

**AUGUST 2022**



# **EQUITABLE POLICYMAKING: RESEARCH AND PRINCIPLES FOR SHAPING AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE FOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

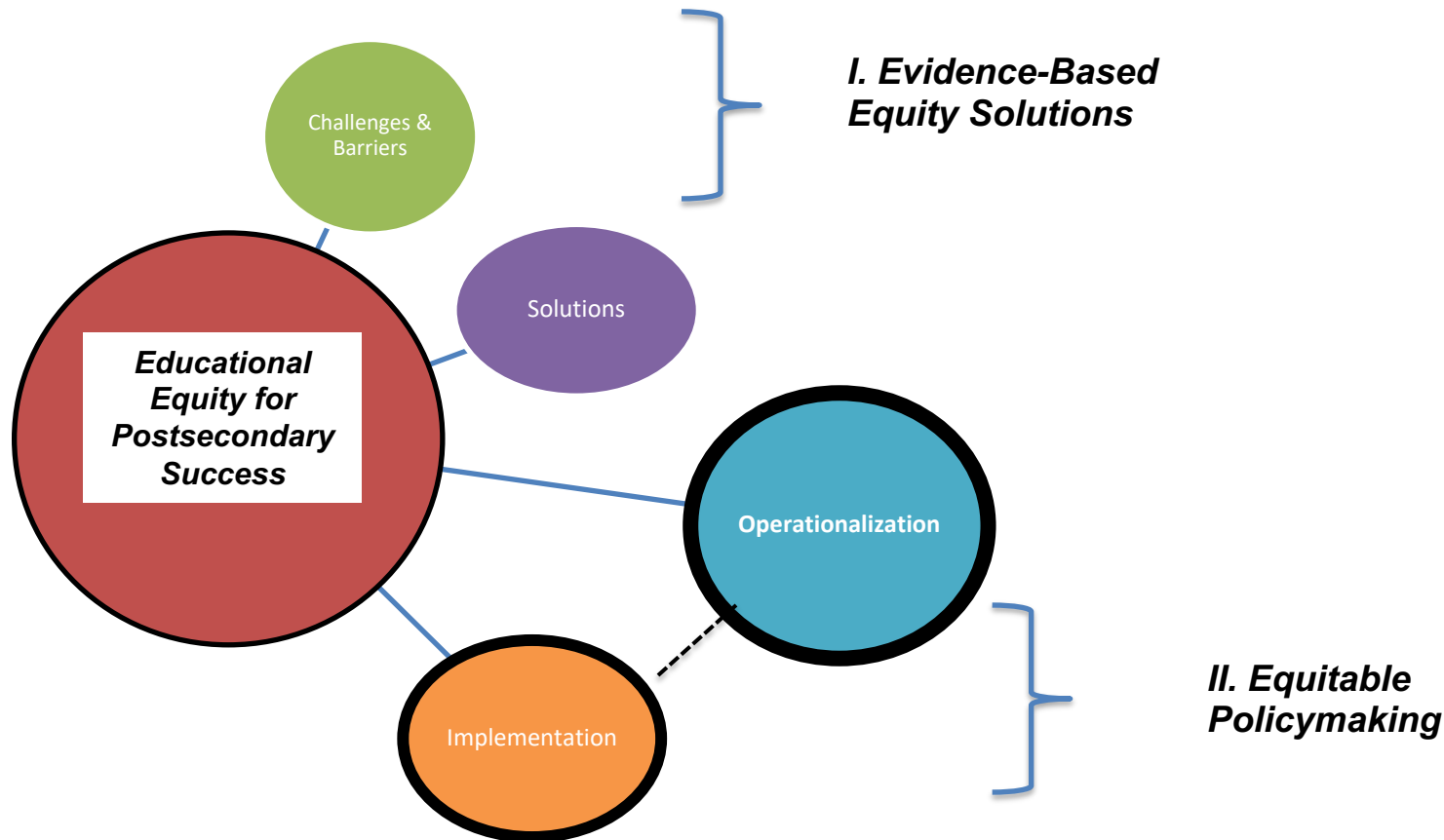
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***WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE IHEP ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON  
EQUITABLE POLICYMAKING***

