an inquiry tool for promoting racial and ethnic equity and equity-minded practice. The syllabus review process promotes faculty inquiry into teaching approaches and practices, especially how they affect Black, Latinx, and other racially and ethnically minoritized students; facilitates a self-assessment of these teaching approaches and practices from a racial and ethnic equity lens; and allows faculty to consider changes that result in more equitable teaching approaches and practice.[liii]

Equity-Minded Faculty and Staff Development Recommendations:

- Incorporate short-term and long-term equity-focused professional development plans for faculty and staff in institutional strategic plans
- Provide faculty with the support and resources necessary for their development in anti-racist and high-impact practices and pedagogies, including the use and interpretation of data
- Create and support Centers for Teaching and Learning that can facilitate campus-based and collaborative professional development
- Enhance and scale up DHE-supported, system-wide platforms for collaborative professional development

Equity-Minded Assessment

Assessment on campuses is too often viewed by administration, faculty, and staff through a compliance paradigm, necessitated by accreditation. However, learning outcomes assessment should be consistently applied across public higher education at the institutional, program, and course levels and for general education with a focus on continuous improvement instead of compliance. Institutional assessment must also include co-curricular assessment in recognition of the significant student learning that takes place outside the classroom.

The DHE's Vision Project (2015) informed a multi-state pilot to assess student learning in critical thinking, written communication, and quantitative reasoning using VALUE rubrics (rather than MCAS-style testing).[liv] Massachusetts faculty embraced learning outcomes assessment, and this was written into the next iteration of the collective bargaining agreements.

Every institution should have a funded institutional assessment office and should utilize methods of data collection and analysis that are inclusive of all students, especially racially minoritized students. Data should be disaggregated to ensure that the overall results are reflected throughout and across all student populations. Students must be integrated into institutional assessment by providing input and authentic student artifacts, scoring data, participating in the analysis of data, and helping to develop appropriate responses to the data analysis. Assessment, both formative and summative, should result in a diversified, holistic approach that reflects both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Equity-Minded Assessment Recommendations:

- Create institutional commitment to resources for equity-minded assessment, including support and professional development for faculty-led learning outcomes assessment, and resources for Institutional Research Offices
- Implement equity-minded assessment resources including support and professional development for faculty-led learning outcomes assessment, and resources for Institutional Research Offices
- Develop institutional learning outcomes and assessment methodologies based on current, equity-minded learning models, such as using authentic student artifacts as the primary source of learning assessment
- Provide training and support for faculty and staff on how to conduct institutional assessment and how to conduct data analysis including disaggregating the data in order to assess the impact on racially minoritized students

VI. High-Impact Practices and the Co-Curriculum

Student Bill of Rights

#3 Students have the right to equitable access to experiential learning opportunities, in and out of the classroom.

This section focuses on high-impact practices. The term "high-impact practices" (HIPs) refers to teaching and learning practices that have been widely tested and shown to be beneficial for college students from many demographic groups. These practices, which take various forms depending on learners and on institutional priorities and contexts, include the following: first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, working with a mentor, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, e-portfolios, service learning, community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects.[lv]

Co-curriculum is defined as learning that happens outside the classroom, in student activities and programs, and often overlaps with HIPs, particularly in areas like internships, work experience, and civic and community engagement. These experiences have been shown to be both highly effective and impactful for student learning, effective in closing racial equity gaps and improving outcomes for racially minoritized students and making college graduates more attractive to potential employers. However, many studies have shown that there is inequitable access to HIPs.[lvi] In addition, there needs to be significantly more consideration for how we coordinate, integrate, and scaffold learning not only in high-impact practices, but in coordination with the academic experience.

A Lumina-funded three-year study of five community colleges in Tennessee, published in 2021, found that while 54 percent of White students participated in a HIP, only 31 percent of Black students and nine percent of Latinx students. Adult students were also less likely to participate. But, as the following table shows, participation in HIPs improved outcomes for Black and Latinx

students (and adult students) across several measures (retention and completion of Gateway courses):[lvii]

Academic Outcomes for High-Impact Practices (HIP) Participants Vs. Non-Participants									
	Black (n=5,718)			Latinx (n=1,616)			All Races (n=18,850)		
	No HIP	HIP		No HIP	HIP		No HIP	HIP	
Fall-Spring Retention	59%	67%	+8%	73%	79%	+6%	66%	73%	+7%
Fall-Fall Retention	35%	43%	+8%	50%	54%	+4%	42%	49%	+7%
Earned 12 Credits In First Term	25%	35%	+10%	46%	54%	+8%	40%	47%	+7%
Earned 24 Credits In First year	12%	17%	+5%	31%	35%	+4%	25%	31%	+6%
Complete GK English in First Year	40%	51%	+11%	51%	64%	+13%	43%	53%	+10%
Complete GK Math in First year	22%	29%	+7%	39%	45%	+6%	32%	39%	+7%
Complete Both GK English & Math	18%	23%	+5%	30%	37%	+7%	23%	29%	+6%

Source: TBR Data

*Fall-Fall Retention data is only available for Fall 2018 students and is restricted to this cohort.

HIPs also make students more attractive to employers. A 2021 AAC&U survey of hundreds of employers found that more than four in five employers say they would be either "somewhat more likely" or "much more likely" to consider hiring recent college graduates if they had completed one of these active and applied experiences in college.[lviii]

Mentoring Racially Minoritized Students

Mentoring is different from advising. Mentoring involves making a strong personal connection with students focused on their personal welfare and development. Advising may move to this level, but it also often stays on a level of matching course selection to degree requirements. Faculty and staff of color often serve informally as mentors to racially minoritized students, responding to students' requests for relationships and guidance. This can be a form of invisible labor for the faculty and staff—essential to the success of the students, but unrecognized by the institution.

There are a variety of mentoring programs in Massachusetts higher education. For instance, 100 Males to College: Brotherhood for College Success is a DHE-initiated program located at several public campuses. The program aims to increase college access, enrollment, retention, and success for low-income students and racially minoritized students**,** particularly young men**,** to positively affect their prospects for success in college and career.[lix] As part of the program, participants are assigned mentors and success coaches. 100 Males to College participants cite relationships formed with these mentors and success coaches as the most-impactful part of the program.[lx] In the 2017–18 school year, 378 students participated in the program across five regional areas, and 94 percent of those participants enrolled in college.[lxi]

Another example is MassArt's Compass program.[lxii] Compass is a mentoring program in its 20th year serving primarily first-generation, racially minoritized students from Massachusetts. Faculty mentors are assigned to cohorts of students from freshman year through to graduation.

Compass works in collaboration with academic services, student development, and other college-wide departments. The program offers participants weekly workshops and annual retreats to connect with faculty and strengthen friendships and community.

Multiple schools around the Commonwealth (Harvard, Tufts, MIT, UMass Amherst and Lowell, Roxbury Community College, etc.) have mentoring programs with similar goals of increasing access and retention, but they are not at scale to serve all racially minoritized students. TRIO programs have staff who serve as mentors to students that has been significant to students' success.
However, many of these programs do not engage all racially minoritized students or first-generation students and typically are not directed specifically at faculty serving as mentors for students. All campuses should build mentoring programs matching faculty and student identities, experiences, and interests, such as first-generation faculty mentoring first-generation students, to support the specific challenges faced by individual groups of students. These programs should follow the seven principles outlined by EAB (an organization focused on education technology, services, and research):[lxiii]

- They **define mentoring**: Not every student-faculty project counts as mentorship.
- They **train mentors** in a structured system with regular assessment.
- They **support mentors** with clear direction and ongoing training.
- They **show the value of mentorships** in the priorities of campus leaders
- They **require excellence**, recognizing that not all faculty members will make good mentors.
- They **reward excellence**, in the criteria for tenure and promotion and in other ways.
- They **provide feedback** offering faculty with continuing opportunities to grow.

"Being a part of a mentoring program changed my entire experience at Holyoke Community College. I was part of a student-to-student program, but if I had been paired with a teacher or staff member of color that would have been even better. It is valuable to see that we can accomplish things like working at a college when we didn't even think we could go to college." —Holyoke Community College student

Mentoring Racially Minoritized Students Recommendations

- Create mentoring networks of racially minoritized faculty, staff, alumni, and employers who will support racially minoritized students throughout their time in the public higher education system.
- Support faculty who choose to mentor by providing the appropriate training, course release or stipends, and having this work explicitly counted in consideration for promotion, tenure, and merit pay.

Equitable Access to Co-Curricular and High-Impact Experiences

Experiential learning is an engaged learning process whereby students "learn by doing" and reflecting on the experience. Experiential learning activities can include, but are not limited to, civic engagement, internships, practicums, field exercises, study abroad, undergraduate research, and studio performances. These experiences lead students to think more critically, increase student confidence, and help students translate and apply technical knowledge gained from the experience in classroom and lab settings.

Thirteen of the colleges and universities in the Massachusetts public system have received the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (Community Engagement Classification (U.S.) – Commission on Public Purpose in Higher Education (public-purpose.org). This elective institutional classification, based on extensive documentation submitted by each campus, recognizes the partnerships created between colleges and universities and organizations in the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. Campuses from across the system should consider how the Carnegie classification identifies best practices in community/civic engagement.

However, not all students have had the same opportunities to build networking skills that would help them connect with development and leadership opportunities. Additionally, implicit bias can cause faculty and staff to overlook referring racially minoritized students. Experiential learning opportunities are often inconsistently delivered or aligned because of decentralized structures within siloed institutions that separate advising, career services, and student engagement. Potential disconnection from the academic program contributes to inequitable access. For example, a course may require an internship, but not offer transportation, thus producing a barrier to student completion and success. Access to basic needs disproportionally affect racially minoritized students. A recent study found that Latinx former college students surveyed reported "transportation problems" as an obstacle to college completion at a rate 19 percent higher than their peers.[lxiv]

Other barriers to high-impact, co-curricular opportunities include lack of funding and GPA requirements. Moreover, co-curricular programs are not always intentional, aligned, and cumulative, with defined learning outcomes and regular equity-minded assessment of access and student learning. It should be noted that community colleges face unique challenges with co-curricular programs due to the types of students who attend community colleges. That is, they are commuters, tend to work more, and they possess a greater representation of minoritized students with less social and financial capital upon which to access. Campuses must prioritize equitable access to unpaid internships and leadership and work opportunities to ensure that racially minoritized students are accessing these opportunities that can then populate their co-curricular transcripts.

Civic Engagement: Students can pursue civic engagement by working in collaboration with others toward a vision of the common good through courses or through the co-curriculum, focusing on action outside the classroom—either on the campus or in the larger community. Civic Engagement courses integrate academic and civic learning goals. When civic engagement is done well, students develop a sense of agency in the public domain. They may recognize that they have the capability to work effectively toward the solution of public problems—such as racism.

