

The background of the slide is a photograph of graduates in black and white academic regalia. They are holding their mortarboards high in the air, and the scene is backlit by a bright sun, creating a warm, golden glow. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and logo.

COMMITTING TO EQUITY:

The Utah System of Higher Education Operationalizes Equity

November 2021



UTAH, THE USHE SYSTEM, AND SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

USHE: 16 institutions and 212,000 students

Wide variety of institutional types:

- 2 research universities
- 4 regional universities
- 2 community colleges
- 8 technical colleges

Student demographics:

- 73.9% White
- 2.5% Asian
- 1.3% African American/Black
- 11.5% Hispanic/Latino
- 3.5% Two or more races



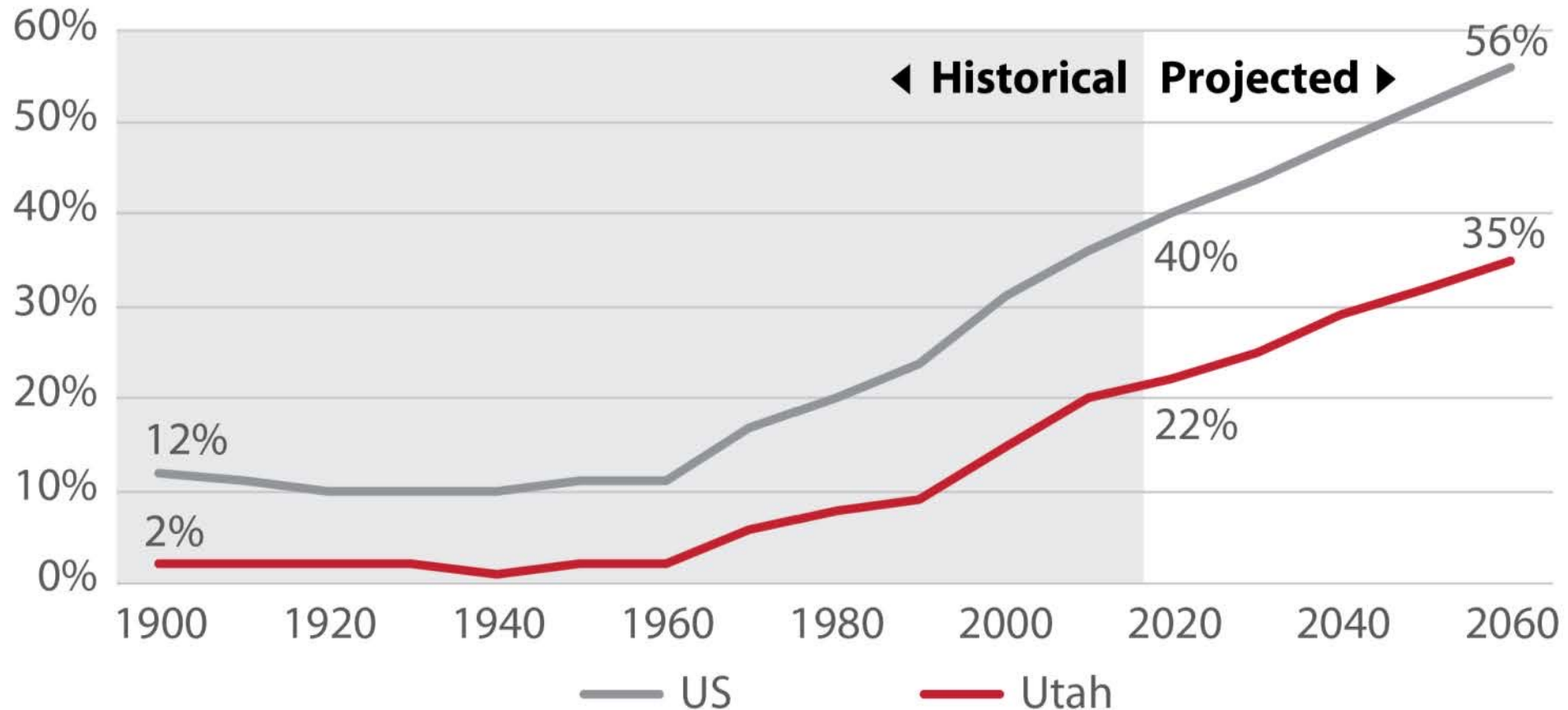
UtahStateUniversity.