# Road Map

- \*Challenges and the Opportunities for Postsecondary Success
- \*Frame 1: Evidence-Base Equity Solutions – Historical and inclusive measurement practices
- \*Frame 2: Centering Equity in Policy and the Policymaking Process
- \*Moving forward: Equity for Economic Development

# Equity Research to Policy Process for Postsecondary Success



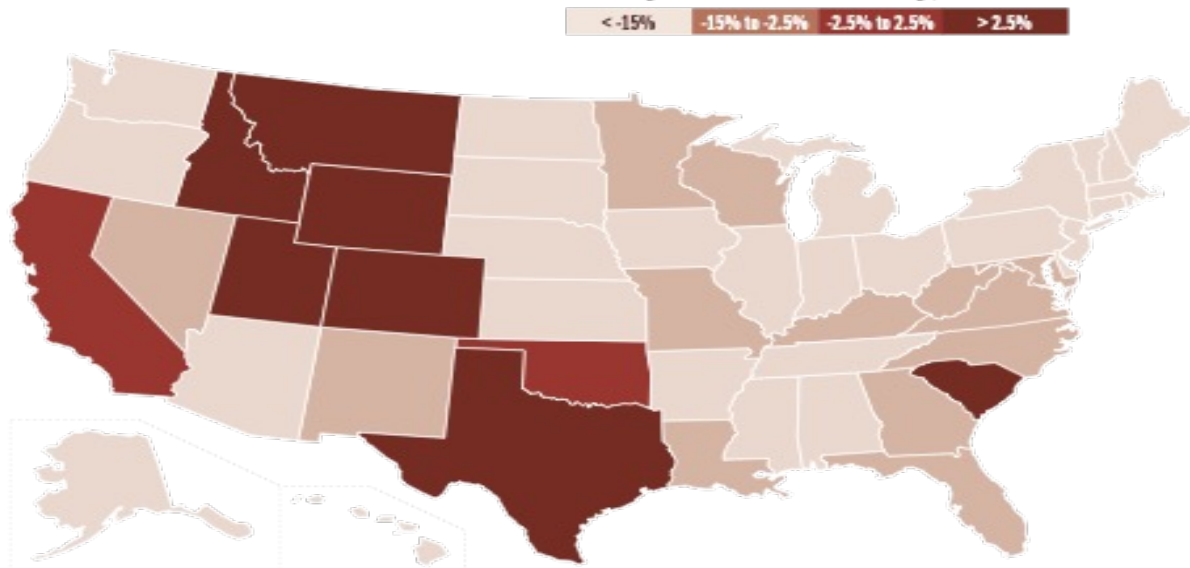
# “POST”-PANDEMIC: FROM DISRUPTION TO OPPORTUNITY

A new moment to redesign educational opportunity with **sustainable equity** and **inclusive evidence-based policymaking**.

## DECLINING STUDENT DEMAND

A leading state-level forecast of traditional-age college-going students shows sharp declines across much of the country through 2029.

Forecasted growth in students who will attend college, 2012 to 2029



Note: Forecast is of 18-year-old college-going students.

Source: Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education by Nathan O. Grawe

Message:

**EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IS AN ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT ISSUE:**

**IT IS A PRACTICE FOR INCREASING  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCATION**

# What is EQUITY in education?

- A practice that integrates **the role of need in regard to resource and opportunity distribution for populations that are underserved and/or born into educational pathways in which there are excessive disparities between groups**. The practice of truly operationalizing educational equity requires more than just adding resources or claiming it as part of a larger organizational goal (National Academies 2019).
- A more comprehensive, and arguably effective, practice of educational equity would also **confront conditions of inequality at the legal, historical, and structural level. And it would do so across jurisdictions – institutional, local, state and federal** (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019).
- This requires **addressing differences in educational starting points that result from income, race or ethnicity, and gender, as well as other sources of privilege over which students have no control**. Thus, an equal assignment of educational resources is not enough to improve completion rates. (National Academies 2019).

