

 LEADING STRATEGIES

Devising Strategies to Address Threats to Enrollment Management Practices

By Allyson Brown and Keith James

There are many concerns that call into question higher education institutions' ability to adequately support the next generation of college-bound students. As institutions begin to develop or refine their respective strategic enrollment plans, enrollment leaders are in a unique position to consider how their efforts are shaped through an inclusive lens.

Literature Review

After decades of progress, colleges and universities still face threats to higher education from declining college enrollment rates (National Student Clearinghouse 2023), declining birth rates (Rogers 2021), perceptions of attending college (Lederman 2023), and most recently the landmark Supreme Court decision to eliminate the consideration of race in college admissions (Roberts, *et al.* 2023). A prominent threat to higher education is the attempted erasure of history through the removal of public funds to support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) (Lu, *et al.* 2023), banning of books (Moody 2022), and the passing of laws that create more trauma for our LGBTQ+ youth community (Redfield 2023). The current state of higher education is not as stable as it once was. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 set a new course for the direction of higher education, into uncharted waters and the pressing question of how to support *all* students in the pursuit of education is still prevalent in this work. The current political climate has higher

education under constant attack from lawmakers who seek to dismantle DEI initiatives.

As institutions navigate the long-discussed and ever growing “enrollment cliff,” enrollment leaders should carefully consider how constructing a strategic enrollment plan using a DEI framework can help mitigate shrinking numbers and enhance the overall quality of students that institutions are seeking to enroll. Significant amounts of data, research, and literature have accumulated over time to provide higher educational professionals with a solid framework of innovative practices in order to counteract these threats and regard them as opportunities to thrive in the years to come.

This article is a practitioner's approach to creating equity and inclusion in the enrollment management culture. The authors will provide ideas for implementation that enrollment divisions can consider when developing a strategic enrollment plan. The authors will look at looming threats to higher education, leveraging DEI as a framework, ideas for identifying areas of opportu-

nities, and concluding by providing institutions with a template for strategic recruitment and enrollment.

Threats to Enrollment Management

There are many concerns that call into question higher education institutions' (HEI) ability to adequately support the next generation of college-bound students—threats that would prevent growth and innovation to improve the position and current landscape of higher education. As of this month, there are 38 anti-DEI pending pieces of legislation and six new laws passed that directly implicate the presence of diversity, equity, and inclusion across all levels of education (Lu, *et al.* 2023). The authors refer to the following concerns as “threats,” due to the ability to inflict damage on the field of higher education. These threats are imminent and need the attention of higher education professionals across the United States.

Shifting Demographics

It is without question the racial and ethnic demographics in the United States are increasing in representation (Conrad and Gasman 2015). Passel and Cohn (2008) published a report through the Pew Research Center that demographic projections indicate a non-white majority by the year 2050. Considering racial and ethnic demographics across the United States, the projected percentages are as follows: Black or African American (13 percent), white (47 percent), Asian (9 percent), and Hispanic (29 percent) (Passel and Cohn 2008). These growing numbers should signal to higher education administrators and other stakeholders that a widely diverse student population is preparing to enroll, study, live, and develop at HEIs across the country. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting this increasingly diverse student population but HEIs should be re-evaluating their current operating structures for efficiency in welcoming students who come from all neighborhoods, religions, socioeconomic classes, domestic/international lands, and bi/multilingual abilities. Enrollment management professionals are on the forefront of setting the tone for the institution's position on supporting all students.

Enrollment Cliff

National data shows a decrease of college-bound students (Knox 2023; Conley and Massa 2022) which is referred to as the “enrollment cliff” (Schuette 2023). This is primarily due to the declining birthrate in the United States (Rogers 2021) but also exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. What this means is there are fewer prospective students to compete for and a sense of urgency to reiterate the value of a college experience. The last two decades have brought about the merging or closing of colleges across the country. The reasons for these decisions will not be discussed here, but what is certain is the data-informed predictions of prospective students institutions seek to recruit are declining in number. Remaining competitive within the higher education market is vital to guide institutional direction.

