A Comprehensive Strategy for Equity and Racial Justice in Public Higher Education
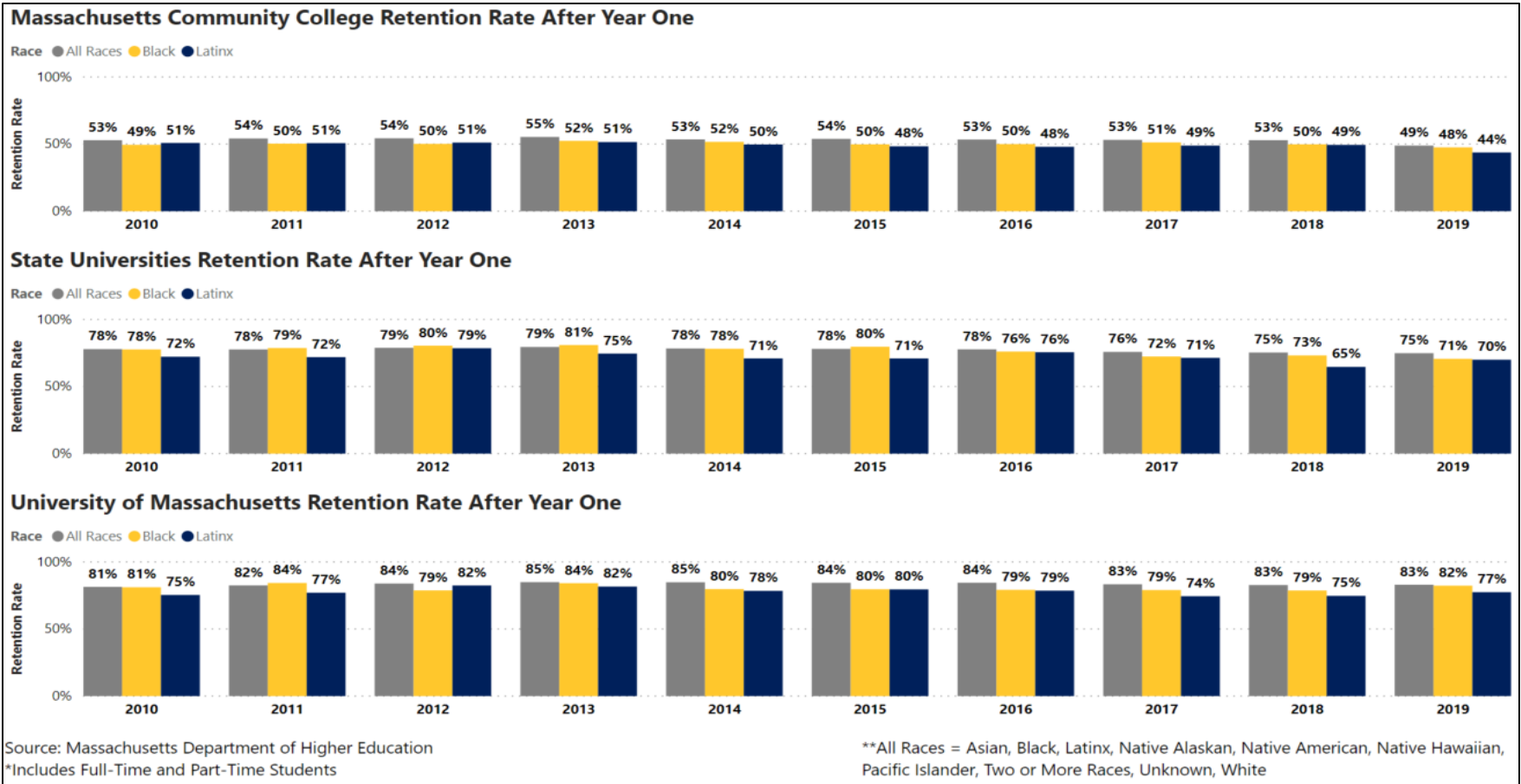
MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Higher Education