# Why should **we care** about EQUITY in higher education?

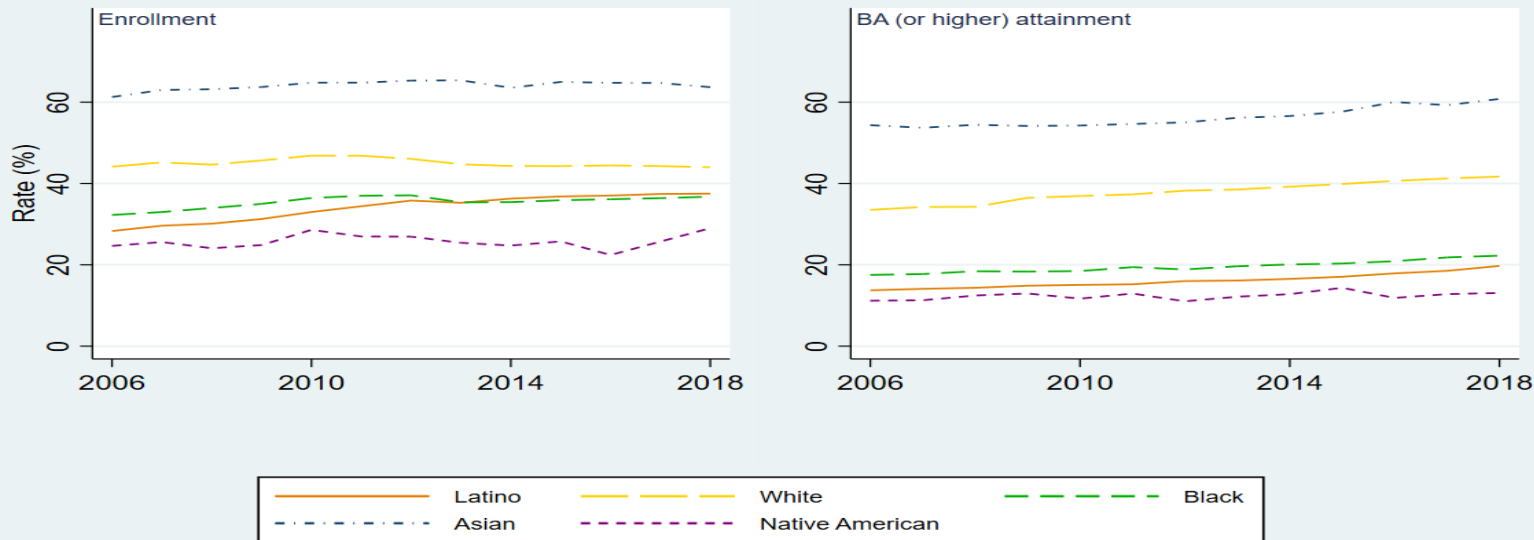
- Equity goes beyond individual gain. Achieving equity for postsecondary success is a societal gain overall, not a mere chance for individual opportunity ([National Academies, 2019](#)). When societies have less inequality, economies are more prosperous and with more opportunities ([Perna & Finney, 2015](#)).
- Equity is economically advantageous. Increased college participation and completion lead to greater wages and reduced crime within communities even for those who have graduated from high school ([Moretti, 2004](#)).
- Equity can be context-dependent and community oriented. For policy makers, these solutions and investments may differ across states based on population demography and history. Oregon may require different solutions than those that may implemented in Texas, but centering equity in the design of effective educational policy should be a foundational practice ([Perna & Finney, 2015](#)).

# What we have done to date has not been sufficient.

## College Enrollment and Attainment Rates

**Fig. 1: Enrollment and attainment by race/ethnicity**

Enrollment universe: age 18-24 excluding adult arrivals  
Attainment universe: age 25-34 excluding adult arrivals