Perceived Value of a Four-Year Degree

A little more than half of Americans do not value a four-year college degree like they once did (Lederman 2023; Kelchen 2016). This shift in perception of the value of a four-year college degree signals a few possibilities: students are looking to obtain a college education by other means; and students have concerns about acquiring too much financial debt, bypassing the collateral gain of life experience while in college for skill-based training and going straight to work. There is even emerging literature that shows an increasing trend of enrollment by nontraditional students, who are returning to school to start, complete, or obtain supplementary credentials in support of their careers (Hittepole n.d). The institution of higher education has been one of the country's earliest opportunities to acquire a decent quality of life; now the perception of the institution of higher education looks different. More diversity in the student populations recruited to attend college raises concern regarding the disparities in accessing resources to attend, and be supported through, college.

Opposition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

One of the most pressing and imminent concerns to higher education is the dismantling of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the conversation surrounding

education. As of this spring, Florida and Texas have quickly taken the lead on removing funding, presence, and position on the matter, with other states eager to follow suit. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* featured an article that compiles the current status of DEI laws and legislation through the DEI Tracker (Lu, *et al.* 2023). This legislation tracker also shows the area of DEI each state has proposed or signed into laws that prohibit education, training, and professional practice in the realm of DEI. Since the pivotal shift created by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the current state of affairs confirms progress toward equitable education remains under attack (Cancian 1998). The opposing argument to why DEI should be removed from the educational system is that the inclusion of America's complete history is too divisive and controversial. Those who support DEI in education argue that the value of this topic within the educational system is warranted in order to support *all* students in their attainment of an education.

There is still hope, and time, for a better future.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a Framework

Defining DEI Concepts as a Trifecta

DEI as a topic is an evolving concept that also recognizes belonging (B), access (A), and/or justice (J), and oftentimes these references are used interchangeably. Individually, DEI concepts can be addressed as stand-alone topics but together, this conversation becomes more effective and innovative in practice.

■ **Diversity** is the representation of lived experiences and how people recognize the differences that exist among us (across a breadth and depth of intersecting identities). Higher education institutions construct many microcosms of campus community filled with people from various backgrounds and identities. Institutions must be open and receptive to ensuring the lived experiences for all their students are respected and valued on their campuses. As DEI initiatives are under attack from various political stakeholders, it is imperative that institutions recognize the collective value their entire student body

brings to the campus community and work to create meaningful opportunities for their experiences and ideas to be expressed.

■ **Equity** is ensuring everyone has support to the individual's respective needs in acquiring access to the resources available (Putnam-Walkerly and Russell 2016). In this discussion, the functional aspects of equity in the enrollment process are considered: admissions application fee waivers as well as travel assistance for students with financial need to visit campus and/or attend orientation. Another example is creating versatile ways to connect with students during travel recruitment. In addition to in-person travel, adding virtual options provides flexibility for students to engage with a college representative. This part of the process is critical to effective and inclusive recruitment efforts. Enrollment strategic plans should be designed for both short- and long-term sustainability. Language used in recruitment materials, and any communication to prospective families should be reviewed for equitable and inclusive practices. Each of these components have the potential to promote equitable access toward overall success.

■ **Inclusion** is the culture created within a space that signals belonging and value of all organizational members. If everyone doesn't feel welcome and valued, then there is more work to do. For students this means perceiving their surroundings as safe and welcoming and seeing themselves as a valuable part of the campus community. Creating an inclusive environment means agreeing to be open-minded to idea sharing and developing a diverse perspective. Invite students into the recruitment process; create opportunities for them to customize parts of their campus visit experience; and provide feedback for staff consideration. Inclusion is a challenging space to operate in because it requires not only being educated on working across differences, or applying what is learned to level the playing field; true inclusion takes work from everyone involved and is a continuous journey of exploration, not a destination. Each of these DEI areas apply to cultivating successful professional teams, too.

Defining DEI as an Enrollment Division

Wilson, *et al.* (2012) conducted a study that reviewed the mission and diversity statements of public colleges across the country, and of the 80 sampled, 74 percent made a reference to diversity, so HEIs are putting forth a considerable amount of effort to acknowledge the value of diversity that exists in this country. Furthermore, “researchers have consistently found that racial/ethnic minority students and their White peers who attend the same institution often view the campus racial climate in different ways” (Harper and Hurtado 2017). An institutional commitment to diversity versus the reality for students are not aligning. Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion starts with recruitment and enrollment.