Presentation Outline

- Equity Agenda Overview

- New Undergraduate Experience Overview

- Institutional Leadership and Partnership

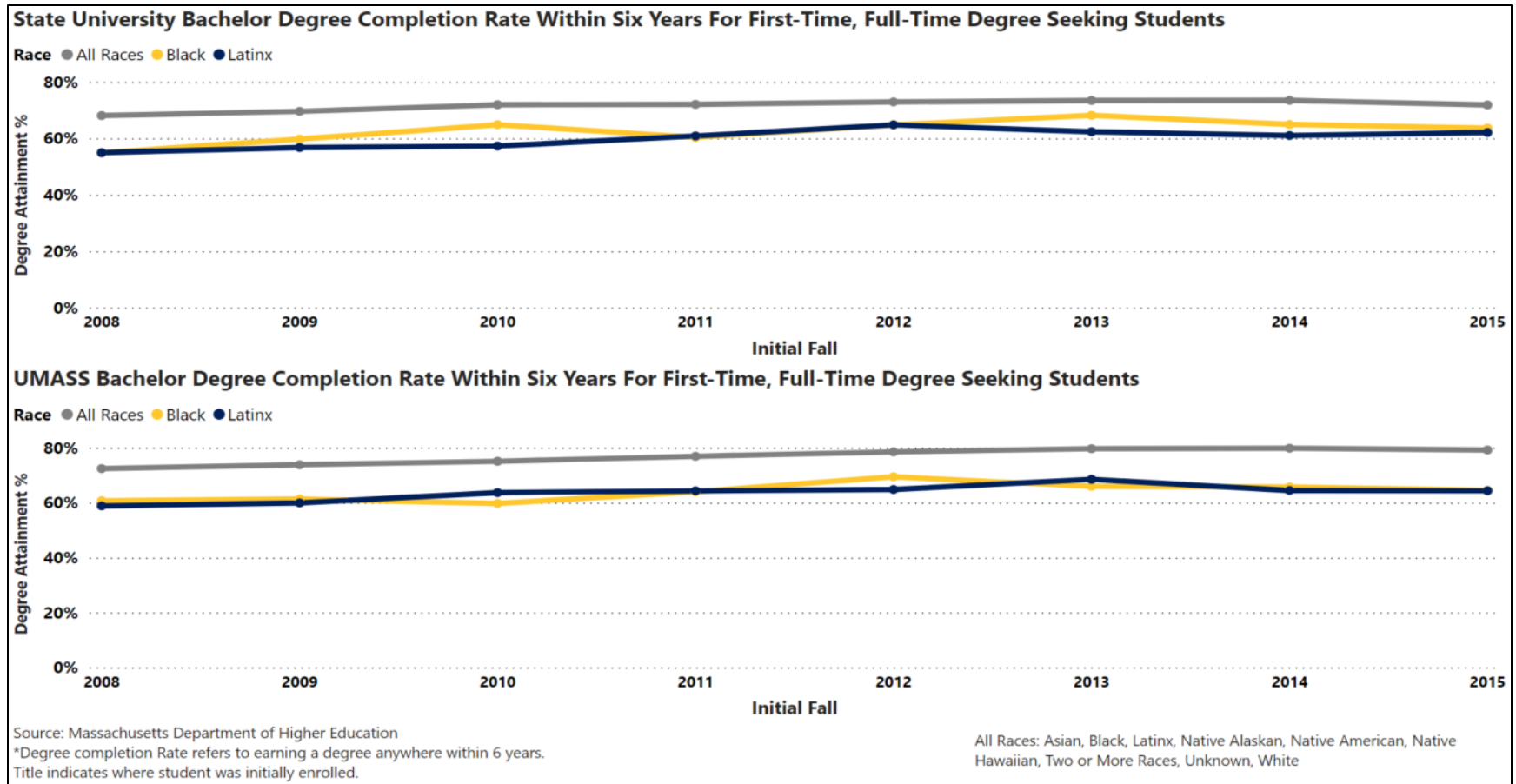- Dialogue

Equity Agenda Overview

Introduction

The institutional equity gap begins early. 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.

