Equity Ready Boards:
Campus Trustees as Bridge Builders

Critical Higher Education Governance Collaborative

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Getting ready for what?

Broadening our Equity Perspective

Reframing the Role of the Trustee: Equity as Fiduciary Duty

Conceptual Tools for Equity
Spotlight on Equity Issues in Massachusetts

Levers for Equity using Culturally Sustaining Governance

Next Steps & Action Items

Question & Answers
Getting ready for what?
A walk down memory lane…
“Advancing equity means more than simply creating a level playing field; it requires a concerted and intentional effort to remove barriers and obstacles that hinder the success of students that heretofore did not have these advantages.”

Elena Quiroz-Livanis, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

“Evolving a complex set of systems, like white supremacy and capitalism, and longstanding institutions like governments, banks, and foundations, requires bridge builders who can envision opportunities for change and lead with compassion.”

Edgar Villanueva, Author of *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous wisdom to heal divides and restore balance*
Today’s Goal:
Help you conceptualize your role as Bridge Builders for Equity
Poll Everywhere
Instructions

• From a **phone**
• Text: DOCTORORRAQ TO 22333
• Send your response

OR

• From an **internet enabled device**
• Login: Pollev.com/docctororraq
How would you define equity in one word?
Broadening our Equity Perspective
What questions should we be asking?
“...a concern for educational outcomes that are cognizant of and responsive to how socio-cultural forces (i.e. structural ‘-isms’) impede or propel student success and institutional accountability.”

KEY QUESTION

• What does educational equity have to do with me?
Reframing the Role of the Trustee: Equity as Fiduciary Duty
Equity as Fiduciary Duty

What *isn’t* an issue of equity?
A fiduciary is someone who has special responsibilities in connection with the administration, investment, monitoring, and distribution of property...as well as intangible assets such as [an institution’s] reputation and role in the community.

AGB Board of Directors’ Statement on the Fiduciary Duties of Governing Board Members
Equity as Duty of Care

• Act in good faith and with skill to protect institutional assets
• Monitor the institution's activities
Equitable practices and decision-making as a priority to their work and central to the work of the board

Prioritizing what will be equitable and good for students as opposed to self-interest
Equity as Duty of Obedience

• Hold institutions accountable to commitments to diversity and student success
• Adhere to mission and laws
“The pursuit of equity ... is a mindset, framework, and lens that guides your approach to the work with which you have already been tasked.”
KEY QUESTION

• Why might approaching educational equity in a check-box fashion delay progress?
Conceptual Tools for Equity
A Primer on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
Operationalizing Equity as a Fiduciary Duty: Culturally Sustaining Governance (CSG)

CSG calls for efforts to sustain the rich histories, experiences, and forms of knowledge that different stakeholders bring to campus. Sustaining a diverse array of cultures and backgrounds necessarily entails removing institutional barriers to access and success.
The 4 Tenets of CSG

- Equity Knowledge
- Value of Equity
- Sociopolitical Consciousness
- Motivation for Equity

Understanding:

- the distinction between equality and equity,
- the need for disaggregated data to determine equity gaps, and
- that equity is an ongoing push, not something that can be achieved once and will no longer be an issue.
Trustees prioritize the pursuit of equitable opportunities and see it as integral to the success of the institution and not just something to check off of a list.
There is some institutional or internal pull to center equity efforts (e.g. wanting to improve institutional rankings, or address injustices on campus that go viral, or one or two board members champion a cause)
Boards can situate and understand the impact of their (in)actions in different contexts.
“The import of CSG is its ability to address both demands without diminishing either.”

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<tr>
<th>Board Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Initiator</td>
<td>Boards spearhead a policy, practice, or behavior to maximize equity on campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>Boards follow the impetus of others (e.g. community groups) to make a change to improve equitable outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barrier</td>
<td>Boards themselves directly create a challenge for the advancement of equity in higher education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inhibitor</td>
<td>Boards slow, prevent, or fail to get involved in movement towards equity</td>
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KEY QUESTION

• Think of the last decision you made on the board. What are the ways in which you started, accelerated, stopped, or slowed that decision-making process?
Spotlight on Equity Issues in Massachusetts
What are the types of inequities that are most present on our campuses? (One word answers only)
DHE Identified Equity Issues

Race/Ethnicity

Geography
Figure 2. Total public high school graduates in Massachusetts by race/ethnicity
Actual 2002–2016, Projected 2017–2032

Closer Look at Urban Areas

Worcester/Leicester

Lawrence/Lowell

Brockton

Springfield/Holyoke/Chicopee

Greater Boston

New Bedford/Fall River

Source: Massachusetts DHE PMRS
KEY QUESTION

• Do these data surprise you?
Levers for Equity using Culturally Sustaining Governance
"Significantly raise the enrollment, attainment, and long-term success outcomes among underrepresented student populations."

Vision Statement for the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) Strategic Framework
Strategic Planning with a CSG Lens

Examine disaggregated data (PMRS)

Question areas of inequities

Understand how to facilitate

Insist on clear outcomes and timelines

Tackle the barriers

Yield resources
Budgeting with a CSG Lens

• Request, 
  *fundraise*, and/or set fees to build financial resources that can support the sustainability of equitable practices, policies, and programming

• Identify and communicate financial rewards/incentives for those engaging in equity efforts
Human Resources with a CSG Lens

• Embed questions about one’s awareness of equity issues and vision for equitable practices in presidential and senior-level selection processes

• Make it a top priority to retain senior-leaders that demonstrate a commitment to and an impact on an equity-focused strategic plan
Accountability with a CSG Lens

• Advocate for clear parameters and accountability metrics from the DHE/BHE

• Establish and communicate clear benchmarks to hold senior leaders accountable for supporting the equity-focused strategic plan
Next Steps & Action Items
Tools Specific to Massachusetts

• Strategic Planning Process
• Presidential Evaluation Process
• Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS)
• DHE Staff
• Other MA Campus Trustees
• BHE Innovation Fund / Performance Based Funding Formula
Diversify the Board Room
Race/Ethnicity (Demographic Percentage)

- **White**: 87%
- **Black**: 13%
- **Latinx**: 18%
- **Asian**: 5%
- **Other**: 8%

Source: Presenter's Calculations
Make Equity THE Agenda
Identify and engage your campus’ Social Gadfly(ies)

Social Gadflies are “campus educators who strive to alter systems and practices of exclusion that harm individuals or groups on campus (LePeau, 2018)
Continue to Learn
Synergize Efforts & Help Others
AGB
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TRUSTEESHIP