As institutions begin to develop or refine their respective strategic enrollment plans, chief enrollment management officers (CEMO) are encouraged to consider how they can work with members of their campus to define what DEI looks like in practice. In order to do this, CEMOs become change agents who partner together with campus leaders to facilitate and assess the campus climate. By accurately defining what DEI means to their respective institutions, CEMOs will be able to narrow the focus of their strategic enrollment (SEM) plan and set concrete recruitment and retention benchmarks. Institutions who utilize too broad of a framework for recruitment and retention will continue to see inconsistent trends in enrollment (especially for marginalized populations). Students of color who are not supported after matriculating are more likely to encounter retention challenges (Strayhorn 2007) at that institution so recruitment and retention truly go hand in hand. Ideas that institutions may consider to cultivate inclusion in the recruitment stage include:

■ *Review recruitment materials.* Representation of the campus community is important and even more so this representation needs to be genuine. A preferred approach to communicating representation includes displaying images of current students, faculty, and staff to promote familiarity and authentic connections to the campus. Embrace and showcase the diversity that currently exists; highlight the student demographics and opportunities for engagement in

these public-facing materials. Websites and social media should also follow these guidelines for inclusion; for print and digital marketing materials, seek out counsel from campus partners on how to make those materials accessible (i.e: Braille, QR codes for materials translated in other languages, translator buttons for websites, and alternative texts for digital images).

■ *Invite students in.* A great recruitment tactic is to connect prospective students to current students; there is no better source of information and perspective than those who have experienced campus life and possibly share similar life experiences. Create time and space for prospective students to connect organically and authentically through virtual chats and overnight visit opportunities. Student organizations and/or admissions ambassadors are a valuable resource for building connections with prospective students; invite them to be part of open house/accepted student day events and welcome week programming. Respective departments can benefit from engagement with prospective students on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. A strategically-crafted social media engagement plan can produce, and capture, demonstrated interest otherwise missed through traditional recruitment strategies, such as campus visits and email correspondence. Track this engagement in a customer relationship management (CRM) program (for ex., Slate, TargetX, etc.).

■ *Provide more student support services.* This is where most enrollment divisions consider the hand off to the rest of the campus community. In partnership with advising, registrar and orientation leadership, enrollment divisions should work to provide additional support services to students from various underrepresented demographics (hiring diverse staff with diversity in language ability, using preferred student names, etc.). For institutions who are looking to provide an even deeper level of support services, explore an investment of a TRiO grant that may be available through the federal Department of Education. TRiO provides additional academic and social support to first-generation students, cur-

rent and former military service member students, Pell Grant recipients, and students with disabilities (McElroy and Armesto 1998). This additional measure of academic and social support provides an even greater avenue of inclusion and, more importantly, potential avenues of success for underrepresented students. A great deal of time, effort, and resources goes into applying for, and if ultimately awarded, implementing a TRiO grant. The depth of services provided to the students impacted by this grant are worth the effort of exploration.

For enrollment divisions to truly embrace what it means to be engaged in DEI work, everyone must embrace it from the top down starting with the CEMO, middle management, admissions counselors, and student recruiters. Once there is a shared vision and collaborative team effort in place, team members can move forward to strengthen the weaker areas of the operation.

Identifying Opportunity Points

Understanding the shift of racial demographics is important for assessing and revising enrollment best practices. “Recent undergraduate college enrollment trends reveal that the share of non-white undergraduate students has steadily increased over time, while the share of white student enrollment has declined by more than 25 percentage points from 1980 to 2014” (King, *et al.* 2016). Traditional recruitment practices of sending brochures in the mail and hosting telethons to call prospective students would not be considered inclusive recruitment practices. Identifying new opportunity points would be creating interactive engagement mailers with QR codes to scan for interest in particular programs, videos that highlight student experiences, or The question here is how to identify opportunities to redesign admissions and enrollment practices as an adaptation to align with emerging trends in the field.

Utilizing institutional data and internal data accessible by the CRM, enrollment teams should carefully analyze which demographics of students are most underrepresented in their applicant pool and assess how that aligns with campus community student represen-

tation and the mission of the institution. These findings will serve as points of opportunity when developing enrollment goals.