The Massachusetts BHE's 2014 Policy on Civic Learning[lxv] names civic engagement as one of the ways that campuses can meet the expectation of involving all their undergraduates in Civic Learning. Several Massachusetts community colleges have collected data showing positive correlation between their students' participation in civic engagement courses and their retention semester to semester as well as degree completion. In 2016, campuses began reporting to DHE on the number of civic engagement courses and on student enrollment in those courses. By 2020, about five percent of students across universities and community colleges throughout the Commonwealth were enrolled in civic engagement courses. However, these data are incomplete: some campuses have still not begun designating their civic engagement courses and therefore are reporting no data on student participation, and for those campuses that do report, practices vary widely in how courses are selected for the designation. Therefore, it is unclear what is actually being reported.

Additionally, campuses vary widely in the degree to which their approach to civic engagement is anti-racist and equity minded. Many campuses frame their work as service or service-learning, which invokes inequitable power dynamics (those who are "more fortunate" provide service to those who are "less fortunate"). Campuses also vary widely in the infrastructure to support civic engagement—from an office with multiple staff to no dedicated infrastructure. The 2017-2020 faculty contract negotiated by MSCA for the state university faculty named community-engaged teaching, scholarship, and service explicitly as components of faculty academic work to be considered in promotion, tenure and

Salem State University Critically Engaged Civic Learning

Salem State's Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) was established as a nexus for equitable and reciprocal community-campus partnerships. In collaboration with community partners, the CCE developed a new and innovative equity-based framework, Critically Engaged Civic Learning (CECL), that is focused on shared responsibility and social change. CECL is structured around six guiding principles: social justice, power dynamics, community, civic learning objectives, reflexivity, and sustainability. CECL differs from traditional service-learning by placing social change at the center of collaborations and situating students within a larger constellation of relationships that include community members, community organizations, and faculty and civic engagement professionals. Within CECL, these stakeholders work together in a more equitable way to examine the root causes of social justice issues to try to affect change. CECL actualizes contemporary calls for leveraging the cultural wealth of communities and students and incorporates anti-racist practices that work to decolonize community-engaged practices.[1]

Source:
Salem State University, "Center civic engagement," accessed August 23, 2021.

[1]C.S. Vincent, S.B Moore, C. Lynch, J. Lefker, and R.J. Awkward, "Critically Engaged Civic Learning: A comprehensive restructuring of service-learning approaches," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 27(2), fall 2021.

post-tenure review decisions elevating the importance of this work. Yet again, however, campuses vary widely in the extent to which faculty evaluators are aware of this contract provision or understand what it entails, and no such commitment exists in union contracts at the community colleges or UMass campuses.

To preserve a hope for democracy, students need to learn how to join across differences to work toward the common good. Civic engagement should be integrated into both the majors and the Core Curriculum. Civic engagement must be built on an antiracist and equity-minded foundation. This begins with how it is named, moving from "service" or "service-learning" to "Civic Engagement" or, as at Salem State, "Critically Engaged Civic Learning" (see sidebar above). This includes building on the cultural wealth of racially minoritized students in the classroom and preparing all students to work *with* rather than *for* or *on* communities. Civic engagement done well embodies anti-racist practices in the classroom and prepares students for equity-minded work with community partners and in their lives beyond the course, the campus, and graduation.

Capstones are culminating curricular experiences that ask students to synthesize, integrate, and apply their learning. This may take the form of an intensive research project, artistic performance, comprehensive portfolio, etc. *Learning Communities* include a collection of thematically connected courses and co-curricular activities that cohorts of students participate in together. Learning communities are intended to support student academic success, identity development, and sense of belonging.

Almost every public university in Massachusetts has a capstone experience and/or student learning community. Although far less prevalent, community colleges also offer capstone experiences and student learning communities. When offered, learning communities are often conceptualized as interdisciplinary and target the beginning of the college experience (first-year experience). They usually have a curricular component of one or more shared courses taken by all the students in the learning community. First-year learning communities may also include students living together on the same floor of a residential hall (i.e., living-learning communities). Although research has demonstrated that these learning opportunities are particularly beneficial to the retention and success of racially minoritized students, proportionally fewer of these students participate in learning communities and capstones.[lxvi]

Collaborative projects may involve faculty collaborating with other faculty to develop curriculum, faculty and students collaborating on projects, faculty and students collaborating across multiple institutions, and faculty and students collaborating with community and industry partners. Many of the strongest examples of the infrastructure for collaborative projects in Massachusetts are at independent institutions (see sidebar below).

Collaborative projects often involve community partnerships that offer students pathways into careers. For instance, in the state, Apprenti Massachusetts[lxvii] sets up apprenticeships with business partners. Hack.Diversity recruits predominantly Black and Latinx students to train them for careers as software engineers, IT professionals and data analysts within the innovation

economy and match them in paid internships in these fields.[lxviii] Finally, the Station1 Frontier Fellowship offers a model of socially-directed science and technology inquiry through a fully funded 10-week summer education, research, and internship experience based on a foundation of inclusion and equity for undergraduate students.[lxix]

Campuses should nurture collaborative spaces and networks that connect faculty, staff, employers and students, and partner with each other and the DHE in collaborative cross-campus projects, expanding the examples currently funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund. For example, in 2021, four campuses (Salem State, Fitchburg State, Worcester State Universities, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst) collaborated on a project entitled "Building on the Cultural Wealth of Minoritized Students: Anti-racist Community-Engaged Programming, Pedagogies, and Practices." This project involved faculty teams from each of the four campuses reviewing campus data about the experiences of racially minoritized students, holding focus groups with some of those students to learn more about their experiences in community-engaged courses, reviewing the literature on anti-racist practices in community-engaged courses, distilling those findings into a statement of 21 principles for anti-racist community-engaged teaching, and then designing professional development workshops for 60 faculty from the four campuses exploring how they can build anti-racist teaching practices into their own community-engaged courses. The work culminated with a presentation of the evolving best practices at a virtual symposium to which faculty and staff from all the public colleges and universities are invited in addition to national audience participants.

Capital funding for colleges and universities within Massachusetts should be prioritized toward supporting the creation of physical spaces for collaborative projects, including open lab/maker spaces. Since community colleges have the highest percentages of racially minoritized students and members of other historically excluded groups, they should be

Examples of Collaborative Projects

The Weissman Foundry is a 10,000-square-foot open-door design studio involving transdisciplinary collaboration between students and faculty at Babson, Olin, and Wellesley Colleges for the advancement of new or existing projects. The Undergraduate Faculty-Student Collaborative Fellowship at Simmons University is a competitive small grant program that supports faculty research and provides funding to undergraduate students assisting faculty in their research. The Wheaton Center for Collaborative Teaching and Learning (CCTL) works to build partnerships between faculty, students, and staff to support teaching and learning while drawing on students' knowledge about their own learning. Finally, the Springfield College Harold C. Smith Learning Commons is a space that acts as the center for academic life on the Springfield College campus, bringing library, technology, academic support, faculty development, and other campus services together in open and flexible spaces.

Sources:
Babson College, "The Weissman Foundry," accessed August 12, 2021; Simmons University, "Undergraduate Faculty-Student Collaborative Fellowship," accessed August 12, 2021; Wheaton College, "Center for Collaborative Teaching and Learning," accessed August 12, 2021; Springfield College, "Harold C. Smith Learning Commons," accessed August 12, 2021.

the focus of funding and support for these initiatives in order to make these opportunities accessible to these students.

Honors Programs: In 1999, Massachusetts created the Commonwealth Honors Program, the first state-wide honors program tying together all public colleges and universities serving undergraduates. Honors courses taken anywhere would count as honors courses if students transferred within the system. However, Honors programs on various campuses are not always equally accessible to racially minoritized students, in part because of eligibility and financial requirements, such as additional fees charged to participate in the program. At some campuses, honors courses cluster in certain departments and are not equally useful for students in all majors.

A national model to consider is the Rutgers-Newark Honors Living Learning Community (HLLC) (see sidebar).[lxx] It aims to revolutionize honors by challenging and redefining the notion of "merit" to cultivate the untapped talent of increasingly diverse new generations, and recruiting predominantly low-income racially minoritized students from Greater Newark. UMass Amherst has created the Emerging Scholars Residential Academic Program; a living/learning community inviting racially minoritized students whose high school GPAs were just under the threshold for admission into honors to live and work together their first year, take honors courses together both semesters, and apply to honors during their first year based on grades from the first semester.[lxxi] Institutions across the Commonwealth should strive to develop or alter their honors programs to parallel the intentional recruitment, equitable access, and interdisciplinary curriculum of these examples.

Rutgers-Newark Honors Living Learning Community

Rutgers-Newark Honors Living Learning Community's (HLLC) mission is to provide continued opportunity and prosperity to all, including those who have been systematically disenfranchised by systems of inequality. Considering anew the notions of talent and excellence, the HLLC is committed to revolutionizing honors, cultivating talent, and engaging communities. HLLC students learn to increase cross-cultural competence and approach local challenges that resonate globally from historical, philosophical, legal, and comparative perspectives. The curriculum provides the flexibility to focus, in and out of the classroom, on issues ranging from civil rights, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, religion, domestic and international violence, environmental justice, health inequities, and questions of democracy and citizenship.

Source:
Rutgers University, "Honors Living-Learning Community," accessed August 12, 2021.

Equitable Access to Co-Curricular and High-Impact Experiences Recommendations

- Create a system-wide community of practice in which campuses, employers, and community leaders are engaged in developing shared language, definitions, essential elements, and learning objectives for HIPs and the co-curriculum
- Re-envision faculty and staff workloads to allow for effective implementation of HIPs

- Establish innovative experiential learning opportunities that count toward degree completion, including rethinking the separation between "internship" and "work"
- Create anti-racist civic engagement opportunities for students across both the Core Curriculum and degree programs
- Institute capstones and learning communities at all community colleges and build on existing ones at universities
- Develop opportunities that connect faculty, staff, employers, and students to partner with each other and the DHE in collaborative cross-campus projects
- Assess existing honors programs to identify opportunities to improve recruitment of, access for, and support of racially minoritized students
- Identify institutional barriers to accessing HIPs for racially minoritized students, assess the impact of these barriers on the students, and remedy the barriers

"Before I joined leadership academy at MWCC, I did not feel I really knew some of my teachers due to taking online classes only. Now with leadership, I feel like I have a sense of the college and their spirit and the open doors they have to students who want to build relationships like that within the college." —Mount Wachusett Community College student