Massachusetts Community College Retention Rate After Year One

Race ● All Races ● Black ● Latinx

Year	All Races	Black	Latinx
2010	53%	49%	51%
2011	54%	50%	51%
2012	54%	50%	51%
2013	55%	52%	51%
2014	53%	52%	50%
2015	54%	50%	48%
2016	53%	50%	48%
2017	53%	51%	49%
2018	53%	50%	49%
2019	49%	48%	44%

State Universities Retention Rate After Year One

Race ● All Races ● Black ● Latinx

Year	All Races	Black	Latinx
2010	78%	78%	72%
2011	78%	79%	72%
2012	79%	80%	79%
2013	79%	81%	75%
2014	78%	78%	71%
2015	78%	80%	71%
2016	78%	76%	76%
2017	76%	72%	71%
2018	75%	73%	65%
2019	75%	71%	70%

University of Massachusetts Retention Rate After Year One

Race ● All Races ● Black ● Latinx

Year	All Races	Black	Latinx
2010	81%	81%	75%
2011	82%	84%	77%
2012	84%	79%	82%
2013	85%	84%	82%
2014	85%	80%	78%
2015	84%	80%	80%
2016	84%	79%	79%
2017	83%	79%	74%
2018	83%	79%	75%
2019	83%	82%	77%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
*Includes Full-Time and Part-Time Students

**All Races = Asian, Black, Latinx, Native Alaskan, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Two or More Races, Unknown, White
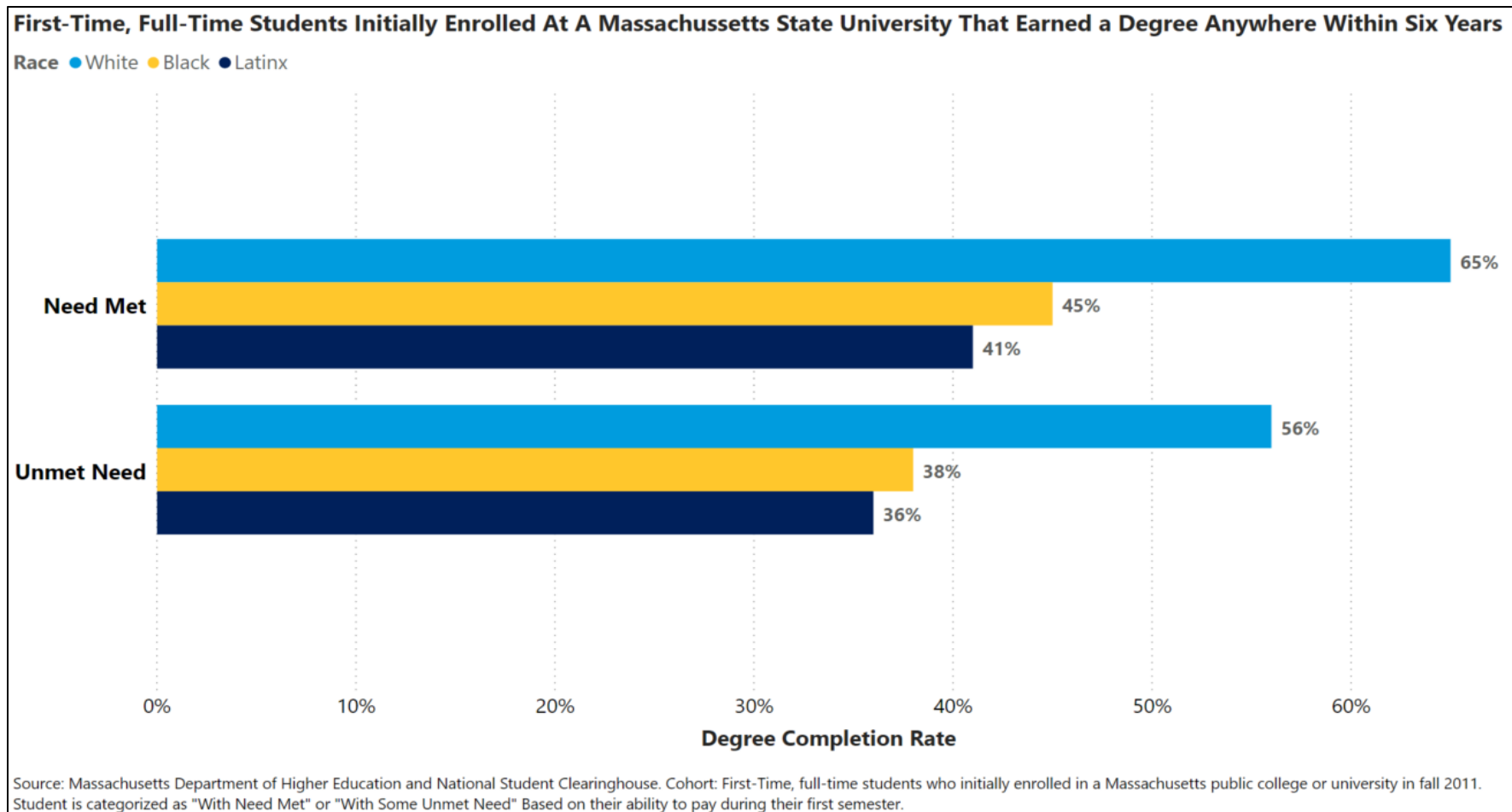
Introduction *(Continued)*

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.