Historically, Hispanic and Black students have enrolled in college within close proximity to where they live (Conrad and Gasman 2015) so while fly-in programs for students are effective in diversifying regional representation, there is an opportunity point in designing campus engagement opportunities for students of color within the institution’s geographical region. Literature on the trends of financial status for students of color are the disparities of debt incurred in comparison to their fellow white peers (King, *et al.* 2016). There are points for creating opportunities for all students to not only engage with campus, people, and the enrollment process but also to incorporate learning opportunities for students to be empowered to make the best decision possible for the foreseeable future. Other opportunity points extend beyond direct student engagement; another opportunity also exists in building and cultivating the enrollment staff.

Professional Development

The global COVID-19 pandemic unveiled many areas of vulnerability and opportunities for innovation. Individually, many people suffered from anxiety and emotional distress from processing the quick shift to working from home and watching the country reopen the wound of racial injustice. Collectively, organizations across the country had to restructure functional operations to accommodate consumers and other stakeholders. During this time, virtual access to working and learning became a leading platform of connection to the world. Webinars, virtual conferences, and other networking events turned into easily accessible (and more affordable) professional development opportunities. Another lesson learned was the sacrifice of staff resources to balance family responsibilities with the demands of work. Learning how to support outlets of coping became critical for leadership to retain team talent. In order to do this, leaders had to be mindful of inequities beyond the scope of work interactions that impacted professional performance (decrease or elimination of

daycare, caring for family members, job/income loss, etc.). These concerns had to be acknowledged in order for leaders to better understand how to appropriately support their teams.

Developing Cultural Competency

Another opportunity point for higher education professionals has been to revisit what it means to take care of one another, directly or through workspaces. Cultural competency is descriptive of an understanding that considers multiple factors of influence to a system that allows for cross cultural interactions (SenGupta, *et al.* 2004); being respectful of human differences and acknowledging the inequities that exist are the main elements of developing cultural competency. This development of a cultural lens is a process and takes work. Developing cultural competency means spending time to create meaningful relationships with team members beyond the expectations of performative tasks.

Peter Drucker's notorious quote, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast," should be adopted by higher education professionals everywhere. Culture significantly impacts strategy. People are at the center of the work performed in enrollment operations. People are the best resource available so by cultivating a culture that supports the best available resource, the people will play a very important role in the success of any strategy. All team members should have a foundational, working knowledge of valuing differences among groups of people.

Recruitment Strategy Template

Devising an inclusive recruitment strategy serves as the compass for navigating short- and long-term goals. For example, co-authors Chrissy Holiday and Sharon Anderson (2022) write about creating high-impact opportunities for first-generation students. Their work can be translated to developing enrollment plans that will recruit, retain, and graduate a widely diverse population. They propose that institutions "should develop programs and experiences that: (1) allow students to dream, (2) connect them with adults who can give them a more concrete connection to those dreams, and (3) support them through efforts to achieve those dreams."

This contribution to the literature incorporates a personal touch to connecting with students. If institutions reframe enrollment through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion, their efforts will be one step closer to achieving all three of those realities. These realities extend into the campus community; the successful operation of higher education institutions requires the shared input and engagement of all campus community members, specifically enrollment management teams.

Multi-Layered Approach

A strategy is a long-term vision, which is hard to conceptualize in day-to-day operations. Administrative leadership, along with the CEMO, can develop strategies to support all aspects of the recruitment and enrollment process. A multi-layered approach to supporting the enrollment process considers the stakeholders impacted. The layers of the enrollment management structure may include: administrative leadership, mid-level managers, entry-level professionals, and customers: prospective students and families.

- **Enrollment Leadership (CEMO/VP):** Buy-in from administrative level leadership is key to implementing a successful strategy because of the position of authority and scope of influence (Bourke and Dillon 2018) so start strategy development with the top in mind. Administrative leadership should be able to articulate the goal(s) of the strategy and present steps of engagement to reach desired goals.
- **Mid-Level Managers (directors):** An influential role within the division, managers and directors are the developing leaders who want experience with new projects and can help keep healthy communication lines open between leadership and entry-level professionals (Bourke and Dillon 2018). Utilize these team members to sustain the efforts of the strategy design.
- **Entry-Level Professionals (admissions/enrollment counselors):** These professionals are typically the newest members of the team. The overall strategy should include developing entry-level professionals to help set the expectations of division culture and how to be successful. Developing young professionals is also a great courtesy in creating a professional

TABLE 1 ► Sample Multi-Layered Recruitment Strategy Template

	Goal	Priority	Metric
This enrollment division aims to attract, recruit and support a diverse representation of students and provide students with a well-versed, culturally competent professional staff.			
1	What is the focus for your team?	Resource of support to achieve goal	How can progress be measured?
2	What is the focus of your recruitment strategy?	Resource of support to achieve goal	How can progress be measured?
3	What is your commitment to supporting students through the enrollment process?	Resource of support to achieve goal	How can progress be measured?

learning environment for individuals to fully understand the implications of the work and how to best utilize personal strengths and talents.