SUU SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY

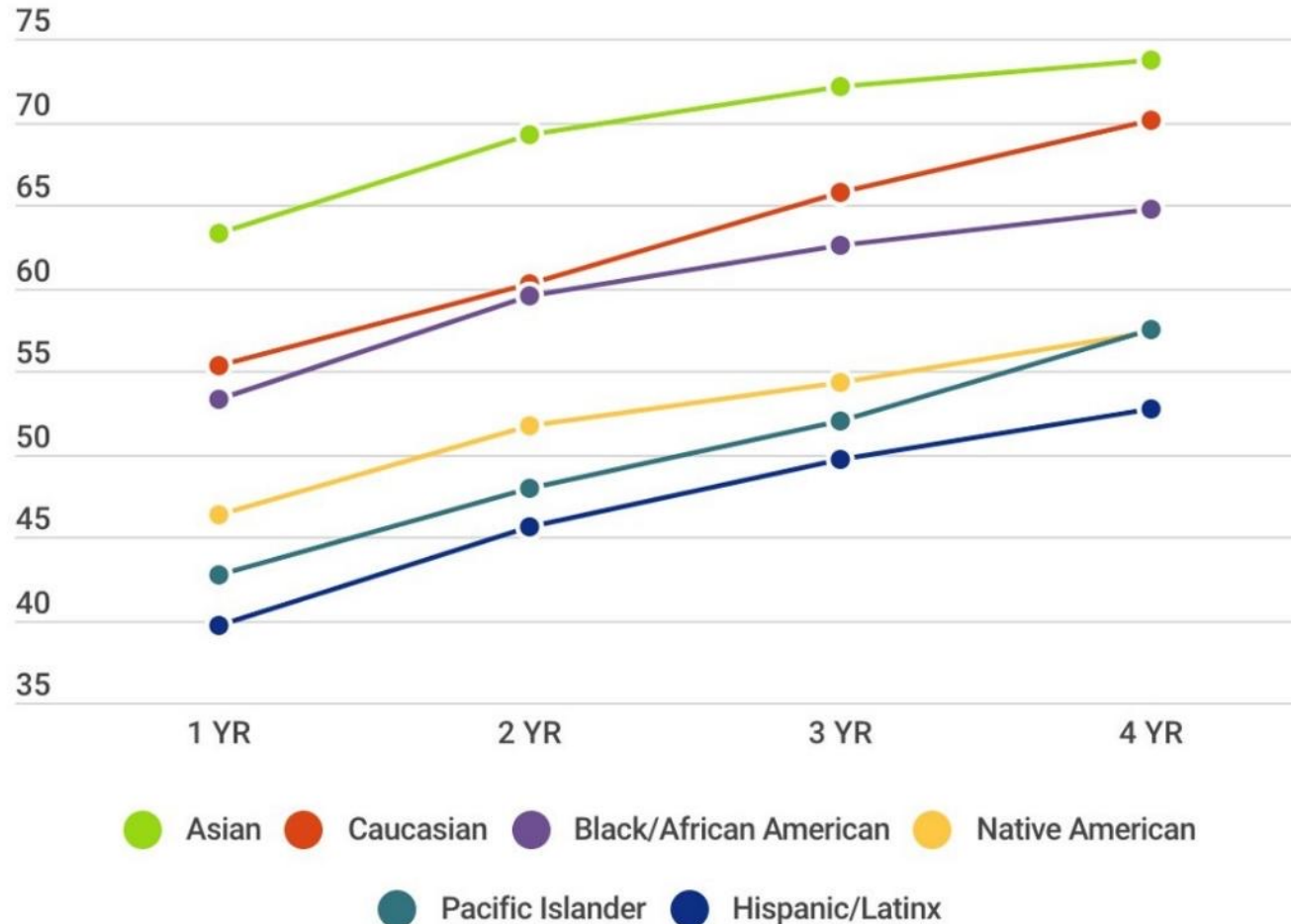


Minority Share of Population, Utah and U.S.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