State University Bachelor Degree Completion Rate Within Six Years For First-Time, Full-Time Degree Seeking Students

Race: All Races, Black, Latinx

UMASS Bachelor Degree Completion Rate Within Six Years For First-Time, Full-Time Degree Seeking Students

Race: All Races, Black, Latinx

Source: Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
*Degree completion Rate refers to earning a degree anywhere within 6 years.
Title indicates where student was initially enrolled.

All Races: Asian, Black, Latinx, Native Alaskan, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Two or More Races, Unknown, White

Introduction *(Continued)*

Moreover, controlled for socioeconomic status, Black and Latinx students still have inequitable access to and outcomes in Massachusetts public higher education.

First-Time, Full-Time Students Initially Enrolled At A Massachussetts State University That Earned a Degree Anywhere Within Six Years

Race ● White ● Black ● Latinx

Need Met
- White: 65%
- Black: 45%
- Latinx: 41%

Unmet Need
- White: 56%
- Black: 38%
- Latinx: 36%

Degree Completion Rate

Source: Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and National Student Clearinghouse. Cohort: First-Time, full-time students who initially enrolled in a Massachusetts public college or university in fall 2011. Student is categorized as "With Need Met" or "With Some Unmet Need" Based on their ability to pay during their first semester.

Racial Equity Principles

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 systemwide 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**

- **Requires acknowledgement, remedy, and repair of policies and practices which 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**

Cultural Conditions toward Racial Equity: Shared Departmental Values

At the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education,
we share these interconnected values:

Equity	Accountability	Community
Understanding and confronting oppression in all its forms	*Answering for the outcomes of decisions and actions*	*Showing care and respect toward others*
Empowerment	Intentionality	Teamwork
Facilitating others' opportunities for growth and contribution, within teams and across DHE	*Acting with purpose and clarity*	*Embracing the power of unity, collaboration, and collective insight*

Equity Agenda Overview

The Equity Agenda outlines an action plan that covers five key areas:

Policy Audit
- Complete a Department-wide policy audit to assess all policies and initiatives
- Identify and remove policies that exacerbate racial inequity
- Redesign the Department's policy scheme to build a culturally sustainable public postsecondary system where students can thrive

Student Experience
- Reimagine the undergraduate experience in order to dismantle systemic barriers by recognizing students' cultural wealth and transforming teaching and learning *(New Undergraduate Experience)*
- Align system and institutional efforts to create student-ready campuses

Data and Evidence
- Expand data dashboards to measure progress toward the goal of racial equity and include baseline projections and benchmarks of Massachusetts public higher education enrollment through 2030
- Value students' experiences through qualitative research
- Identify and support the implementation of equity-minded, evidence-based solutions

Community of Practice
- Support the growth of a system-wide community of practice
- Elevate the work of equity leaders
- Create digital resources for campuses, which may include implementation toolkits and digital archives to allow sharing across campuses
- Develop a statewide professional development curriculum focused on culturally sustaining teaching practices

Sustained Transformation
- Convene and support a broad coalition of equity partners
- **Develop a 10-year statewide strategic plan focused on advancing racial equity**

Development of the Strategic Plan for Racial Equity

The Strategic Plan is being developed in partnership with all the Commonwealth's key stakeholders and using the inputs outlined below:

Environmental Scan

- System-Wide Data Analysis
- System-Wide Survey
- Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

+

NUE Report

+

Stakeholder Input via Strategy Labs & Review Sessions w/ Steering Committee

+

Racial Equity in Higher Education Leading Practices

Statewide Strategic Plan for Racial Equity

Strategic Plan for Racial Equity Stakeholder Engagement

Through a system-wide survey, focus groups, interviews, strategy labs, and review sessions, 7,903 stakeholders across the system were engaged in the Strategic Planning process and their feedback informed the Plan.