VII. Hiring, Supporting, and Retaining Faculty of Color

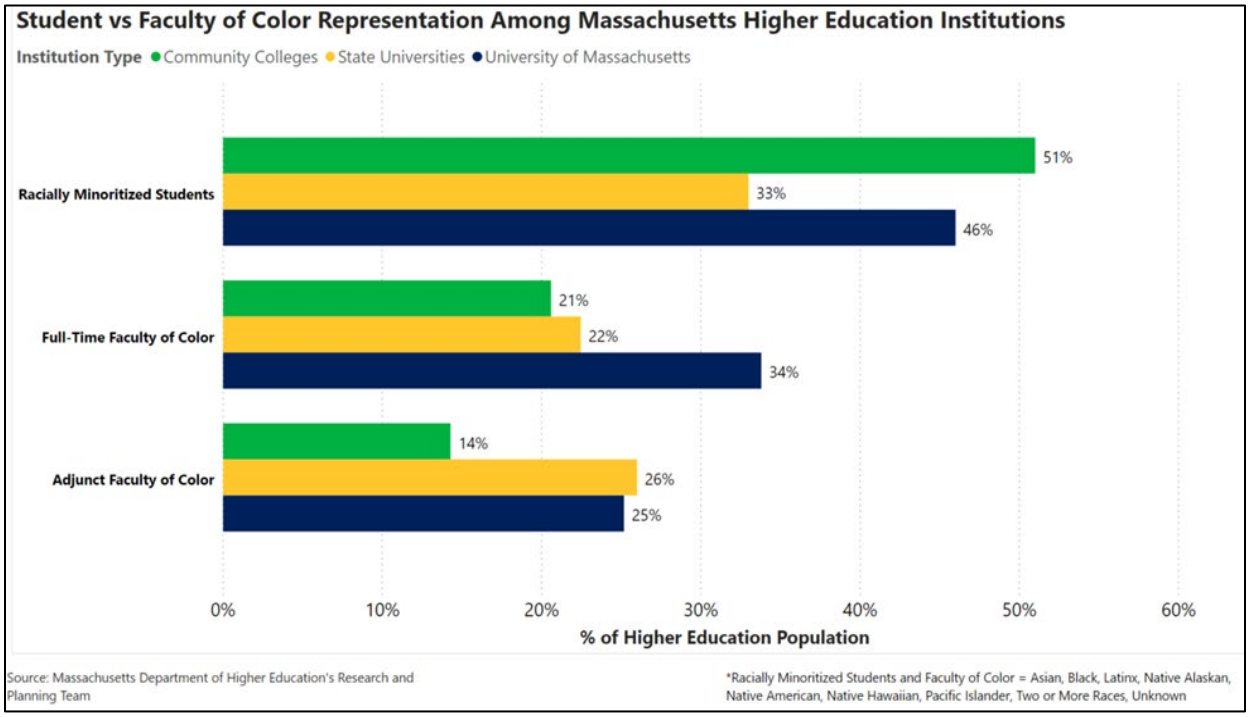
Student Bill of Rights
#4 Students have the right to diverse and supportive faculty and staff who are equity-minded higher education practitioners.

This section focuses on hiring, supporting, and retaining faculty of color. Faculty diversity at Massachusetts public higher education institutions does not reflect the diversity of the student body nor the diversity of the state. To change that, recommendations in this section not only focus on attracting more diverse faculty members, but also how to retain them by creating institutional cultures that recognize and reward the invisible labor that faculty of color take on. We would like to note that staff and administrator diversity also does not reflect the diversity of the student bodies at our institutions. Though this report focuses on strategies for diversifying faculty, the 10-year strategic plan for racial equity will focus on faculty, staff, and administrators.

Hiring Faculty of Color

The diversity of Massachusetts higher education faculty does not match the diversity of the Commonwealth's students. Nationally, of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2018, some 40 percent were White men; 35 percent were White women; seven percent were Asian/Pacific Islander men; five percent were Asian/Pacific Islander women; and three percent each were Black men, Black women, Latinx men, and Latinx women.[lxxii] In Massachusetts, 74 percent of full-time faculty and staff are White, yet racially minoritized students represent 45 percent of the public higher education population.[lxxiii]

In Fall 2019, racially minoritized students comprised approximately 50 percent of Massachusetts community college students, while only approximately 22 percent of community college full-time faculty were faculty of color. Nearly 19 percent of adjunct faculty, who teach most courses are faculty of color. Community colleges, which serve the most diverse student body, are taught by the least diverse faculty across all segments. In all segments, and in all cases, there is a substantial gap between the Massachusetts diverse student body and the percentage of faculty of color. Note that our adjunct faculty across the segments are even less diverse than full-time faculty, a statistic that bucks the national trend:



Many colleges, universities, boards, and agencies have issued the call for diverse faculty and staff hiring by focusing on resolutions, policies, and mandates. In addition, many institutions of higher education are inventing programs, initiatives, and strategies all intended to increase the number of faculty and staff of color in predominantly White institutions. At the University of Massachusetts Amherst, for example, there are multiple targeted programs aimed at attracting top faculty from diverse backgrounds.[lxxiv] UMass Amherst also boasts an inclusive view of faculty development and advancement and the practice of aiding colleges and departments in conducting regular, self-assessment to foster inclusive practices toward faculty engagement and advancement. However, as seen in the above data, despite efforts like these across Massachusetts public higher education institutions, the vast majority of faculty in most Massachusetts colleges and universities are still White.

Diverse faculty and staff hiring is critical to all students' learning processes, and especially for minoritized students. Hiring more diverse faculty provides many benefits to the students, faculty, and institutions. A diverse faculty creates an environment that fosters intellectual

diversity and better prepares students to live in a diverse society.[lxxv] Diverse faculty also tend to utilize more active teaching methods to engage students of all backgrounds and promote strategies that encourage students to interact with each other.[lxxvi]

Hiring Faculty of Color Recommendations:

- Hire Chief Diversity Officers who are empowered to lead diverse faculty hiring and retention efforts to signal institutional commitment to faculty diversity
- Develop and implement strategic recruiting plans (including faculty and their spouses) for attracting faculty of color that engage the entire institutional community
- Institute a DHE-supported, system-wide effort to develop racially minoritized students to become the faculty of the future

Supporting and Retaining Faculty of Color

As diverse hiring is being prioritized at institutions across the country, colleges and universities must also work to create inclusive educational cultures focused on intercultural competence that supports and retains diverse faculty and staff. Institutional practices may make the environment unwelcoming. Faculty of color often leave predominantly White institutions due to a lack of support and engagement with the institution. That can take many forms, including undesirable course assignments, a devaluing of their scholarship, poor support, and collaboration on research efforts, and microaggressions in the work environment.[lxxvii]

In addition, many faculty of color also feel burdened by the effects of invisible labor that is not financially supported or recognized within the relevant and appropriate reward systems. Invisible labor can be understood as the additional service burden of, for instance, serving as informal advisors and mentors for racially minoritized students, or being asked repeatedly to serve on Diversity and Inclusion initiatives or task forces. The Massachusetts public higher education system must ensure that there is financial support and recognition provided for the invisible labor done by faculty and staff of color through the tenure and promotion process. This includes mentoring racially minoritized students, supporting the needs of racially minoritized students, serving on additional committees so that the voices of faculty and staff of color are represented, helping to navigate racism on and off campus, and more.

Given the rapidly changing demographics affecting colleges and universities, it is imperative that all institutions recognize the serious repercussions of a monocultural faculty and staff serving a multicultural student body. Institutions need to support their employees in moving from minimization of cultural differences to adaptation and prioritization through aggressive hiring, anti-bias search committee training, and anti-bias training for all employees. This will help to change the culture and the environment to one that that is welcoming of faculty of color so that they wish to come and stay.

Strategies for diversifying the professoriate that neglect to reward the kind of scholarship that junior and more diverse faculty seek to pursue—like community engaged scholarship—often

fail to address the cultural changes necessary to retain faculty of color. Research indicates that faculty of color are more likely to pursue community engaged forms of scholarship and are less likely to pursue academic careers or to remain in faculty positions on campuses where emerging forms of scholarship, including community engaged scholarship, are not valued and rewarded.[lxxviii] Other emerging forms of scholarship include, but are not limited to, digital, open, and interdisciplinary pedagogies. These forms of scholarship and teaching are collaborative and participatory and often give voice to and value the perspective of silenced and subordinated groups and communities with the aim of improving the lived experience of those individuals.

In 2018, Massachusetts State College Association (MSCA) and the Massachusetts BHE agreed to new language in the faculty contract that overtly recognizes community engaged teaching, service, and scholarship within the criteria for tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review. However, it is not yet fully operational or understood by most evaluators. This is the only example in Massachusetts of recognizing faculty who participate in emerging pedagogies using the same standards that occur for the evaluation of traditional teaching and scholarship.[lxxix]

Further, research shows that faculty of color are often disproportionately criticized by students in faculty evaluations, which are crucial in tenure and promotion processes.[lxxx] Systems for rewarding, incentivizing, and supporting faculty need to be re-envisioned so that institutions shift from traditional, inequitable, and patriarchal faculty reward systems to those that value diverse forms of scholarship including community-engaged scholarship, community-engaged teaching, digital, open, interdisciplinary, and other emerging pedagogies. This shift seeks to increase the equity-mindedness of the faculty reward system and does not diminish those who are recognized for their traditional scholarly work.

Supporting and Retaining Faculty of Color Recommendations

- Design and implement promotion, tenure, reward, and recognition processes that prioritize racial equity, justice, equity-mindedness, and more diverse forms of scholarship.
- Establish employee resources for faculty and staff of color and their allies to cultivate a supportive community.
- Develop systems to recognize and reward invisible labor taken on by faculty and staff of color.

VIII. Holistic Student Support

Student Bill of Rights

Students have the right to:

- **#5 A welcoming, safe, and inclusive campus environment.**
- **#6 Timely and relevant pathways to graduation.**

This section is focused on student support across the curricular and co-curricular aspects of educational experience, ensuring an asset-based approach to supporting racially minoritized students intellectually, mentally, socially, and physically. Specific areas addressed include

academic and financial policies, curricular and co-curricular advising, basic needs support, mental health, conduct and safety with acknowledgement of the increasing role of all college campuses as community hubs, providing services and resources to students well beyond an academic experience.

Many of the following recommendations intersect with existing initiatives spearheaded by the DHE, including the Basic Needs and Security Task Force, campus safety and violence prevention, and equity-based audits of state financial aid and other financial policies. *NUE*'s recommendations are meant to affirm and support this ongoing work.

Academic and Financial Policies

Local and national studies have shown that racially minoritized students are disproportionately impacted by many policies related to academic progress and success such as hold policies, grade appeals, academic probation, leave policies, readmission policies, and discipline practices. For example, one Massachusetts community college's internal audit found that not only do White students appeal their grades more often than racially minoritized students, but grade appeals brought by White students are more likely to be granted than appeals brought by racially minoritized students.[lxxxi] At this institution in 2020, White students comprised 49 percent of the student body, but submitted 64 percent of grade appeals. Their appeals were granted 46 percent of the time, as opposed to racially minoritized students, who comprised 51 percent of the student body, submitted only 36 percent of grade appeals, and were approved only 26 percent of the time.[lxxxii] Clearly these so called "race-neutral" policies have disproportionate negative impacts on racially minoritized students.

Equitable academic policies need to partner with equity-minded, asset-based advising practices. Too often, advising and class registration is experienced by staff and students as a transactional checklist. The complexities of scheduling, requirements, forms, clearing of holds, among other issues take up student cognitive and emotional bandwidth and present clear barriers. Student financial services, the registrar, and advising should meet regularly to align policies and practices; there should be an equity audit and analysis of all financial policies of the institution to review for disproportionate impacts on Black, Latinx, and any other affected populations of students. Financial services and counseling especially need to be delivered with care and compassion, with cultural awareness and no student blaming.