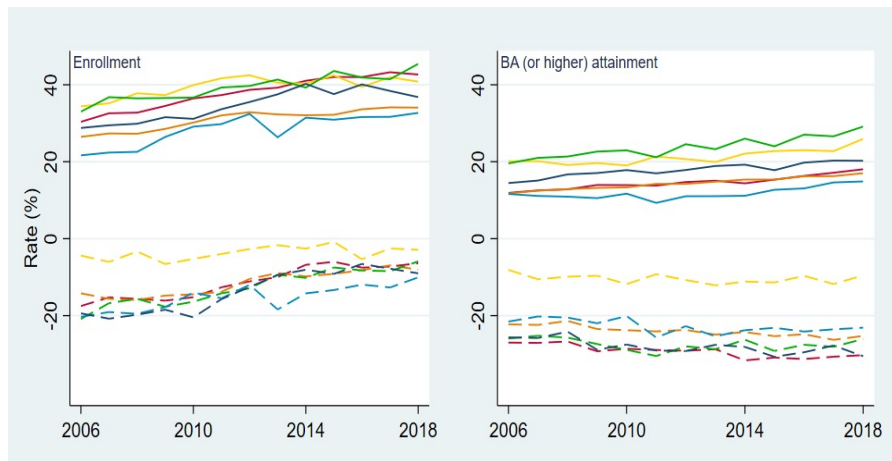


Source: IPUMS USA ACS samples; survey weights applied

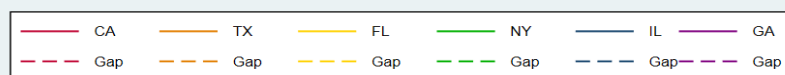
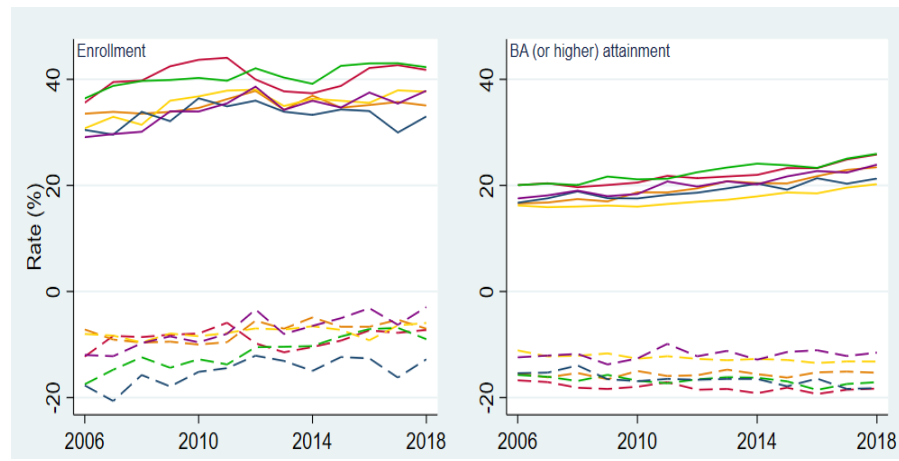
# Racial Gaps in College Success by State Context

Enrollment Universe: Age 18-24; Attainment Universe: Age 25-34 (both exclude adult arrivals); Source: IPUS USA ACS samples, survey weights applied.

## White-Latino Gap



## White-Black Gap



# Two Frames for Operationalizing Equity

## 1. Evidence-Based Equity Solutions – historical and inclusive measurement practices

(National Academies, 2019; College Completion Research Compilations; State policy effects)

## 2. Centering Equity in the Policymaking Process (multi-jurisdiction)

(Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2022; and National higher education experts and researchers)

# ***FRAME 1. CENTERING EQUITY IN THE COLLEGE SUCCESS INTERVENTION PATHWAY***

***1. BARRIERS; 2. POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS;  
3. OPERATIONALIZATION SUGGESTIONS***

*Flores, forthcoming*

# 1. Barriers to US Postsecondary Success

([Carnevale et al., 2013](#); [Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013](#); [Flores et al., 2021](#); [Flores et al., 2017](#); [Hoekstra, 2009](#); [Hoxby & Avery, 2013](#); [B.T. Long & Riley, 2007](#); [M. C. Long et al., 2012](#)).