System-Wide Survey	
Students	4,389
Faculty/Staff	2,802
Administrators	505
Trustees	17
Total	**7,713**

+

Focus Groups, Interviews, Strategy Labs, and Review Sessions	
Students	15
Faculty/Staff	69
Administrators	46
Presidents	28
Board of Higher Education Members	13
Commissioners	3
DHE Staff Members	10
Industry Leaders	6
Total	**190**

7,903 Stakeholders

Strategic Plan for Racial Equity Overview

Overarching Goal: The elimination of racial disparities in the Massachusetts public higher education system

Key Goals: Increase Student Of Color's...

- Enrollment
- Transfer Rates
- Persistence To 2nd Year
- Timely Completion Of Gateway Courses
- On-time Credit Accumulation
- Degree / Certification Completion (*Including Post-transfer*)
- Social & Economic Mobility
- Sense of Belonging

Strategies for Achieving the Goals
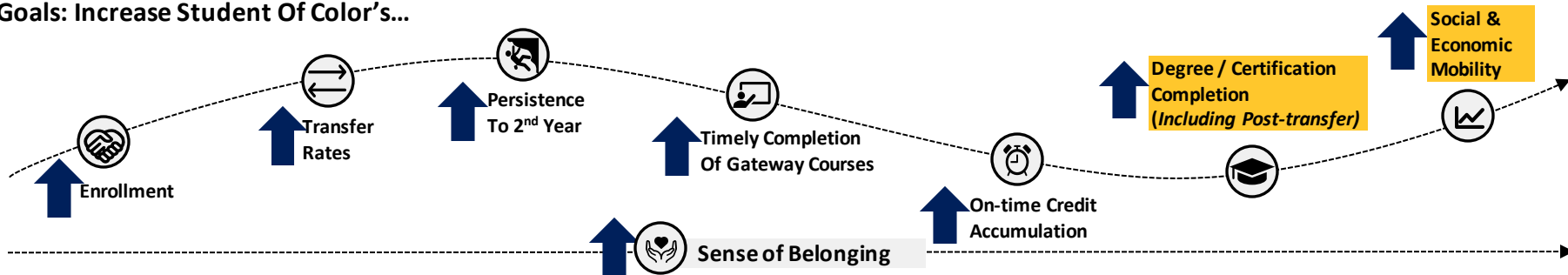
- Establish The Infrastructure To Drive Racial Equity
- Prepare Students Of Color To Thrive Beyond Their Time In Higher Education
- Transform Institutional Cultures To Be Equity-minded
- Build A Culturally Relevant And Civically Engaged Educational Experience For Students Of Color
- Increase Access To Higher Education For Students Of Color

The New Undergraduate Experience (NUE)

February 2022

BHE 22-38

Receipt of the NUE Report

MOTION: The BHE receives *The New Undergraduate Experience* report (the "Report") from the New Undergraduate Experience (NUE) Committee.

The Board endorses the Report as a vision document intended to inform the work of the Steering Committee developing the Statewide Strategic Plan for Racial Equity.

The Board further affirms NUE as a collective blueprint for policies and practices needed for students to reach their goals in the Commonwealth's public higher education institutions.

As such, the Board directs the Commissioner to work with the institutions and other stakeholders to help advance opportunities and policy levers that are appropriate for immediate implementation, as outlined in Appendix B of the Report. The Board further directs the Commissioner to identify policy priorities for Board action and to provide the Board with an implementation plan by December 2022.

Authority: M.G.L. c. 15A, §§6 and 9 (c), (f)and (u); BHE 19-03.

NUE Report Stakeholder Feedback Process

The Department of Higher Education engaged all segments in an extensive stakeholder feedback process to gain input on the NUE Report. The process produced several themes that the DHE addressed before finalizing the report.

1

Feedback Survey

The DHE sent the report and a feedback survey to all institutions requesting feedback within seven weeks. The DHE received feedback from 15 community colleges, 3 state universities, 2 UMass campuses, and REJI representatives.

2

Theme Development

The DHE reviewed every piece of feedback and determined which feedback should be addressed in the NUE Report and which required campus follow-up. DHE then developed a list of themes that encompassed all feedback.

3

Report Edits and Institution Follow Up

The DHE made edits to the report based on stakeholder feedback and determined an action plan to follow up with institutions on specific feedback where it was warranted.