Many campuses struggle with unevenness and inconsistency of advising because it is carried out by faculty and by professional advisors, where both groups don't always hold all the information a student needs. Thus, a platform for information sharing between offices and divisions is crucial. Even so, the support culture on most campuses depends upon students going to their advisor or to the advising center, seeking out help; the burden is on the student. There must be a shift from the culture of advising as a *center*, to advising as a *system* that touches all students. The bureaucratic, checklist elements of advising and registration should be eased and facilitated through analytics and technology, thus freeing up bandwidth for both student and advisor while supporting on-time interventions.

NUE's student focus group discussions revealed that racially minoritized students draw upon two networks, formal and informal. Informal networks often include faculty and staff of color, whose informal labor is unrecognized or supported. Students also spoke of being reassigned different advisors often, and of going semesters without meeting an advisor in person. If students struggle academically in their classes, they may get referred to a tutoring center, thus framing the academic support that enhances student learning as remedial and deficit-based. If students withdraw from or do not pass requisite courses, especially those needed to advance in their programs, they often must wait a semester or two until it is offered again, thus delaying their time to graduation. Racially minoritized students, who are more likely to be part-time students, are disproportionately and acutely impacted by such derailments and delays. Many of the Commonwealth's public institutions are experimenting with less high-stakes or punitive policies, especially in the first semester, including making the entire first semester pass/fail, or eliminating the impact of F's on student GPAs.

Racially minoritized students are further disproportionately affected by leave, withdrawal, probation, and readmissions policies. Inequitable practices include very high Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards, which are crucially linked to federal financial aid eligibility, and requirements to take classes while away from campus on a medical leave, where cost can be a barrier. However, as many professional advisors understand, allowing a student to re-enroll multiple semesters without making progress puts their financial aid eligibility in jeopardy. *NUE's* student focus group participants spoke powerfully of the barriers they encountered in their campus's withdrawal, leave, or readmissions policies, pointing to the need to review such policies with a rigorous equity-focused lens.

In 2021, Boston University partnered with the Ruderman Foundation to create the Guide for Equitable Leave and Withdrawal Policies.[lxxxiii] Among their recommendations are that students need to be given options, to feel empowered rather than punished, and have agency over their decisions. Staff need to be culturally competent in talking through time away, what it means, how to make it meaningful, and how to build tools for success upon return to institution. Campuses need to examine the language used in student communications and eliminate blaming, punitive, deficit language and instead create hopeful, developmental, and encouraging language. Campuses need to develop ways to continue to engage with students on leave from the institution.

A crucial first step is the development of flexible, student-centered, responsive, less "high-stakes" course scheduling, so that students are not held up for a semester or year if they withdraw or fail, or don't get into a crucial pre-requisite or requirement. The public higher education system must acknowledge and normalize different paces of degree completion, and ensure that there are clear, accessible return on-ramps for students who stop out. Part-time students need to be validated and the impacts of flexible scheduling on them need to be carefully assessed. Higher education leaders should consider piloting first-year policies that are more forgiving and less high stakes. This should be enacted by focusing or redirecting of funding and partnerships with campus multicultural centers to offer free courses or summer bridge

programs to racially minoritized students and additional populations of students identified as minoritized to maintain their momentum and ensure academic progress.

Academic and Financial Policies Recommendations:

- Examine campus and system discipline, financial, probation, leave (including medical leave), withdrawal, hold, and readmissions policies through an equity lens
- Develop and align equitable SAP standards, leave, withdrawal and readmissions policies across the Commonwealth, including Fresh Start policies
- Implement flexible, accelerated semesters and scheduling so that students who stop out have multiple "on-ramps" back into learning

Curricular and Co-Curricular Advising and Support

Abundance of opportunity does not mean that there is equitable access to those opportunities. A 2018 Gallup poll indicated that 40 percent of students do not use their school's career services, including one-third of seniors. The same study also showed that these services were most beneficial to racially minoritized students and first-generation students.[lxxxiv] Part of the problem is the fact that higher education advisors have enormous caseloads. A National Academic Advising Association survey found that US universities have, on average, one advisor for every 367 students.[lxxxv]

Career preparation needs to be unavoidable for students and integrated firmly with their academic experiences. An example of how schools can firmly tie the curricular with the co-curricular is visual representations that can serve as road maps for students, such as the award-winning "Major Maps" produced by Queen's University (see sidebar).[lxxxvi] Career coaching and advising are built into student experiences from the point of entry. Some institutions have for this purpose combined career services and academic advising into one department or co-location. These services should be designed to support first-generation or racially minoritized students to leverage their communities and educational capital.

Institutions need to ensure that staff and faculty believe in their students' community capital and can help students deploy and articulate their community wealth as assets they can bring to work and leadership development opportunities. All student-facing staff are educators, and all activities have a

Queen's University Major Maps

Innovative institutions have created major maps that align course requirements with cocurricular and experiential learning opportunities. These maps help students explore majors, reflect on the career-relevant skills they are gaining, receive hands-on experience in preparation for jobs and graduate programs, and see career paths available to each major. Queen's University major maps alert students to both curricular and cocurricular programming, ensuring that they are aware of both academic and parallel non-academic enrichment opportunities. The major maps also detail a diverse set of potential career outcomes for each major to communicate to undergraduates the broad scope of potential career outcomes that are well-aligned with each major.

Source:
Colin Koproske, *Integrating Academic and Career Development: Strategies to Scale Experiential Learning and Reflection Across the Curriculum*, EAB, 2017, p. 30.

learning/development component, from clubs and athletics to affinity groups. This is especially important for racially minoritized students where all engagement activities should be intentionally designed to support their college and post-graduate success. In pursuit of this goal, campuses need to nurture deep collaboration between traditional academic and student affairs sides of the house.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Advising Support Recommendations:

- Create visible networks of faculty and staff who are first-generation and/or people of color, such as campus-wide affinity groups or multicultural centers
- Reframe "support centers" as "success and achievement centers," or even as "Centers of Excellence," moving away from a deficit-minded approach and toward asset-based approaches grounded in recognition of student cultural wealth, offering growth mindset, success strategies, and higher education navigation
- Build partnerships between career services and academic departments and programs in creating integrated curricular and co-curricular pathways through graduation and employment

Basic Needs Support

For the purposes of this report, basic needs are defined as material needs that have to be met so that a student can focus on learning (i.e., food, housing, health (including mental health), childcare, transportation, technology, accessibility, and emergency financial support). Structural racism affects access to basic needs for racially minoritized students. National and local data show that students who report food and housing insecurity are more likely to be Black, Latinx, and/or LGBTQIA+.[lxxxvii]

Massachusetts is the first state to address basic needs insecurity as a matter of intentional, state-level policy, forging inter-agency partnerships to fund regional teams of campus staff and community providers who support students with housing, meal plans, and support services. Many Massachusetts campuses have identified Single Points of Contact (SPOC) designated staff who help students access basic needs services and funding. However, services are often decentralized and available to students on a first come, first-serve basis, a system that perpetuates inequitable distribution of resources. Existing staff do not always reflect identities and life experiences of students, so students may not feel safe and comfortable disclosing needs. As a result, preliminary data seem to indicate that while racially minoritized students are disproportionately overrepresented among students who need basic needs support, they may be *underrepresented* among students who access such services.[lxxxviii]

Campuses need the technology to facilitate assessment, outreach, communication, and information-sharing, and all staff and faculty need to be trained and expected to use this technology. However, technology cannot replace the human connections and relationships that are essential for student success.

A Basic Needs Security (BNS) Advisory Committee, convened by the DHE, has helped to inform a set of recommendations for basic needs support of students. Recommendations include:

- Scaling up existing housing pilots across the system
- Prioritizing Pell-eligible students in the disbursement of state financial aid
- Enhancing campus emergency funds and creating a state emergency fund
- Implementing a non-academic assessment for every student upon entry to public higher education, to identify basic needs and to ensure predictive, proactive, and individualized interventions (i.e., proactive referral to veteran services, childcare vouchers, food pantry, student emergency fund, clinic, counseling, etc.)

With the support of the BHE, the DHE will continue to work with interagency partners and campus and community stakeholders to develop and implement BNS strategies for Massachusetts students. In addition to supporting the recommendations of the strategic plan for BNS, attention should be focused on areas of educational inequity that affect students' full access to the transformative potential of public higher education, including their access to technology. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the Commonwealth's inequitable digital landscape, where not all individuals and communities have access to and use of information and communication technology. Most college students have devices, but they are not always in working order (e.g., older, low-quality, or borrowed devices), they are running out of storage and data, or they must access from inconvenient and inadequate conditions. Equitable access for students with disabilities, many of whom may experience the divide in unique ways, have not kept up with the pace of technological transformation.

> *"I have had quite a bit of technological difficulties over the past year [during the pandemic] during classes. A lot of people cannot afford good Internet/Wi-Fi, me being one of them, and it can be a struggle on a daily basis." —Massachusetts public higher education student*

With the shutdowns and remote work produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, students found it more difficult to access computer labs, and experienced Wi-Fi network restrictions. Faculty members were also hindered by digital inequity, especially adjunct faculty who do not receive laptops and must use their personal devices. During the pandemic, colleges and universities approached these challenges in creative and flexible ways, including:

- Creating public hotspots in campus parking lots for students to be able to work from their cars
- Laptop and hotspot loaner programs through libraries
- "Bring, Borrow, Buy" policies that notify students as to the technology they will need, and give them options to borrow from the library or buy affordable hardware at the bookstore

Going forward, it will be important for institutions to collaborate with Internet providers and state agencies to market and outreach to high-risk communities about technology access

opportunities. Further, we must ensure that all students have adequate devices, connectivity, and training to navigate technology. Financial aid packages should be inclusive of students' technological needs. And finally, the human resources division must ensure that all full and part-time faculty have the digital resources to be successful in all facets of their teaching and support of students.

Basic Needs Support Recommendation:

- Implement the recommendations presented in the BNS Plan

Wellness, Conduct, and Safety

Mental health intersects with academic support, basic needs support, and discipline discussions. Communities of color have experienced profound trauma, and they have not been well served by a mental health system of practitioners who are predominantly White and have been shaped by structural racism and norms that center on that whiteness. These issues affect both the availability of counselors of color, as well as the readiness of racially minoritized students to access counseling. Effective mental health support for racially minoritized students may not look like the dominant therapeutic models that are currently practiced and assumed to be the norm. Colleges need to reimagine themselves as a wellness hub and community resource for racially minoritized students, understanding both historical and current trauma of impacted communities suffering fragmentation and loss.

Research indicates that racially minoritized students at American colleges and universities are almost twice as likely not to seek care when they feel depressed or anxious compared to White students.[lxxxix] Additionally, a recent online Harris Poll of 1,000 college students conducted by JED and the Steve Fund found that racially minoritized students are significantly less likely to describe their campus as inclusive and more likely to indicate that they often feel isolated on campus.[xc] These statistics indicate a need for a more tailored approach to protecting the mental health of racially minoritized students.

Framingham State University Restorative Practices

Framingham State continues to modify its academic standing policies after reviewing through an equity lens. First, academic probation was changed to academic warning as a move away from more punitive language. Second, the practice around academic suspension was also revised. Rather than asking students to appeal their suspension before being allowed to return the next semester, academic suspension is held in abeyance and students are given the opportunity to meet with one of the academic deans or associate deans of academic success to create a recovery plan. Early research on the practice shows that the persistence as well as progress of students is slightly improved over the more punitive approaches used previously.