- (1) restricted access to **high-quality academic preparation**, reflected in limited course availability and **teacher quality** in schools and neighborhoods historically **segregated** by race and income;
- (2) **financial constraints** for low-income families, including federal and state policies that benefit upper-income families (e.g., tax breaks and merit-based scholarships based primarily on test scores);
- (3) **limited access to information** about college access and success;
- (4) a **lack of postsecondary institutional resources for low-income college students** at low-resourced institutions. Additional research finds that **state policy can directly or indirectly help or hinder** college access and completion among racial minorities and immigrant students

## 2. Potential “Equity” Solutions for the New Demography

1. **Alignment with teacher quality:** Ensure coursework is aligned for college and career success with adequate high quality professional development for teachers to effectively execute the practice of curricular alignment ([Long, Conger & Mcghee, 2019](#));
2. **Equitable school integration:** Integrate schools historically segregated by race and income, so that they are less dependent on wealth, property values, parental capital, and test-driven policies ([Reardon, Weathers, Fahle, Jang, and Kalogrides. 2021](#));
3. **Prioritize colleges that serve low-income students.** Increase financial and political support for postsecondary institutions that low-income and racially underrepresented students are more likely to attend (e.g., community colleges, broad access and minority-serving institutions), to increase postsecondary degree and credential completion. ([Bound, Lovenheim & Turner, 2010](#)).

# 3. Operationalization

1. **Design with Equity Metrics.** Integrate and utilize **K-workforce** equity metrics to assess and design interventions for underserved populations attentive to cultural practices and state contexts of inequality.
2. **Recruit & Retain a Diverse Educator Workforce.** Recruit and retain high quality educator and higher education leadership demographically representative of the K-12 and postsecondary population.
3. **Utilize inclusive high-quality data.** Augment and utilize high-quality, inclusive, intersectional, multi-jurisdictional data for decision making.

## II. A Frame for Equity Implementation Across Sectors and Jurisdictions

### *OPENING THE PROMISE: THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITABLE POLICYMAKING*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR EQUITY POLICYMAKING, THE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY: <https://www.ihep.org/publication/opening-the-promise/>

# IHEP Advisory Committee for Equitable Policymaking

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the product of expertise shared by the members of the Advisory Committee for Equitable Policymaking Processes. The findings expressed are those of the authors and the committee, though not every member may fully endorse every individual recommendation. We appreciate the time, knowledge, and perspectives offered by committee members to support a more inclusive and deliberate policymaking process at every level.

### Committee members include:

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**Christina Whitfield**, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)

**Mamie Voight**, Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

**Tarajeau Yazzie-Mintz**, First Light Education Project

# Five Interrelated Principles for Equitable Policymaking

PRINCIPLE	ACTION ITEMS
An issue's <b>framing</b> shapes the creation of the relevant policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Frame an issue by including the specific "why" of the work and "what" of the problem.</li><li>▪ Apply an equity lens to outcomes, even for seemingly race-neutral problems.</li><li>▪ Reach hearts AND minds.</li></ul>
<b>Investments</b> signal priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Plan for long-term, sustainable, systemic change.</li><li>▪ Invest in long-term, sustainable, systemic change.</li></ul>
Who <b>participates</b> in policymaking decisions shapes the outcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ensure the representation and voices of impacted communities hold influence.</li></ul>
<b>Data</b> and empirical evidence are essential to effective policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Disaggregate, disaggregate, disaggregate.</li><li>▪ Ensure the evidence base is informed by researchers of color* and reflects racially diverse populations.</li></ul>
<b>Language</b> must be precise, inclusive, people-first, and respectful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Take an asset-based approach.</li><li>▪ Be specific and respectful.</li><li>▪ Be people-first and inclusive.</li></ul>

# PRINCIPLE 1: AN ISSUE'S FRAMING SHAPES THE CREATION OF THE RELEVANT POLICY

1. Be explicit about inequity and injustice regarding problem/issue.
2. If equity is not part of framing of an issue, it will likely not be part of the result.
3. Helps to hold policymakers accountable for comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

**Barrier:** restricted access to high quality and aligned academic preparation. **Solution elements:** school desegregation, teacher recruitment and wage/benefit solutions; partnerships with universities at early college prep stage; translatable and culturally relevant information and strategy sessions with parents.