15

NUE Report Stakeholder Feedback Themes

Purpose of the NUE Report & Implementation. Are the recommendations in the report suggestions or requirements? How does it relate to the 10-year statewide strategic plan? How does NUE acknowledge current campus efforts?

Funding. How will the work be funded? Will additional funding be provided?

Accountability. Who will be accountable? Will institutions be held accountable for implementing recommendations in the report? If so, how?

Intersectionality/Focus on Black and Latinx students. Why are Black and Latinx students the focus of the report? Will that exclude other minoritized students, e.g., Asian and Indigenous students? Does that exclude White students? Does that exclude other intersectional identities, e.g., gender, sexuality, first-generation, and socio-economic status?

K-16. How will the DHE partner with the Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on this work?

Segmental Differences. Why does the report not fully articulate the differences between institutions and how that affects implementation?

Introduction *(Continued)*

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.

*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.

Student Bill of Rights

NUE's recommendations align with the below Student Bill of Rights, which evolved as part of the NUE process. To fulfill these, the Massachusetts public higher education system must focus on racial equity and justice.

Students Have the Right to:

1. Clear, accessible, and understandable financial information, and 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 education

Content-Specific Recommendations

NUE's content-specific recommendations are organized by the following categories which are aligned to the Student Bill of Rights. The rest of the presentation takes a deep dive into these 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

Content-Specific Recommendations

Admissions, Enrollment, and Transfer

- Admissions and Enrollment
- Transfer

Curriculum

- Credit for Prior Learning/Prior Learning Assessment
- English Language Learners
- Developmental Education
- A Rejuvenated Core Curriculum
- Majors, Minors, and Certificate Programs

Equity-Minded Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

- Equitable Pedagogical Practices
- Equity-Minded Faculty and Staff Development
- Equity-Minded Assessment

High-Impact Practices and the Co-Curriculum

- Mentoring Racially Minoritized Students
- Equitable Access to Co-Curricular and High-Impact Experiences

Hiring, Supporting, and Retaining Faculty of Color

- Hiring Faculty of Color
- Supporting and Retaining Faculty of Color

Holistic Student Support

- Academic and Financial Policies
- Curricular and Co-Curricular Advising and Support
- Basic Needs Support
- Wellness, Conduct, and Safety

High Impact Practices and the Co-Curriculum Overview

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

The recommendations in the High Impact Practices (HIPs) and the Co-Curriculum section focus on **creating meaningful experiences alongside and outside of the classroom experience**. These experiences have been widely tested and shown to be beneficial for college students from many demographic groups.

Mentoring Racially Minoritized Students Recommendation

1 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.

2 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.

Recommended Owners

■ = DHE/Institution Collaboration ★ = DHE/BHE Led ▲ = Individual Institutions

Equitable Access to Co-curricular and High-Impact Experiences Recommendations (1 of 2)

1 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.

2 Re-envision faculty and staff workloads to allow for effective implementation of HIPs.

3 Establish innovative experiential learning opportunities that count toward degree completion, including rethinking the separation between "internship" and "work".

4 Create anti-racist civic engagement opportunities for students across both the core curriculum and degree programs.

Recommended Owners

■ = DHE/Institution Collaboration ★ = DHE/BHE Led ▲ = Individual Institutions

Equitable Access to Co-curricular and High-Impact Experiences Recommendations (2 of 2)

5 Institute capstones and learning communities at all community colleges and build on existing ones at universities.

6 Develop opportunities that connect faculty, staff, employers, and students to partner with each other and the DHE in collaborative cross-campus projects.

7 Assess existing honors programs to identify opportunities to improve recruitment of, access for, and support of racially minoritized students.

8 Identify institutional barriers to accessing HIPs for racially minoritized students, assess the impact of these barriers on the students, and remedy the barriers.

Recommended Owners

■ = DHE/Institution Collaboration   ★ = DHE/BHE Led   ▲ = Individual Institutions

The Strategic Plan for Racial Equity--Vision to Action

Strategy 4 Priority Overview

Build a Culturally Relevant and Civically Engaged Educational Experience for Students of Color

Priority 1: Recognize Students of Color's cultural and experiential assets through the adoption of equity-minded, culturally relevant, and civically engaged curricular, co-curricular, and pedagogical practices
- Knowledge and skills for participation in civic life in a multi-racial democracy
- Core Curriculum
- HIPs and the Co-Curriculum
- Open Educational Resources