Source:
Framingham State University, Undergraduate Catalog 2020–2021.

Further, national conversations about policing and race are pushing campuses across the country to do profound self-assessment and self-reflection at all levels about the relationship of mental health needs, campus discipline and conduct, and racist policing practices. All campuses must find a balance between keeping their communities safe from external threats and an awareness and understanding of student mental health in the context of racism and policing. They must also balance the tension between respecting the privacy of investigation processes while at the same time encouraging transparency and accountability.

National and local data show that racially minoritized students are more likely to be reported for conduct concerns and more likely to be harshly disciplined.[xci] This led Framingham State University (see sidebar above), for instance, to develop restorative over punitive practices like fining or suspension/expulsion. Worcester State University, in similar fashion, has created an internal committee to assess its conduct policies; surveying faculty, staff, students, and affinity groups; and reviewing campus police data.

Partnerships with private practices, community agencies, and nonprofit foundations, such as JED, that have the cultural competencies for mental health care for racially minoritized student populations are helping campuses create a more multipronged and informed culture of mental health and wellness support. The Massachusetts chapter of the ACLU created a set of recommendations on more equitable, anti-racist, and transparent campus policing practices. In addition, Massachusetts campuses, such as MCLA, are also undertaking work in examining their policing practices.

Wellness, Conduct, and Safety Recommendations:

- Provide all staff with professional development opportunities on culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices
- Diversify our counseling corps and ensure that an understanding of racial trauma is a central part of counseling
- Review and revise campus policing practices to address racial trauma, center wellness and mental health awareness, incorporate restorative justice practices, and commit to transparency and accountability
- Perform equity-informed assessment of all conduct and discipline policies and practices in order to identify the disproportionate effects on racially minoritized students
- Replace punitive measures with restorative, developmental and educational approaches
- Partner with community agencies and other providers to amplify mental health support designed for racially minoritized students

Invitation

Student Bill of Rights

#7 Students have the right to a voice in the decisions that impact their undergraduate experience.[8]

The moral, economic, and democratic imperatives for transforming the Commonwealth's public higher education system to focus on racial equity and justice are clear. Importantly, during the transformation process, the people most affected by the changes—students—should be consulted. The *NUE* report was created in partnership with students. Students' voices—particularly racially minoritized students' voices—must continue to be an integral part of the process as recommendations are debated and policies are formed. At the same time, public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must flip the mindset of students' being "college-ready" to institutions being "student-ready." Institutions' must create services and activities that are intentionally designed to advance student success and educate racially minoritized students. This mindset change and supportive system cannot wait.

NUE members invite you to join with us and the DHE on the journey toward racial equity and justice. As Robert Sellers, the former Chief Diversity Officer at the University of Michigan, has emphasized, diversity, equity, and inclusion work must be considered together in partnership. As Sellers has famously said, "Diversity is where everyone is invited to the party. Inclusion means that everyone gets to contribute to the playlist. Equity means that everyone has the opportunity to dance."[xcii]

Additionally, the role of the BHE is vital to advancing the *NUE*'s recommendations. BHE support will help the DHE and individual institutions to forge ahead, navigate resistance, and fulfill the promise of transformative change. BHE's endorsement of the *NUE*'s recommendations to inform the statewide strategic plan underscores the focus on racial equity and justice, meets the urgency of the moment, and breathes life into the recommendations. Importantly, the BHE's support will also ensure that resources will be dedicated to the vision set forth in this document and in the upcoming statewide strategic plan.

To see progress and success, this process must be iterative, collaborative, inclusive, and a constant focus of the BHE, DHE, and individual institutions. Collaboration between the BHE, DHE, institutions, other stakeholders will be key to ensuring the success of the Commonwealth's journey toward racial equity and justice. But—as the detailed recommendations in this report suggest—each body has an individual role to play to create an environment focused on racial equity and justice and urgently drive the changes necessary. The *NUE* report will inspire the next step in this process: the development of the 10-year statewide strategic plan focused on racial equity. The strategic plan will take the recommendations in this report one step further by prioritizing them according to timelines and providing tangible metrics for implementation and accountability. The time for action is now.

[8] Refer to the NUE's structure and process regarding the level of integration of student involvement and the Student Bill of Rights that was derived from that student engagement.

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Accuplacer
An integrated system of computer-adaptive assessments designed to evaluate students' skills in reading, writing, and mathematics.
Source: Northern Essex Community College

Anti-racist Community-Engaged Pedagogy
Anti-racist community-engaged pedagogy (ARCEP) seeks to counteract the persistence and impact of racism on our campuses and in our community engagement through critical reflection on individual and systemic/structural racism (including institutional and governmental policies). Intentional ARCEP course design may include anti-racist learning goals, course content, policies and assessment; and the creation of a compassionate, reflective classroom that critically challenges racism when it happens, acknowledges the cultural wealth of students of color, and meets students where they are.
Source: NUE Group

Assets-Based Approach
An approach grounded in recognition of student cultural wealth, offering growth mindset, success strategies, and higher education navigation.
Source: NUE Report

Asset-based Language
Asset-based language defines people by their aspirations and contributions, rather than the systemic barriers and challenges they face.
Source: NUE Group

Capstone
Culminating curricular experiences that ask students to synthesize, integrate, and apply their learning. This may take the form of an intensive research project, artistic performance, comprehensive portfolio, etc.
Source: NUE Group

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)
A program designed to provide college credit to students for life experience including workplace training, military service, and volunteering.
Source: Massachusetts Community Colleges

Civic Engagement
Civic engagement means the work of deliberation and action that people do in collaboration with others to solve public problems and co-create a more just society.
Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

Civic Learning
Civic learning means acquisition of the knowledge, the intellectual skills and the applied competencies that citizens need for informed and effective participation in civic and democratic life; it also means acquiring an understanding of the social values that underlie democratic structures and practices.
Source: Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

Community Engaged Scholarship
A type of scholarship that seeks active partnerships between the university and the community as a way to generate and apply mutually beneficial and socially useful knowledge and practices.
Source: University of Colorado

Core Curriculum
A student-centered approach to curriculum that is learning outcomes-driven rather than content-driven.
Source: NUE Group

Cultural Wealth
An array of knowledges, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and used by communities of color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression.
*Source: Tara J. Yosso, "*Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," DOI, p. 154

Culturally Responsive/ Culturally Sustaining
"Culturally sustainable" or "culturally responsive pedagogies" means recognizing, maintaining, and developing cultural identity and diversity, as they are assets, not weaknesses, and employing pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.
Sources: Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," American Educational Research Journal, 1995. Django Paris, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice, American Education Resource Association and Sage Publication, *2012*

Co-Requisite Courses
The co-requisite course model allows students who would benefit from additional support to receive just-in-time remediation while receiving academic validation by being placed directly into a college-level course.
Source: Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Curricular Redesign
Revamping or upgrading content or creating new course structures and content for more effective learning opportunities.
Source: NUE Group

Decolonize Curricula
Curricula that focus on decolonization as a practice that brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life and does not use the term as a metaphor for other things that improve societies and schools.
Source: Indigenous Land and Decolonizing Curriculum, E. Tuck, 2015

Deficit Model
A perspective which attributes failures such as lack of achievement, learning, or success to a personal lack of effort or deficiency in the individual, rather than to failures or limitations of the education and training system or to prevalent socio-economic trends.
Source: Oxford References

Developmental Education
Non-credit bearing remedial courses that are designed to develop the reading, writing, or math skills of students who are deemed underprepared for college-level courses.
Source: Center for the Analysis of Post-Secondary Readiness

Digital Inequity
A condition where not all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in society, democracy and economy.
Source: National Digital Inclusion Alliance

Diversity
Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).
Source: NUE Group

Dual Admissions
Dual Admissions enables a community college student who plans to complete a baccalaureate degree to be simultaneously admitted to a four-year college while earning an associate degree. Admission to the four-year institution is guaranteed as long as certain requirements (e.g., time, credit, grade point average) are met.
Source: ECS

Dual Enrollment
The Massachusetts Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership provides opportunities for Massachusetts high school students to take college-level courses for free or at a discounted price and earn credit toward high school completion and their future college degrees.
Source: Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Educational Justice
A form of educational equity committed to building power and capacity in historically underserved communities, advancing policies and practices that achieve educational justice,

and shifting decision-making power and representation throughout the education system to be inclusive of community voices.
Source: NUE Group

Equity
The creation of opportunities for underserved and racially minoritized populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.
Source: NUE Group

Equity Audit
Equity audits identify institutional practices that produce discriminatory trends that affect students.
Source: Intercultural Development Research Association

Equity-Mindedness
Refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes. These practitioners take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices. It also requires that practitioners are race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American higher education.[9]
Source: Center for Urban Education and University of Southern California

Experiential Learning
Engaged learning processes whereby students "learn by doing" and reflecting on the experience. Experiential learning activities can include, but are not limited to, civic engagement, internships, practicums, field exercises, study abroad, undergraduate research and studio performances.
Source: NUE Group

Gateway Courses
The first credit-bearing college-level course 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. Typically, every student majoring in each discipline must pass through the gateway courses.
Source: Every Learner Everywhere

High-Impact Practices
Teaching and learning practices that have been widely tested and shown to be beneficial for college students from many demographic groups. These practices take various forms depending on learner characteristics.
Source: NUE Group

[9] Definitions quoted from AAC&U, "Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity: Core Principles," in "Making Excellence Inclusive" (https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive)

Inclusion
The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.
Source: NUE Group

Inclusive Excellence
An active process designed to help colleges and universities integrate diversity, equity, and educational quality efforts into their missions and institutional operations. This includes uncovering inequities in student success, identifying effective educational practices, and building such practices organically for sustained institutional change.
Source: Association of American Colleges & Universities

Instructional Design
A field of study that marries education, psychology, and communications to create the most effective teaching plans for specific groups of students. This ensures that students receive instructions in a form that is effective and meaningful to them, helping them better understand the topics and concepts being taught**.**
Source: Purdue University

Intersectionality
The theory that various forms of discrimination centered on race, gender, class, disability, sexuality, and other forms of identity, do not work independently but interact to produce particularized forms of social oppression.
Source: Oxford Reference

Invisible Labor
Efforts essential to the success of the students, but unrecognized by the institution.
Source: NUE Group

Learning Community
Includes a collection of thematically connected courses and co-curricular activities that cohorts of students participate in together. Learning communities are intended to support student academic success, identity development, and sense of belonging.
Source: NUE Group

Micro-Credentials
Certifications that verify, validate, and attest that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved. They differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible timespans and tend to be more narrowly focused. Micro-credentials can be offered online, in the classroom, or via a hybrid of both.
Source: SUNY

Minoritization
To make (a person or group) subordinate in status to a more dominant group or its members.
Source: Dictionary.com

Multiple Measures
Using various metrics or standards, such as high school GPA, self-assessment/self-placement, and individualized learning pathways when making learning or placement decisions for students.
Source: DHE Report

Nontraditional Students
Students who have been out of high school for at least three years.
Source: University of Massachusetts Lowell