■ **Customers (prospective students):** Supporting students through the process should be the foundation of strategy for recruitment offices; it is the foundation of recruitment and enrollment. Review current operational policies, best practices in enrollment management, and resources available to recruit and support a diverse representation of students. Students can sense trust among people in positions of power, which leads to confidence in making their admissions decision.

An example of a multi-layered recruitment strategy is shown in Table 1.

Once the strategy is in place, refer back to it as a guide and define what timeframe is appropriate. Start with a five-year timeline with annual/quarterly reviews to monitor progress and adjust, if needed. Again, the vision is a long-term destination (which should not change much over time), and the goals (which can be altered to address any challenges that arise) get you there.

Anti-Bias Training

Any professional interactions made between humans is enough to solicit anti-bias training. The reason why is because everyone carries biases, some conscious and some unconscious (Ross 2020; Fuller and Murphy 2020), with a spectrum of behavioral outcomes from innocent to fatally harmful to others. Part of managing threats to higher education starts with personal reflection. The

way each person performs work within the context of personal and professional spaces are shaped by perceptions interpreted for meaning. This means the ability to show up authentically to work every day is important. This also means the ability to create, implement, and sustain inclusive policies and practices require a continuous effort to acknowledge biased perceptions and the mission of the institution. These two considerations cannot be successful without understanding more about the influential factors in everyday decisions made and the ideas formed about differences.

Anti-bias training is designed to decrease the impact personal bias has on professional performance. As with learning anything new, there is a foundational base for understanding what bias is and how it manifests, so when considering engaging in anti-bias education, learn the basics first. *Everyone* in the enrollment management division needs to have a basic level of bias competency. From the administrative assistant or student intern who answers the phone to the director of admissions and chief enrollment management officer, everyone needs to engage with understanding bias. By including everyone in the professional development opportunity, the organizational leader can ensure the team has access to improve as educators but also to create an inclusive culture by acknowledging the valued differences across people groups. People are the best resource, and they will be a key factor in organizational success (Hinojosa, et al. 2023).

The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias: How to Reframe Bias, Cultivate Connection, and Create High-Performing Teams by Pamela Fuller, et al. (2020) is a highly suggested book

for leading teams through learning and understanding bias. Each chapter concludes with a short, reflective exercise that not only re-visits concepts from the respective chapter but gently challenges the reader to journal about personal and professional experiences regarding the topic. This read also helps center bias as a concept rather than on the facilitator's perspective on the experience, which could further displace how bias influences interactions. Hinojosa, *et al.* (2023) speaks to the level of effective influence a CEMO has in the equation of success: "A CEMO will find success to be a direct reflection of their ability to influence not just the people in the environment, but the processes and structures that make up the environment" (20). This position points to this leadership role as a conduit in improving team performance from a transformative, not just performative, angle. Engaging in this type of reflective work now will better position all higher education professionals to support the increasingly diverse student populations served.

Cultivating Sustainable Practices

Hinojosa, *et al.*, (2023) emphasize the creation of effective practices is a shared benefit for the student and the institution. In order to develop these effective practices, it is helpful to know what efforts are currently effective and those that are not. Begin with an evaluation of the services provided, student/customer satisfaction and employer representation, and engagement. The initial evaluation will serve as a benchmark for subsequent years. For starters, consider the following questions to shape the initial report:

Evaluation of Services

- What offices are available to assist new students in the enrollment process?
- When does a transcript evaluation take place for dual enrolled high school, transfer, and/or veteran students?
- Does the division provide a way to support non-English speakers?
- When does the transition of matriculation to other campus partners for student support take place?

Customer Satisfaction

- As a new student, did you receive adequate support to enroll at our institution?
- At which point of the enrollment cycle did you feel most engaged? Before or during the application process or after committing to enroll?
- As a new student, did you have a specific person who was your point of contact throughout the enrollment process?
- Was the process easy to navigate? Why or why not?