## PRINCIPLE 2: INVESTMENTS SIGNAL PRIORITIES

1. Where and when government and foundations invest reflect the groups they prioritize.
2. Equitable investments focus on groups that have been historically marginalized.
3. Investments are not only outcome oriented but seek to dismantle historical barriers and include sustainable strategies.

**Barrier:** The racial/income achievement gap. **Solution elements:** Invest in diverse research and practitioner teams reflective of the populations served by the policies. Going beyond funding the golden nugget experiment. Investing in equity processes and outcomes requires multi-faceted, long-term policy solutions; there are no “miracle cure” solutions. Systemic change requires continuous assessment, adjustment, and reassessment and it should be inclusive.

## PRINCIPLE 3: WHO PARTICIPATES IN POLICYMAKING DECISIONS SHAPES THE OUTCOME

1. Centering equity requires centering the experiences of and contributions from impacted communities, including in power sharing, active solicitation of feedback, and ultimate decision- making.
2. Ensure racial diversity in formal appointments, hiring, groups, and panels.
3. Conduct outreach to impacted communities in ways that meet community members where they are and ensure participation.

**Barrier:** Lack of participation from diversifying student body in the design, dissemination and improvement in college success interventions.

**Solution elements:** Ensure What works could work better; What doesn't work could work with more culturally attentive design elements and dissemination.

## PRINCIPLE 4: DATA AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ARE ESSENTIAL TO EFFECTIVE POLICY

1. For policymaking to be equity-driven, it must also be data-informed, evidence-based and inclusive of the diversity of underrepresented impacted communities.
2. Collect and disaggregate metrics for use in the policymaking process, such as completion rates for part-time and transfer students, Pell Grant receipt and amount, loan receipt and amount, earnings outcomes, cumulative debt burden, cohort default rates, and repayment rates by race/ethnicity, economic status, first-generation status, and country of origin
3. Enable and support streamlined and linked data systems at the institution, state, and federal levels to leverage existing postsecondary data to investigate similarities and differences in outcomes by state and region.
4. Use data to examine systems and seek to remedy the inequities inherent in them. Data interpretations often focus on student behavior rather than systemic conditions. Understanding student trends is undoubtedly important, but policymakers must examine systemic and institutional barriers and opportunities.

**Barrier:** Using data for a population from a different decade or with only singular sectors with no attention to inequality in structures. **Solution element:** Use integrated data to understand intersectional identities as well as bridges between sectors to increase equity. Find solutions for students involved with different systems – children of incarcerated parents, students who are parents and caretakers, health and voting outcomes that inform educational policy outcomes.

# PRINCIPLE 5: LANGUAGE MUST BE PRECISE, INCLUSIVE, PEOPLE-FIRST, AND RESPECTFUL

- Language is complex, fluid, and holds power. Committing to racial and socioeconomic equity means using clear, specific, and respectful language. Describe equity, not simply diversity. Use language that is inclusive of intersectional identities, to recognize the range of experiences within a group
- Use an asset-based approach means framing and defining communities by their strengths, and consciously avoiding deficit framing, negative stereotypes, or any implication that students or other populations need to be “saved.”
- Use language that reflects problems in the systems, not the people. Instead of seeking to “reduce dropout rates” or “close the achievement gap,” consider language that describes “addressing systemic obstacles to graduation,” “increasing graduation rates,” and “dismantling inequities.”

**Problem:** A focus on deficit focused language regarding students and/or not acknowledging intersectional identities of which each may have its own challenges and opportunities. **Solution elements:** Include populations for which policies address in more than token numbers.

# MOVING FORWARD: RESEARCH AND POLICYMAKING FOR EQUITY IN COLLEGE SUCCESS ACROSS JURISDICTIONS

1. An opportunity to reset and redesign
2. Contend with inequality but work as a community for the future of a community
3. A time to architect real American opportunity. Creating inclusive spaces for equity solutions will likely lead to diversity strengths and solutions the nation hasn't seen in practice.

# Final Words

When policymakers at the federal, state, local, and institutional levels center racial equity throughout policies and processes, higher education can realize its full transformative potential for students, their families, our communities, our workforce, our economy, and our shared future.

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