Open Educational Resources
OER are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium—digital or otherwise—that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.
Source: MA Department of Higher Education

Pell-Eligible
Pell-eligible students are undergraduate students who are eligible for Federal Pell grants because they display exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree.
Source: Federal Student Aid

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)
The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) gives Essex and Middlesex County residents the chance to earn college credit for prior learning and work experience by credentialing skills attained outside of the traditional classroom.
Source: Northshore Community College

Racialization
The act of giving a racial character to someone or something the process of categorizing, marginalizing, or regarding according to race.
Source: Merriam-Webster

Racially Minoritized Students
Nonwhite students. NUE authors chose this terminology based on the most-recent language being used by the Massachusetts Department of Education. NUE authors believe this terminology to be the most representative at this time but understand that language and terminology evolve and therefore "racially minoritized students" may not resonate with all constituencies and may evolve over time.
Source: NUE Group

Reparative Justice
A voluntary process whereby the offenders, victims, and members of the community collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations resulting from an offense, in order to understand the impact of that offense. Restorative justice requires an offender's acceptance of responsibility for their actions and supports the offender as they make repair to the victim or community in which the harm occurred.
Source: Massachusetts Senate Bill 847

Satisfactory Academic Progress
Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is the measurement of a student's academic progress toward their degree. SAP evaluates three components to determine eligibility for financial aid: qualitative measure (cumulative grade point average), quantitative measure (percentage of coursework completed) and maximum timeframe allowed for degree completion.
Source: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)
The SoTL model engages full and part-time faculty in a Syllabus Review Guide as an inquiry tool for promoting racial and ethnic equity and equity-minded practice. The syllabus review process promotes faculty inquiry into teaching approaches and practices, especially on how they affect racially and ethnically minoritized students.
Source: DHE Report

Single Point of Contact
A Single Point of Contact (SPOC) is the on-campus point person for addressing the needs of homeless youth and providing a continuum of support after homeless students transition from high school to post-secondary education. The SPOC assists homeless youth during matriculation and throughout their post-secondary career, helping students access a broad range of services both on and off campus.
Source: University of Massachusetts Boston

Stackable Credentials
Credentials that articulate toward a higher-level certificate, degree, or other credential. Credentials at the beginning of the sequence allow students to earn a short-term, industry-recognized credential so they can find skilled work while preparing for the next step in their career or academic path.
Source: North Shore Community College

Strength-Based Model
Strengths-based education is a learner-centered approach that helps students identify, articulate, and apply individual skills relevant to their learning needs. Principles of strengths-based education include helping students identify their own strengths building student's strengths through deliberate practice and engagement and provide mentorship opportunities or create cohort-based class collaboratives that provides peer support and feedback.
Source: Saint Louis University

Student-Ready College
A college where services and activities are intentionally designed to facilitate students' advancement toward college completion and positive post-college outcomes. Student-ready colleges strategically and holistically advance student success and educates all students for civic and economic participation in a global, interconnected society. They are committed to student achievement, organizational learning, and institutional improvement.
Source: Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success by McNair, Albertine, Cooper, McDonald, and Major (2016).

Universal Design
The National Center for Universal Design for Learning defines Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone rather than a one size fits all approach. It also guides educators to use a flexible approach that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.
Source: Boston Public Schools

VALUE Rubrics
VALUE stands for Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education. VALUE is an evidence-based, faculty developed assessment approach organized and lead by AAC&U as part of its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative.
Source: Association of American Colleges & Universities

White Privilege
The set of social and economic advantages that white people have by virtue of their race in a culture characterized by racial inequality.
Source: Merriam-Webster

Appendix B: Consolidated Recommendations

Key: Recommended Owners
■ Collaboration between DHE and Institutions
✦ DHE/BHE-led
△ Individual institutions

Consolidated Recommendations
Admission, Enrollment, and Transfer
● Examine admissions practices through a racial equity and justice lens to ensure that all students feel supported in the application and enrollment processes. ■ ● Create programs to ensure that every Early College student in the Commonwealth is automatically accepted to their local community college or state university without needing to submit SAT scores or complete enrollment paperwork. ■ ● Establish Early College funding models that are flexible and inclusive including art and design pathways. ■ ● Develop and implement recruitment, admissions, and enrollment policies and practices that increase the enrollment of racially minoritized students. ■ ● Establish practices that support students in understanding and accessing financial aid. ■ ● Develop admissions policies that automatically welcome and accept all high school seniors who live withing a regional catchment area to attend their institution, without students needing to go through any application process because racially minoritized students are often undermatched and are not always encouraged to apply to universities. This approach must be piloted, and data gathered to support scaling up this approach. △ ● Develop a statewide dual admission program between community colleges and universities to reduce the uncertainty and barriers of transfer that disproportionately impact racially minoritized students. ■ ● Partner with community-based organizations that provide counseling and services to college applicants of all ages. △ ● Require institutions to use the MassTransfer course equivalency database to facilitate smooth transfer of courses. ■ ● Develop a system that will automatically contact qualifying transfer students to complete the ReverseTransfer/FERPA release form when eligible for the associate degree. ✦ ● Work with high schools across the Commonwealth to establish quality Early College programming through its public institutions and increase enrollment in designated Early College programs. ■
Curriculum
● Strengthen the Prior Learning Assessment consortium by including universities. ✦ ● Collect comprehensive and intersectional data on post-secondary English Language Learners beyond enrollment: age, full or part-time status, demographics across the state, retention, completion, transfer, and employment. ■ ● Revive the statewide Developmental Education Advisory Board and charge it with phasing out non-credit-bearing standalone developmental education courses system-wide and supporting community colleges and universities in developing credit-bearing courses designed to support students in their learning, including

co-requisite, integrated, and accelerated options, in alignment with the New England Commission of Higher Education accreditation standards. ✦

- Create and charge a broadly inclusive working group with the examination and re-design of the Core Curriculum while maintaining the benefits of the MassTransfer General Education Foundation. ■
- Create a Core Curriculum framework that is outcomes-driven rather than content-driven while still allowing for individual institutional flexibility. ■
- Integrate racial justice education principles into the Core Curriculum framework. ■
- Guide students into exploring the public dimensions of their field of study, including how the field can contribute to understanding and addressing major public problems such as racism especially General Studies as an area of study. △
- Provide faculty in every program of study with student success data disaggregated by race and professional development that will enable them to analyze the points at which they are failing to serve racially minoritized students in their program and explore alternative practices that would better serve these students. △
- Create a transfer policy and partnership among all universities to recognize Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) awarded by community colleges. ✦
- Formalize a DHE-supported, statewide working group to create integrated courses, share resources and best practices, standardize system and design, recommend non-credit to credit pathways, and create a rubric for awarding credit to multilingual students. ✦
- Adopt the Seal of Biliteracy to provide credit to multilingual students in order to receive credit, similar to Advanced Placement scores. △
- Provide more ELL resources to community colleges through existing budget streams. ■
- Integrate racial justice learning outcomes throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum, woven into each institution's mission and mapped onto disciplinary and Institutional Learning Outcomes. △
- Create interdisciplinary programs to develop students' abilities to address complex public and societal problems. △
- When developing new programs or making changes to existing programs, ensure the design includes recruitment and marketing strategies; enrollment and retention; learning goals and objectives; faculty, staff, and operational resource allocation, which are deliberate and intentional in serving racially minoritized students. △
- Ensure equity-minded oversight of CPL, including the creation of equity-minded assessments and reviews of practices to ensure that racially minoritized students are benefitting from CPL. ✦
- Redirect financial resources to support students in Developmental Education, through existing budget streams such as HEIF grants and institutional aid. △
- Align college curricula with feeder high school content in partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure that students do not repeat and pay for courses unnecessarily. ■

Equity-Minded Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

- Develop and adopt campus-specific, data-driven equity-minded pedagogical approaches. △
- Collect, analyze, and utilize data that portray the benefits of utilizing OERs specifically for racially minoritized students. ■
- Seek legislative support to obtain funding to create a competitive OER campus funds program to increase and encourage adoption (faculty members enacting OER), adaptation (faculty members remixing and revising existing OER to make it more culturally and disciplinary relevant), and creation (faculty members

creating their own digital textbooks for their own and others' use) of OER, especially in STEM and Core Curriculum courses. ■

- Create institutional commitment to resources for equity-minded assessment, including support and professional development for faculty-led learning outcomes assessment, and resources for Institutional Research Offices. △
- Enhance and scale up DHE supported, system-wide platforms for collaborative professional development. ✦
- Prioritize trauma training and education, as well as universal design for assignments and curriculum, in strategic planning for Massachusetts colleges and universities. △
- Incorporate short-term and long-term equity-focused professional development plans for faculty in institutional strategic plans. △
- Provide faculty with the support and resources necessary for their development in anti-racist and high-impact practices and pedagogies including the use and interpretation of data. ■
- Create and support Centers for Teaching and Learning that can facilitate campus-based and collaborative professional development. △
- Develop institutional learning outcomes and assessment methodologies based on current, equity-minded learning models. ■
- Provide training and support for faculty and staff on how to conduct institutional assessment and how to conduct data analysis including disaggregating the data in order to assess the impact on racially minoritized students. △
- Implement recognition, financial and non-financial incentives, and faculty tenure & promotion to encourage the use and development of OER, community-engaged scholarship, and interdisciplinary pedagogies. ■
- Implement equity-minded assessment resources including support and professional development for faculty-led learning outcomes assessment, and resources for Institutional Research Offices. △

High-Impact Practices and Co-Curriculum

- Create a system-wide community of practice in which campuses, employers, and community leaders are engaged in developing shared language, definitions, essential elements, and learning objectives for HIPs and the co-curriculum. ■
- Create mentoring networks of racially minoritized faculty, staff, alumni, and employers who will support racially minoritized students throughout their time in the public higher education system. △
- Support faculty who choose to mentor by providing the appropriate training, course release or stipends, and having this work explicitly counted in consideration for promotion, tenure, and merit pay. △
- Re-envision faculty and staff workloads to allow for effective implementation of HIPs. ■
- Establish innovative experiential learning opportunities that count toward degree completion, including rethinking the separation between "internship" and "work". △
- Create anti-racist civic engagement opportunities for students across both the Core Curriculum and degree programs. △
- Institute capstones and learning communities at all community colleges and build on existing ones at universities. △
- Develop opportunities that connect faculty, staff, employers, and students to partner with each other and the DHE in collaborative cross-campus projects. ■
- Assess existing honors programs to identify opportunities to improve recruitment of, access for, and support of racially minoritized students. ■
- Identify institutional barriers to accessing HIPs for racially minoritized students, assess the impact of these

barriers on the students, and remedy the barriers. △

Hiring, Supporting, and Retaining Faculty of Color

- Hire Chief Diversity Officers who are empowered to lead diverse faculty hiring and retention efforts to signal institutional commitment to faculty diversity. △
- Develop and implement strategic recruiting plans (including faculty and their spouses) for attracting faculty of color that engage the entire institutional community. △
- Design promotion, tenure, reward, and recognition processes that prioritize racial equity, justice, equity-mindedness, and other diverse forms of scholarship. ■
- Establish employee resource groups for faculty and staff of color and their allies to cultivate a supportive community. △
- Develop systems to recognize and reward invisible labor taken on by faculty of color. △
- Institute a DHE-supported, system-wide effort to develop racially minoritized students to become the faculty of the future. ✦
- Implement promotion, tenure, reward, and recognition processes that prioritize racial equity, justice, equity-mindedness, and other diverse forms of scholarship. ■