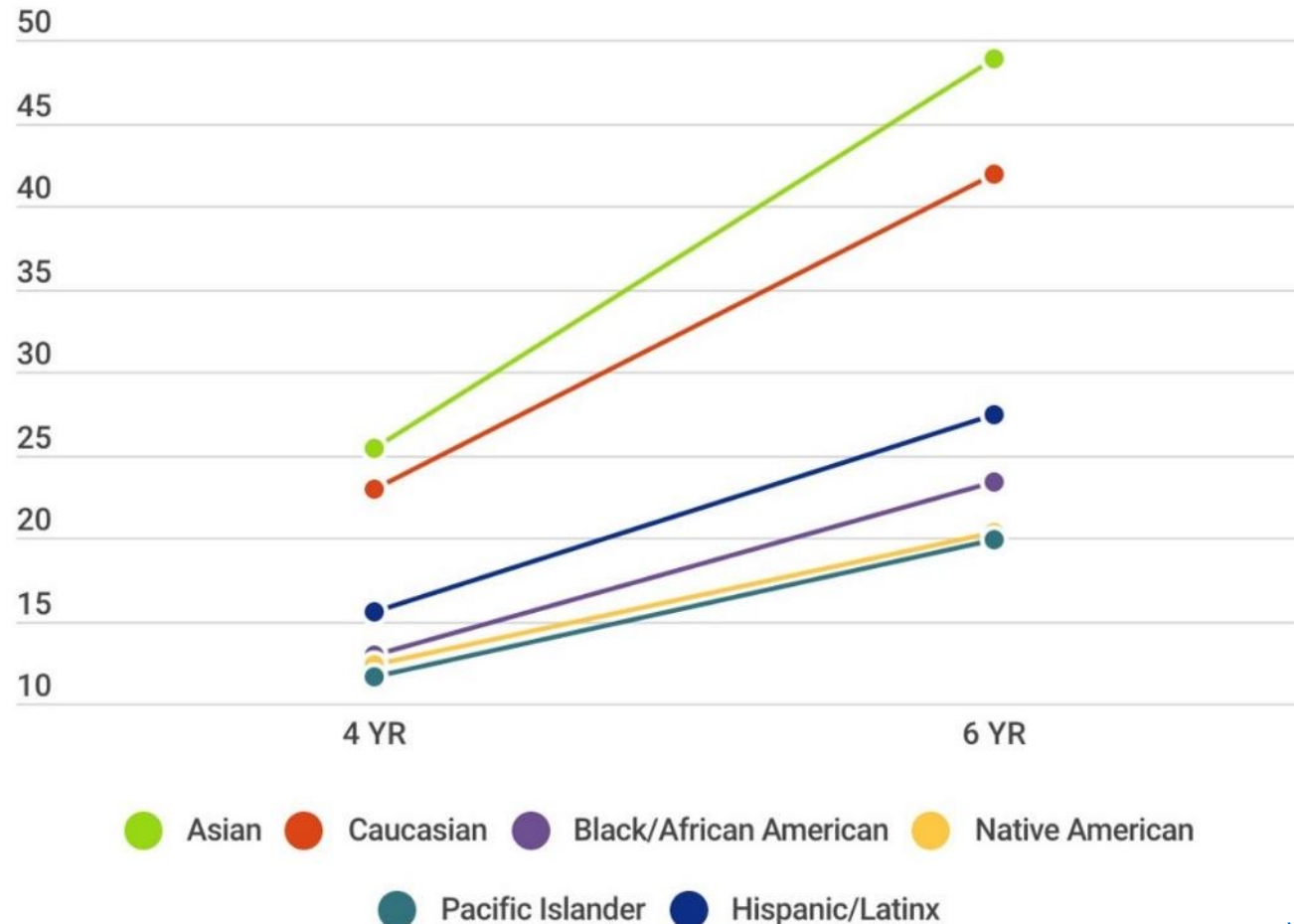
Disparities in College Participation



The differences in enrollment rates between Utah's students of color and white students are as much as **40%**.

Disparities in College Completion

The differences in completion rates between Utah's students of color and white students are as much as **35%**.



July 1, 2020: New governance structure for public higher education in Utah

- Utah Board of Higher Education: 18 members, including 2 student members
- Utah System of Higher Education: Utah's 16 public higher ed institutions
 - Merging of the technical education system with the degree-granting system
- Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education



Legislative Charge for Utah's New Board

The board shall establish and promote a state-level vision and goals for higher education that emphasize system priorities, including:

- quality;
- affordability;
- **educational opportunity, access, equity, and completion;**
- workforce alignment and preparation for high-quality jobs; and
- economic growth.

From Awareness to Acceleration



[Issue Brief: Utah's Growing Opportunity Gap](#)



[Portraits in Salt Lake City memorialize Utahns killed by police violence, in addition to George Floyd](#)

EQUITY LENS FRAMEWORK

Equity Lens Framework

- Co-created by institutional Chief Diversity Officers, Commissioner's office staff, and Board members
- Consists of beliefs, definitions, and a practical exercise
- Beliefs and definitions ensure institutions and the System begin from a common, asset-based understanding
- Practice of the framework focuses all efforts on closing opportunity gaps for marginalized populations

Core Beliefs in the Equity Lens Framework

Every student has the ability to learn.