Priority 2: Redesign academic policies and practices through a racial equity lens
- Academic policies that better support Students of Color
- Academic calendar flexibility

Priority 3: Provide various pathways for Students of Color to complete credit-bearing coursework and degrees
- Developmental Education
- English Language Learner Pathways
- Credit for Prior Learning
- Statewide Dual Admissions

Key

= Included in the Student Success Framework   = Key Board Action for FY23

An Example from the Strategic Plan for Racial Equity

Strategy 4: Build a Culturally Relevant and Civically Engaged Educational Experience for Students of Color

The first recommendation under this strategy, for the DHE in collaboration with the institutions:
Identify the knowledge and skills needed for full and effective participation in civic life and public problem-solving in a multi-racial democracy, in order to acknowledge and build upon the cultural wealth carried by individual Students of Color through the curriculum and co-curriculum.
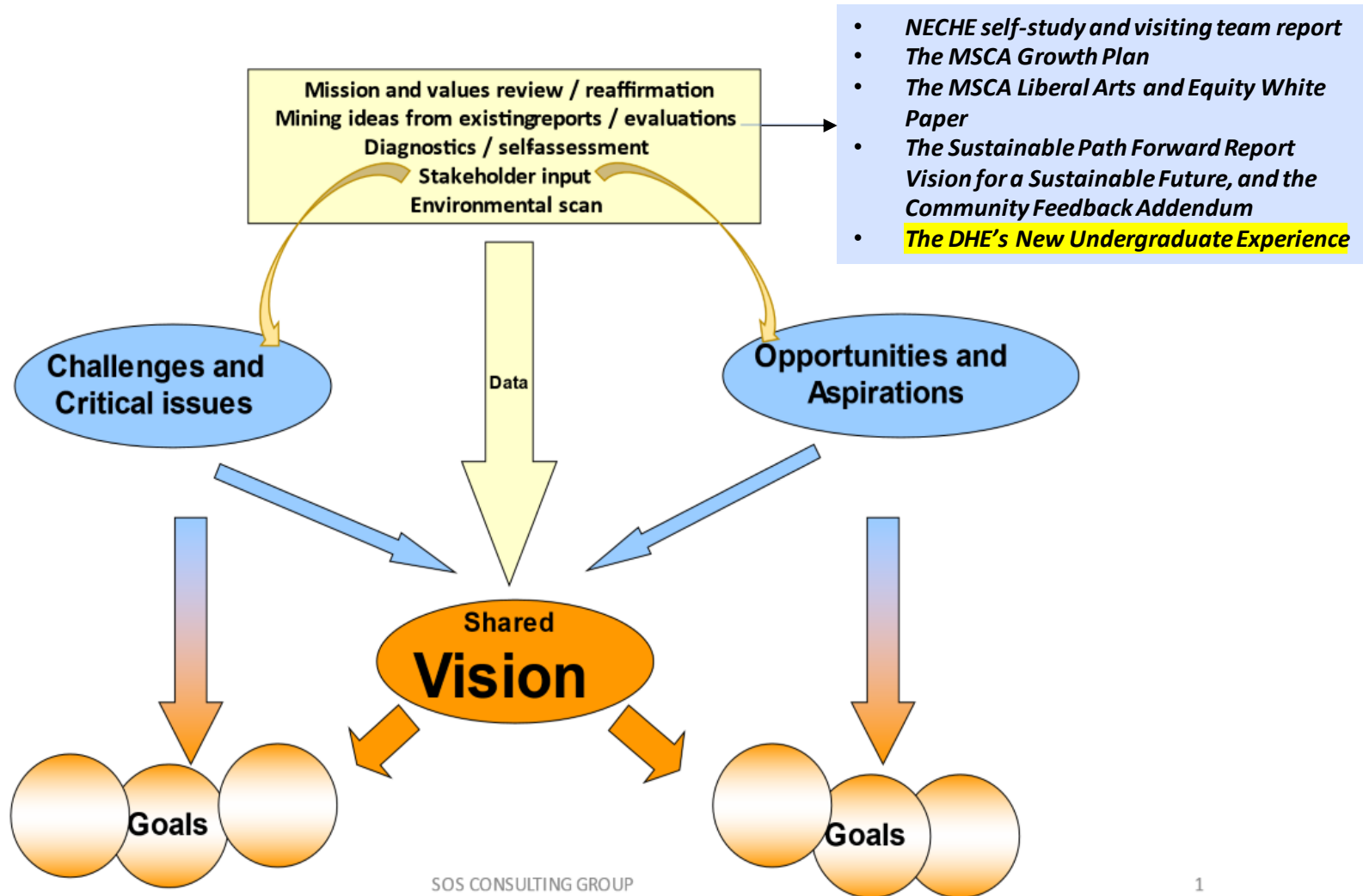
Salem State University