Holistic Student Support

- Examine campus and system discipline, financial, probation, leave (including medical leave), withdrawal, hold, and readmissions policies through an equity lens. ✦
- Reframe "support centers" as "success and achievement centers," or even as "Centers of Excellence," moving away from a deficit-minded approach and toward assets-based approaches grounded in recognition of student cultural wealth, offering growth mindset, success strategies, and higher education navigation. ■
- Work with Human Resources to ensure that all full and part time faculty have the digital resources to be successful in all facets of their teaching and support of students. △
- Provide all staff with professional development opportunities on culturally-responsive and trauma-informed practices. ■
- Diversify our counseling corps and ensure that an understanding of racial trauma is a central part of counseling. ■
- Develop and align equitable Satisfactory Academic Progress standards (SAP), leave, withdrawal and readmissions policies across the Commonwealth, including Fresh Start policies. ■
- Build partnerships between career services and academic departments and programs in creating integrated curricular and co-curricular pathways through graduation and employment. △
- Implement the recommendations presented in the Basic Needs Security Plan. ■
- Perform equity-informed assessment of all conduct and discipline policies and practices in order to identify the disproportionate effects on racially minoritized students. △
- Partner with community agencies and other providers to amplify mental health support designed for racially minoritized students. △
- Implement flexible, accelerated semesters and scheduling so that students who stop out have multiple on-ramps back into learning. △
- Create visible networks of faculty and staff who are first-generation and/ or people of color, such as campus-wide affinity groups or multicultural centers. △
- Review and revise campus policing practices to address racial trauma, center wellness and mental health

awareness, incorporate restorative justice practices, and commit to transparency and accountability. ■

- Replace punitive measures with restorative, developmental and educational approaches. △

Appendix C: Charge from Commissioner Santiago

The New Undergraduate Experience: *A Vision for Dismantling Barriers, Recognizing Students' Cultural Wealth, and Achieving Racial Equity in Public Higher Education in Massachusetts*

Steering Committee Charge

The Steering Committee of the New Undergraduate Experience is charged with organizing and facilitating the creation of a new guiding document for Massachusetts Public Higher Education: "The New Undergraduate Experience: A Vision for Dismantling Barriers, Recognizing Students' Cultural Wealth, and Achieving Racial Equity in Public Higher Education in Massachusetts."

In 1989, the Board of Regents of Higher Education issued "The Undergraduate Experience," a nearly 60-page document detailing recommendations to define the student experience at Massachusetts public institutions. This report is long overdue for a comprehensive update that acknowledges and responds to our vastly different times. Furthermore, as the number one policy priority of the Board and DHE is to address racial equity, it is imperative that a guiding document clearly express our collective vision for the cultural, curricular, pedagogical, and structural changes needed for a true transformation in public higher education. Furthermore, this collective vision will ensure access and ground the policies and practices needed for all students to succeed in reaching their goals at our public institutions.

The New Undergraduate Experience must be unmistakably grounded in racial equity, and it must be explicit and deliberate in dismantling barriers and creating access pathways for marginalized students. The means through which student cultural wealth is valued and racial equity realized must be quantified in the currency of academic credit and a formalized exchange rate for competencies and skills learned outside of the academy. Pedagogies and structures for delivering content must be culturally proficient, readily accessible, and intentionally student-centered. The New Undergraduate Experience document will also inform the development of the statewide equity strategic plan by delineating the implementation time horizon (i.e., short, mid or long term) and if the recommendation is best addressed at the institutional and/or system-wide level. It should boldly strive to provide fully equitable opportunities and to compensate for the (unwitting or otherwise) impact of racism and other forms of discrimination and unequal treatment in public higher education prior to this moment in history.

To achieve these ends, the Steering Committee is charged to work collaboratively with the Student Ready Colleges and Universities Committee and the Teaching and Learning Committee, whose membership will be charged with addressing and drafting portions of the document reflective of those aspects of the student experience. This collaboration will account for and incorporate, as appropriate, work already undertaken by many public institutions. The Steering Committee will also provide guidance and direction to the Committees. The Committees will share their work with the Steering Committee, which will act as a thought-partner with the

committees and will organize and facilitate the completion of the combined report based on that work.

The Steering Committee has been thoughtfully formed to represent diverse leadership in the Commonwealth and to broadly reflect our institutions, many of which are already advancing this work. The Steering Committee is explicitly charged with proposing and requesting the contributions of those who represent all aspects of our public institutions—students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members. While the composition of the committee is formed to elicit these voices, the committee is also encouraged to seek authentic input from others.

Ultimately, the Steering Committee is charged with the completion of what will serve as a 21st century foundational document for public higher education in Massachusetts.

The Steering Committee will meet at least monthly, beginning in December, and in charged to present its final recommended document to the Commissioner by May 2021.

Student Ready Colleges and Universities Committee Charge

The Student Ready Committee is charged with considering, discussing, and formulating recommendations that will guide public institutions in:

- creating or updating policies and practices designed to serve all students who attend them, and
- sustaining a culturally engaging environment that recognizes the assets students bring to higher education.

Given the increasing diversity of the students at our public institutions in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender status, gender expression, religion, language, ability, and economic means, we must be ready and prepared to meet the whole needs of our students – intellectual, emotional, social, and physical. The committee's recommendations will focus on objectives and outcomes that center student access and success via inclusive and equitable educational strategies, policies, and practices.

The committee will propose asset-based recommendations for our institutions to witness and honor students in the fullness of their humanity. Furthermore, the recommendations will build upon their strengths, recognize what they already know and can do, and enable them to use their gifts, talents, knowledge, and experiences to successfully achieve their educational goals. This approach will lead to greater student engagement in the economic and civic life of our Commonwealth.

This committee will develop recommendations that ensure there is a holistic consideration of our students. A student's life experience is defined not only by academics, but also by the larger

context in which they live. Our institutions' work begins with ensuring that the institutional culture and environment is welcoming, engaging, safe and affordable.

The committee will develop recommendations that address how students are assessed upon entry into the institution and how students perceive and assess an institution's reception of them. These factors directly determine students' decisions to enroll, how they choose their curriculum pathways, and their ability to persist and complete their chosen program(s). If these matters are not addressed properly, students may be precluded from being successful before they begin. Public higher education must recognize that outreach is significant for potential students who may aspire to college, but are not sure they belong there nor are they sure how to begin their educational journey.

As a result, institutions must recognize and account for students' perceptions upon entry, during assessment and onboarding. In addition, in order for students to focus on learning, the committee will need to address financial, housing, healthcare, and food insecurity that many of our students encounter. The availability of institutional resources and supports is necessary, but not sufficient for a student's success if students are not confident or knowledgeable enough to feel empowered to access them. Accordingly, the committee should consider how institutions could build structures that encourage the development of faculty-staff relationships with students that will propel students to develop greater self-efficacy in their own institutional navigation skills. In that light, the committee must recognize and address the value of community assets and networks and their relationships with public higher education institutions, which are also essential to helping students to meet their needs.

Finally, public higher education must also provide a robust co-curricular experience for students that will develop many elements of critical learning outcomes gained by participating in activities such as orientation, first-year experiences, and student clubs. These interactions assist students to matriculate at and graduate from a university or to transfer successfully from a community college to a four-year institution. Enabling or extending active and positive co-curriculum programs and supports for adults who are often already in the workplace means public higher education must embrace policies and practices attuned to adult learners including, but not limited to, those related to childcare, family care, transportation, and related basic needs.

The Student Ready Committee includes diverse participants in order to ensure the development of research-based, thoughtful, and engaging recommendations that will challenge our institutions by deconstructing structural racism and other institutional barriers that limit the opportunity for our students to not only survive in higher education, but also thrive.

The chapters drafted by the Student Ready Committee will be shared with the Steering Committee throughout the process and will ultimately be provided to the Steering Committee for its review and approval by April 2021 to submit to the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Teaching and Learning Committee Charge

The Teaching and Learning Committee is charged with considering, discussing, and formulating recommendations that will guide public institutions in creating a culturally responsive curriculum, which centers students as agents in their education and lives, acknowledges the assets they bring with them to the classroom, and honors their human dignity. The committee will also offer recommendations to ensure that the pedagogy and curriculum will prepare students to demonstrate their acquisition of essential learning outcomes that will enable them to function successfully in the larger society. Curriculum will be addressed through general education, majors, and electives in this revisioning of public higher education.

The Committee will develop specific recommendations for a **general education foundation** that is integrated across disciplines, and relies as little as possible on siloed, menu-driven protocols by incorporating AAC&U's LEAP framework for Essential Learning Outcomes that include the knowledge and skills that students will need to participate effectively in civic and democratic life. This framework will include acknowledging the assets of our students and working to overcome the structural challenges faced by dual and multi-lingual students who possess a primary language other than English.

The Committee will develop and recommend a **framework for academic majors** that illuminates how each discipline and interdisciplinary field of inquiry has a public dimension, preparing students to use their learning for civic responsibility and racial equity. The committee must account for some professions having strict requirements regarding accreditation or licensure. The Committee will also strive to reduce walls and barriers to integrating and strengthening general education in concert with such requirements. In addition, the Committee will address the role of electives in broadening students' knowledge and allowing them to explore diverse interests.

The Committee will develop recommendations about how **curriculum** is taught, delivered, and made accessible. This will include the use of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Open Pedagogy, High-Impact Practices and Universal Design for Learning among others. To complement the use of culturally responsive pedagogy and materials, the Committee should also form recommendations about best and emergent practices in professional development.

In addition to curriculum and pedagogy, another important aspect that supports student identity and sense of belonging at every institution is the **diversity of higher education faculty and staff**. Therefore, the committee should develop recommendations to continue to diversify higher education faculty and staff by means of evidence-based recruitment and retention policies and strategies. In addition, more robust and intentional diversity hiring efforts must also be aligned with institutionalized systems of rewards for faculty advancement through teaching and community-engaged scholarship that will recognize and reward well-developed skills and culturally proficient teaching practices.

The Committee will develop recommendations about **research-based assessment practices** that each campus can deploy in order to offer multiple socially just assessment strategies when determining what students are learning. Socially just assessment requires that we incorporate the experiences of minoritized students who have lived in systems of oppression. In this way, we can shift from reinforcing to deconstructing institutional structures. Thus, assessment can nurture forms of learning that provide greater social justice in society as a whole.

The Committee will also develop recommendations about the use of **Online Education** and address the impact of technology on pedagogy and student learning outcomes. Classroom technology includes the use of learning management systems, video technology, synchronous communication, digital textbooks and ancillaries, interactive presentation software, etc. This would include an exploration of the challenges and opportunities posed by a transition to remote instruction driven by a public health emergency or other potential emergent crises. Institutions will need to be flexible and to adapt to the changing environment in which teaching and learning may occur.