Employee Representation and Engagement

- What is the current demographic representation, inclusive of the intersecting identities of race/ethnic and gender?
- What is the tenure of employment for staff? The life cycle of employee talent will provide data indicators on what part(s) of the organization is effective and identify opportunities for improvement.
- What is the level of employee engagement with the operations of the division? *Low* (inconsistent work performance, focuses on completing tasks and little to no desire to advance); *Moderate* (consistent work performance, engages in team building activities if required) level; *Active* level (exceeds performance expectations, eager to develop in the profession by engaging in optional development opportunities).

Part of establishing a benchmark for the team is maximizing the opportunity to incorporate sustainable practices. Creating a process just to say it exists is performative. Hinojosa, *et. al* (2023) suggests "review[ing] policies and procedures on a regular basis" (25) for access and comprehension by all team members. Sustainable practices require consistent review in order to identify the challenges before they become implications to others.

Conclusion

The idea here is not to remain complacent, or stagnant, in efforts to be innovative and lead inclusively. Leadership will set the tone and influence the culture of the team; by doing more of the same (Hinojosa, *et al.* 2023),

the team is positioned to succumb to the trap of ineffective practices. As institutions think about how they can achieve long-term success, it is fundamental that initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion be at the forefront of the discussion in developing strategy and address the existing threats to higher education. Change unveils new opportunities to improve the work, recruit-

ment, and enrollment and across the field of higher education. The threats to higher education mentioned here are signals that a shift in practice and student experience is imminent. Creating and implementing an inclusive strategy now is a way to be proactive in decreasing reactive tactics to navigating potential recruitment challenges. Start preparing now for a new future.

References

- Bourke, J., and B. Dillon. 2018. The diversity and inclusion revolution, eight powerful truths. *Deloitte Deloitte Review*. January 22. Available at: <www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/deloitte-review/issue-22/diversity-and-inclusion-at-work-eight-powerful-truths.html>.
- Cancian, M. 1998. Race-based versus class-based affirmative action in college admissions. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 17(1): 94–105.
- Conley, B., and R. Massa. 2022. The Great Interruption. *Inside Higher Ed*. February 27. Available at: <insidehighered.com/admissions/views/2022/02/28/enrollment-changes-colleges-are-feeling-are-much-more-covid-19>.
- Conrad, C., and M. Gasman. 2015. *Educating a Diverse Nation: Lessons from Minority-Serving Institutions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fuller, P., and M. Murphy. 2020. *The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias: How to Reframe Bias, Cultivate Connection, and Create High-Performing Teams*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Harper, S. R., and S. Hurtado. 2007. Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*. 120(2007): 7–24.
- Hittepole, C. n.d. *Nontraditional Students: Supporting Changing Student Populations A Guide for Chief Academic Officers & Chief Student Affairs Officers*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for Student Personnel Administrators.
- Holiday, C., and S. Anderson. 2022. The Deciders: Understanding the First-Generation College-Going Experience in Support of Enrollment and Diversity Efforts. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*. 10(3): 35–43.
- Kelchen, R. 2016. *Education Under Review: Examining the Value of Education in for Student Success—In Career and Life*. Washington, D.C.: The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved from: <ellucian.com/assets/emea-ap/white-paper/student-success-chronicle-education-under-review.pdf>.
- King Jr., J. B., T. Mitchell, A. McIntosh, and J. Bell-Ellwanger. 2016. *Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: Key Data Highlights Focusing on Race and Ethnicity and Promising Practices*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
- Knox, L. 2023. Leveling off at the bottom. *Inside Higher Ed*. May 24. Available at: <insidehighered.com/news/admissions/traditional-age/2023/05/24/leveling-bottom>.
- Lu, A., J. Elias, A. W. June, J. B. Charles, E. Hall, H. Huiskes, K. Marijolic, J. Roberts-Grmela, Z. Schermele, and E. Surovell. 2023. DEI legislation tracker. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. June 16. Retrieved from: <chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts>.
- Lederman, D. 2023. Majority of Americans lack confidence in value of four-year degree. *Inside Higher Ed*. April 3. Retrieved from: <insidehighered.com/news/2023/04/03/majority-americans-lack-confidence-value-four-year-degree>.
- McElroy, E. J., and M. Armesto. 1998. TRIO and Upward Bound: History, programs, and issues-past, present, and future. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 67(4): 373–380. Available at: <doi.org/10.2307/2668137>.
- Moody, J. 2022. How K–12 book bans affect higher education. *Inside Higher Ed*. February 9. Available at: <insidehighered.com/news/2022/02/10/how-k-12-book-bans-affect-higher-education>.
- National Student Clearinghouse. 2023. *New Research: Fall Undergraduate Enrollment Stabilized in 2022*. Herndon, VA: Author. Available at: <studentclearinghouse.org/new-research-fall-undergraduate-enrollment-stabilized-in-2022/>.
- Passel, J., and D. Cohn. 2008. *U.S. Population Projections: 2005–2050*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center. Available at: <pewresearch.org/hispanic/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/>.
- Putnam-Walkerly, K., and E. Russell. 2016. What the heck does “equity” mean? *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. September 15. Available at: <ssir.org/articles/entry/what_the_heck_does_equity_mean>.
- Redfield, E., K. J. Conron, W. Tentindo, and E. Browning. 2023. *Prohibiting Gender Affirming Medical Care for Youth*. Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA.
- Roberts, J. G., C. S. Thomas, S. A. Alito, S. Sotomayor, E. Kagan, N. M. Gorsuch, B. M. Kavanaugh, A. C. Barrett, and K. B. Jackson. 2023. *Students for Fair Admissions v*

