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National Organizations Partner to Launch the Higher Education Equity Network

Collective Impact Network in Higher Education Is Focused on Creating an Equitable System for Black, Latin/a/o/x, and Indigenous Students

More than 25 organizations working in postsecondary education today announced the launch of the Higher Education Equity Network. The national organizations, which have decades of experience in the areas of research, policy, advocacy, and effective practices, will collectively draw from their respective areas of expertise to work on eliminating systemic barriers to help Black, Latin/a/o/x, and Indigenous students reach their full potential while pursuing higher education.

The opportunity to address racial disparities in higher education and the labor market through a unified effort is immense. Racially minoritized students experience low graduation rates¹ while bearing the burden of higher median levels of student loan debt². These systemically perpetuated inequities take a toll on the students themselves – too many of whom leave college or graduate college without a credential of value that improves their career opportunities and economic mobility.

To address these challenges, the Higher Education Equity Network, with initial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will bring a sense of urgency and intentional focus on the needs of Black, Latin/a/o/x, and Indigenous students. In addition to championing access, success, and affordability in higher education, the network will focus on solutions to improve economic and social mobility for these student populations beyond graduation, promoting ways to address deep inequities in hiring, wages, and career advancement.

¹ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_red.asp

² <https://www.brookings.edu/research/student-loans-the-racial-wealth-divide-and-why-we-need-full-student-debt-cancellation/>

The collective impact network will spur changes in higher education in ways that explicitly respond to the lived experiences of Black, Latin/a/o/x, and Indigenous students. Network members will bring unique perspectives that provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and solutions for equity in higher education. The network will share insights related to the following actions:

- Elevating policies that deliver equitable value for students at colleges and universities, higher education systems, and state and federal agencies;
- Developing new strategies and lifting up existing equity-driven practices to improve credit recognition and transfer, investment in higher education, data use to advance career outcomes and economic mobility, and technical assistance approaches through a racial equity lens;
- Calling upon systems and institutions to analyze their programs and outcomes, identify patterns of disparities, and dismantle racist structures; and
- Mobilizing and supporting institutions in adopting practices that provide equal opportunity to credentials of value for Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous students.

“The Network’s explicit focus on Black, Latin/a/o/x, and Indigenous students is so important,” said Dr. Yolanda Watson Spiva, President of Complete College America. “We’ve been tinkering around the edges for some time in higher education. We know where the resources are most needed. Now is the time to allocate these resources where the need is the greatest so that increased college completion is no longer aspirational.”

“The potential impact for this network is huge,” said Dr. Amelia Parnell, Vice President for Research and Policy at NASPA. “We can cover issues more thoroughly with this many higher education professionals, leaders, thought partners, and influencers working together toward the same end goal. We need a group of this size and level of influence in order to get the work done.”

Members of the Higher Education Equity Network are:

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
Achieving the Dream
American Institute for Research (AIR)
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
The Aspen Institute
The Campaign for College Opportunity
Community College Research Center (CCRC)
Complete College America
Dana Center

Educate Texas at Communities Foundation of Texas
Education Commission of the States (ECS)
Excelencia in Education
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
HCM Strategists
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Jobs for the Future (JFF)
JKW Consulting
Latinos for Education

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in
Higher Education
National Student Clearinghouse
New America
Paul Quinn College
SOVA Solutions

University Innovation Alliance
United Negro College Fund (UNCF)
VentureWell
WICHE Cooperative for Educational
Technologies (WCET)
Young Invincibles

In the coming months, the network will begin to lay the groundwork for its initial set of priorities - promoting racial equity in transfer and credit recognition practices, equity-focused technical assistance, and data use to improve career outcomes for Black, Latin/a/o/x, and Indigenous students.

An informational webinar about the Higher Education Equity Network is scheduled for November 1, 11-12 p.m. ET. To register for the webinar and learn more about the Higher Education Equity Network, visit higheredequitynetwork.org

The Higher Ed Equity Network is managed by Catalyst:Ed, a national nonprofit that supports education organizations and networks with equity-centered capacity building.