The Committee will also consider how to deploy **alternative sources of credit** (e.g., PLA, competency-based education, the seal of biliteracy, and other alternative forms of credit that may emerge in the future) to fulfill learning and completion goals that will augment students' progress toward a credential or degree.

The Committee is composed of diverse participants in order to ensure the development of research-based, thoughtful, and engaging recommendations. These recommendations will need to challenge our institutions by interrogating and deconstructing the various obvious, nuanced, indirect and embedded elements of racism and other institutional barriers that limit the opportunity for our students to not only access and survive in higher education, but also to thrive.

The chapters drafted by the Committee will be shared with the Steering Committee throughout the process and will ultimately be provided to the Steering Committee for its review and approval by April 2021 to submit to the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Appendix D: NUE Committee Members

Name	Job Title	Institution
DHE Staff Members		
Robert J. Awkward	Assistant Commissioner for Academic Effectiveness	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Cynthia Brown	Associate Commissioner for Regulatory and Veterans Affairs	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Samantha Giffen	Graduate Research Assistant	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Winifred M. Hagan	Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Public Program Approval	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Allison Little	Assistant Commissioner for P-16 Alignment and Outreach	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Patricia A. Marshall	Deputy Commissioner or Academic Affairs and Student Success	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Elena Quiroz-Livanis	Chief of Staff and Assistant Commissioner for Academic Policy and Student Success	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
John Reiff	Director of Civic Learning and Engagement	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Rachel Rubinstein	Former Senior Advisor for Academic Affairs and Student Success	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Christine Williams	Assistant Commissioner for Regulatory Affairs and Strategic Initiatives	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Steering Committee		
William Berry	Professor, Language and Literature	Cape Cod Community College
B. Stephen Boyd	CEO/Chairman	Boyd Tech./Berkshire Innov. Ctr.
Constanza Cabello	Former VP, DI, and Community Engagement	Framingham State University
Alberto Cardelle	Former Provost and VP, Academic Affairs	Fitchburg State University
Fred Clark	President	Bridgewater State University

Patty Eppinger	Board Member	Board of Higher Education
Yves Salomon-Fernández	Former President	Greenfield Community College
Carlnita Greene	Dean, Behavioral, Social Sciences and Global Learning	Bunker Hill Community College
Laura Hayden	Interim Dean of College of Education and Human Development	UMass Boston
Imari Parris Jeffries	Executive Director Trustee	King Boston University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees
Anna Johnson	Student	Worcester State University
Tia Brown McNair	VP, DE&I and Student Success	AAC&U
Harshil Patel	Student	UMass Dartmouth
Khalilah Reddie	Associate Teaching Professor, Chemistry	UMass Lowell
Linda Saris	Executive Director	LEAP for Education
Carolay Suarez	Student	Northern Essex Community
Henry Thomas, III	President and CEO	Urban League of Springfield
Sebastián Vélez	Professor, Biology	Worcester State University
Teaching and Learning Committee		
Mari Casteñeda	Dean, Commonwealth Honors College	UMass Amherst
Eric Fan	Student	UMass Lowell
Paul Hernandez	Former Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs	Mt. Wachusett Community College
Kehinde Ikuomensian	Professor, STEM and Education	North Shore Community College
Alexa Jean-Baston	Student	Holyoke Community College
Robert Layne	Dean, Outreach Programs	UMass Medical School
Jose Lopez	Chair, Education Committee	Boston NAACP
Cynthia Lynch	Exec. Director, Center for Civic Engagement	Salem State University
Dimitri Moore	Student	Fitchburg State University
Takeru Nagayoshi	Former Art Teacher	New Bedford High School
Theresa O'Bryant	Dean, Center for Student Success and Engagement	Mass. College of Liberal Arts
Noreen McGinness Olson	Director of Academic Support	Middlesex Community College

Lee Santos Silva	Director, Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth	Bunker Hill Community College
Kristin Osborne	Assistant Professor, Marine Science, Safety and Env. Protection	Mass. Maritime Academy
Lyssa Palu-ay	Dean of Justice, Equity and Transformation	Mass. College of Art and Design
Tara Parker	Department Chair, Higher Education	UMass Boston
Ventura Rodriguez	Former Senior Associate Commissioner	MA Dept. of Elem. and Sec. Education
Paul Toner	Senior Director, Teach Plus	Board of Higher Education
Ruby Vega	Assoc. Prof. and Director, Center for Teaching and Learning	Mass. College of Liberal Arts
Pratt Wiley	President and CEO	The Partnership, Inc.
Student Ready Committee		
Melissa Alves	Director of Career Services	Fitchburg State University
Evelyn Ashley	Dean of Students	UMass Amherst
Joyce Atkinson	Coordinator of Academic Support	Roxbury Community College
Laura Bayless	Vice President of Student Affairs	Fitchburg State University
Stephanie Beauvil	Student	UMass Boston
Amy Belina	Assoc. Dir. Of Student Financial Services	Springfield Technical Community College
LaDonna Bridges	Assoc. Dean of Academic Support	Framingham State University
Tiffany Chenault	Professor, Sociology	Salem State University
Jamie Costello	Dean of Students	Mass. College of Art and Design
Enrique Morales-Diaz	Interim Dean of Faculty	Westfield State University
Jane Fain	Coordinator of Transfer Affairs	Middlesex Community College
Sabrina Gentlewarrior	VP, Student Success and Diversity	Bridgewater State University
Dezary Guzman	Student	Quinsigamond Community College
Marcela Uribe-Jennings	Former Assistant Dean, Multicultural Affairs	Worcester State University
Valerie Kapilow	Director of STEM Starter Academy	Mass. Bay Community College
Chris Laney	Professor, History	Berkshire Community College

Juan Martinez	Student	Westfield State University
Beth Mitchell	Senior Director, Integration	General Dynamics Missile Systems
John Previte	Academic Advisor, Veterans Center	Bristol Community College
Mary W. Sarris	Executive Director	MassHire North Shore Workforce Board
Marquis Taylor	Chief Executive Officer	Coaching 4 Change
Tracey Wallace	Senior Coordinator For New Student Transfers	UMass Dartmouth
Karen Wilber	Program Director, MA and CA	uAspire Massachusetts
Bryan Wint	Director of Advising and Academic Pathways	Middlesex Community College
Deanna Yameen	Provost and VP, Academic and Student Affairs	Massasoit Community College

Appendix D: Current Commonwealth and National Efforts: A Snapshot

The following outlines ongoing Commonwealth and National efforts to address racial equity:

- The DHE received a TIE (Talent, Innovation, Equity) Lumina grant that is supporting many of the state system's equity-related initiatives (see https://www.mass.edu/about/newsreleases/nr-20200910.asp), such as:
- **DHE's internal equity policy and program audit.** Several programs and policies are scheduled to be reviewed this year and more in years 2 and 3. This process will then inform individual campuses as they undertake their own equity policy and program audits.
- **Lumina equity grants to six institutions** in the system who are piloting or supporting equity-related projects in student mentoring and/or professional development. One of those institutions is Bridgewater State, which is using the grant to support the **Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI), a consortium of 25 campuses in the region** committed to data-informed educational equity work, which is convened and coordinated by Bridgewater State University. They are producing a **Racial Equity and Justice Handbook**, which will be a compendium of case studies/best practices at individual campuses.
- **Bunker Hill's Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth** is another important resource for equity work in the state.
- In 2020-21, the DHE's **HEIF grants** (Higher Education Innovation Fund, formerly known as PIF) prioritized institutions addressing equity needs on their campuses.
- **OER (Open Educational Resources) Advisory Council**, led by Dr. Bob Awkward at DHE.
- **Equity Advisory Board**: focused on (1) building/expanding the Equity Coalition and (2) supporting this group of like-minded partners, from DHE staff to campus colleagues to representatives of other organizations, in advocating collectively for the funding and policy changes needed to achieve racial justice in Massachusetts public higher education.

Some national initiatives that inform the project:

- **CUE (Center for Urban Education)** Equity Scorecard Project and many self-assessment tools: https://www.cue-tools.usc.edu/
- **USC's Center for Race and Equity: https://race.usc.edu/**
- **AAC&U**'s many resources and initiatives related to equity: https://www.aacu.org/committing-to-equity **and Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Campus Centers:** https://www.aacu.org/trht-campus-centers
- **NASH (National Association of System Heads)** published an equity self-assessment/framework: http://nashonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NASH-Equity-Action-Framework-Summary.pdf

Appendix E: Student Focus Groups Themes

I. Additional Support at Important Moments of Transition

This was the most salient theme from our conversations with students. Recommendations should include more resources being devoted to offices, staff, and programs that support students during these key inflection points. Alternative support systems should also be explored and elevated especially when they are intentional about their strategies for supporting students with minoritized identities. Below are the examples of challenges students said they faced that resulted from a lack of support, or an ineffective support structure, during key times in their college transitions and experiences.

Example Challenges:

- Applying to college and transferring colleges
- Navigating pre-college requirements such as SATs
- Jargon of Higher Education - barrier for immigrants, children of immigrants, first generation to college, and others
- ELL - students will have to do two years of ELL before even enrolling in a program
- Navigating academic advising, often needing to figure things out on their own
- Understanding the financial landscape

II. Student Identities Reflected and Valued in the Curriculum and on the Campus

Students validated the importance of their social identities being reflected and valued in all parts of their college experience. Students shared instances where they struggled or felt marginalized because they didn't feel valued or represented and explained how this impacted their choices, sense of belonging, and overall progress in college. Recommendations should include intentionality in the development of campus materials, curriculum, programs, and hiring practices to ensure there is relevance to students' lives, representation of their identities, and value of their ideas/experiences.

Examples of Recommendations:

- Curriculum should be relevant to students' lives and experiences
- Students' experiences and ideas being valued in class discussions
- Representation of their social identities should be reflected by the faculty, staff, and students on campus

III. Representation in Student Government and to Have a Voice in Decisions that Affect Them

Students consistently shared the importance of being able to do something about the (racial) injustices they were experiencing or witnessing. Students shared both the powerless feeling they had against the racial injustices they experienced or witnessed, and strategies they took to actively combat these

injustices. Recommendations should include a focus on shared governance, a method for reporting injustices, accountability for those who are responsible for injustices, and space to reflect on these experiences.

Examples of Student Agency in Combating Injustices:


Starting a new student organization


Reporting racist incidents with faculty and staff being held accountable for their actions


Creating a space to talk about injustices as a community


Students having a strong and consistent role in institution's shared governance

IV. For Institutions to be Transparent and Accountable in Implementing the Equity Agenda

Students focus group participants expressed frustration and fatigue with campuses talking about equity and the value of diversity, but not taking action to demonstrate their commitment. Furthermore, there was expressed fatigue with taking surveys and participating in dialogues that aim to identify areas of improvement and opportunity for equity initiatives. There was an expressed frustration with needing to re-live traumas through dialogues to show campus administrators the need for change, yet change is not communicated to the student body or brought to fruition. Recommendations should include improved communication with students to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of equity initiatives.

Examples of What Students Want From Their Institutions:


Transparency about the decisions being made and the action plans developed


Accountability for implementing diversity and equity initiatives


Student voices are being heard and campuses caring enough to change

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