- Comprehensive regional state university 18 miles north of Boston
- 5,555 undergraduate, 1576 graduate students
- 36% of undergraduates receive Pell grants
- 24% of undergraduates are first generation students (Financial Aid, 2022)
- 40% of first year undergraduate students, including transfer students, self-identify as students of color (Fall 2021)
- Students hail from 36 states and 34 countries

From NUE to SSU Strategic Planning

- Role on NUE Committee

- Updates to my President

- Launch of Strategic Planning Committee

- Role on Strategic Planning Committee
  - NUE Committee Influence

- Strategic Planning Charge

Strategic Planning Process

Mission and values review / reaffirmation
Mining ideas from existing reports / evaluations
Diagnostics / self assessment
Stakeholder input
Environmental scan

- *NECHE self-study and visiting team report*
- *The MSCA Growth Plan*
- *The MSCA Liberal Arts and Equity White Paper*
- *The Sustainable Path Forward Report Vision for a Sustainable Future, and the Community Feedback Addendum*
- *The DHE's New Undergraduate Experience*

Challenges and Critical issues

Data

Opportunities and Aspirations

Shared **Vision**

Goals

Goals

SOS CONSULTING GROUP

1

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Strategic planning Process

- **Data Gathering**
  - Forums
  - Surveys
  - Targeted Meetings
  - Environmental Scan
  - Document Analysis

- **Document Analysis via 4-S Grids**
  - **SUSTAIN/LEVERAGE:** What is currently strong that we should optimize?
  - **STRENGTHEN/IMPROVE**: What is weak that we should improve or strengthen?
  - **START/EXPLORE**: What is missing or represents a new opportunity-that we might add or ramp up?
  - **STOP/SCALE BACK:** What is wrong or broken that we should stop?

4-S Grid For NUE Report

SUSTAIN	STRENGHTEN	START	STOP
Racial Equity: • Enrollment of Latinx and black students • Graduation rates of these populations (20% higher than most of our peers)	**Racial Equity:** • Hiring and retention of faculty of color	**Racial Equity:** • Path to HSI • Are all Schools across SSU racially equitable? • Explore opportunities around online deliveries • Reach out to new student populations • How do we encourage students of color to pursue a more diverse educational program—education, etc.?	
Curriculum: • Strong general ed/liberal arts curriculum that supports career growth	**Affordability:** • Predictable costs; from a holistic standpoint—incidental expenses (internships, etc.)	**Affordability:** • Connections with Community Partners (within 25 miles) in order to create work-to-college-to-work program • Waive fees and/or tuition for Salem residents	

4-S Grid For NUE Report

SUSTAIN	STRENGHTEN	START	STOP
Student Persistence: • Student organizations and groups/clubs (esp. post-COVID)	**Curriculum:** • Culturally responsive teaching • Honors Program—may be a barrier for equity	**Curriculum:** • Credit for prior learning/credit for life experience—not standardized on campus • Interdisciplinary work between schools • Funded Internships	
Community: • Develop specific relationships with community partners • Recognition for Racial Equity like Civic Engagement Hall of Fame	**Communication:** • Systems talking to each other • Staffing for maintaining communication between campus entities (IA, Career Services, etc.)	**Student Experience:** • Different approach to older student populations • How to make it easier to access resources (Navigate, Navigator, Canvas, Outlook, etc.)?	

Developing the Plan

- Pivot to DHE Strategic Plan for Racial Equity

- Presentation and Breakout Sessions

- Student Bill of Rights

- Next Steps in Strategic Planning Process
  - **Visioning**
  - **Goal Setting**
  - **Strategies**
  - **Campus Engagement**
  - **Plan Finalization**
  - **Plan Approval**

Value to Salem State SP Process

- Focal Point

- Accountability Measure

- North Star ☺

- **Lead the Commonwealth in Utilizing the 10-year Strategic Plan for Racial Equity for Campus-wide Strategic Planning**

Q&A

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