When students are not being given the opportunity to learn, it is due to barriers inherent in the educational system.

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

Measure Success

- How do you identify and measure the success of a potential policy, initiative, resource allocation, strategy, etc.?
- Does that success measure properly evaluate the success relative to underrepresented populations?

Implement

- What is your decision after looking at this course of action through the Equity Lens?
- Has your approach or decision changed after looking at this topic through the Equity Lens?
- What action will be taken, if any?

Assess

- Does the decision being made maintain, sustain, or intervene in existing educational disparities, or does it produce other unintended consequences?
- What is the impact of this decision on eliminating attainment gaps?
- How does the policy, initiative, resource allocation, or strategy, etc. advance opportunities for historically underserved students and communities?
- What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes?
- What resources exist that could be leveraged to challenge these barriers (e.g., political, emotional, financial, programmatic, or managerial resources)?

Examine Data

- What does the current data tell us about representation among students, staff, and faculty groups? Check the source of the data for quality and impartiality.
- Where do current data collection methodologies fail to measure the extent of underrepresentation?
- Does your data infrastructure support forward-thinking measures of representation?
- What data sources will you use to understand the impacts of race, ethnicity, gender, and native language?
- Is qualitative data needed to support and better understand impacted communities more holistically?

Engage & Plan

- What is your commitment to, and understanding of, equity, specific to the policy, initiative, resource allocation, or strategy?
- What resources are you allocating for training that includes stakeholder instruction?
- How have campus and community stakeholders, who may be affected by this potential course of action, been purposefully involved?
- How will you modify or enhance your strategies to ensure the needs of the community and each learner's individual higher education and career goals are met?

ADOPTING THE EQUITY LENS FRAMEWORK: CASE STUDIES



Sanchaita Datta
Board Member



Alan E. Hall
Board Member



Patricia Jones
Board Member



Crystal Maggelet
Board Member



Harris H. Simmons
Chair



Jesselle Barlow Anderson
Board Member



Mike Angus
Board Member



Jera L. Bailey
Board Member



Tanner Marcum



Arthur E. Newell
Board Member



Shawn Newell
Board Member



Aaron V. Osmond
Vice Chair



Nina Barnes
Vice Chair



Stacey K. Bettridge
Board Member



Lisa Michele Church
Board Member



Wilford Clyde
Board Member



Valirie Serawop



Scott L. Theurer
Board Member

UTAH BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Getting Started: Board Resolution on Equity

Acknowledging systemic racism and growing structural equity disparities, the Board passed an equity resolution, charging itself to:

1. Develop a set of aligned priorities that are equity driven, measurable, and will have a meaningful impact on closing the opportunity gap
2. Establish a diversity, equity and inclusion workgroup
3. Work with the Board, system leaders, and chief diversity officers to create an equity lens framework

Implementing the Equity Lens Framework

- Hiring the system's first Assistant Commissioner for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Laís Martinez
- Measuring for Equity
 - Measures in performance funding and the strategic plan account for closing attainment gaps
- EDI Board Workgroup
 - Awareness and training on equity-related issues by stakeholder students, staff, and faculty, including those working with underserved students on the ground
 - Includes Board members, Commissioner and staff, institutional CDOs
- System's Chief Diversity Officers serve as advisors to Board committees

Public Commitments towards Equity

- *Resolution to Advance Equitable Systemic Change*
– July 2020
- *Resolution to Recognize Positive Impact of Dreamers in USHE*
– March 2021
- *Resolution to Support and Celebrate Juneteenth*
– May 2021



What's next for EDI in USHE?

- Equity review of system policies
- Presidential reviews include analysis of institutional diversity ([policy R805](#))
- New Leadership Academy
 - EDI leadership development program provided to system leadership (including Board and Commissioner's office) in partnership with the University of Utah



A photograph of four students in a computer lab. In the foreground, a young man with dark curly hair, wearing a grey button-down shirt and a silver watch, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is sitting at a desk with a computer monitor and keyboard. To his right, a young woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a red shirt, is looking at the monitor. In the background, another young man with light brown hair, wearing a black hoodie, is also looking at a monitor. On the far right, a young man with short brown hair, wearing a grey t-shirt, is partially visible, looking towards the camera. The background shows a typical computer lab setting with yellow walls and some equipment.

DAVIS TECHNICAL COLLEGE

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY



THE WORK AHEAD

Capacity building
system wide

Removing silos and
duplication of efforts

Transparency and
sustainability

Racial battle fatigue