President and Fellows of Harvard College. Washington, D.C.: Supreme Court of the United States.

Available at: <supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199_hgdj.pdf>.

Rogers, L. 2021. U. S. population grew 0.1% in 2021, slowest rate since founding of the Nation. *America Counts: Stories Behind the Numbers* (U.S. Census Bureau). December 21. Available at: <census.gov/library/stories/2021/12/

[us-population-grew-in-2021-slowest-rate-since-founding-of-the-nation.html](https://census.gov/library/stories/2021/12/)>.

Ross, H. J. 2020. *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives*.

Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Schuetz, A. 2023. *Navigating the Enrollment Cliff in Higher Education*.

Round Rock, TX: Trellis Company.

SenGupta, S., R. Hopson, and M. Thompson-Robinson. 2004.

Cultural competence in evaluation: An overview. *New Directions for Evaluation*. 2004(102): 5–19.

Strayhorn, T. L., and M. C. Terrell. 2007.

Mentoring and satisfaction with college for Black students. *Negro Education Review*. Greensboro. 58(1/2): 69–83, 132.

Wilson, J. L., K. A. Meyer, and L. McNeal.

2012. Mission and diversity statements: What they do and do not say. *Innovative Higher Education*. 37(2012): 125–139.

About the Authors



Allyson Brown

Allyson Brown is the inaugural Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Spartanburg

Methodist College (SC). Prior to SMC, Mrs. Brown served as the associate dean of admissions for diversity and inclusion in the Office of Admissions at Furman University for ten years. She spent the majority of her service recruiting transfer and underrepresented students. Mrs. Brown provides a dual perspective merging both admissions and DEI practices together.

Her professional affiliations include the following: the Southern Association for College Admission Counseling (SACAC), Carolinas Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers (CACRAO), Southern Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (SACRAO), American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and the Carolinas chapter of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE). Mrs. Brown's research interests are in the areas of

college admissions, the underrepresented student college experience, and inclusive practices in higher education.

Mrs. Brown holds a bachelor of arts degree in English from Francis Marion University (2005), a master's degree in counselor education–student affairs from Clemson University (2011), and a graduate diversity certificate from the University of North Georgia (2021). She is currently a doctoral student at Boston College, in the executive doctoral program for higher education.



Keith James

Keith James currently serves as an Equity & Title IX Investigator at Kennesaw State

University (GA) and is a veteran higher education professional. His areas of expertise include residence life, student activities, behavioral intervention, Title IX, and Equal Opportunity.

Prior to arriving at KSU, Mr. James served at Spartanburg Methodist Col-

lege (SC) as the Director of Title IX & Equal Opportunity. Mr. James also provided leadership at Dickinson State University (ND) as the Director of Student Life and Title IX Coordinator.

Mr. James has been active in multiple professional organizations including the Student Conduct Institute (SCI), Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA), Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA), National

Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

Mr. James has a passion for leadership development, staff training, and the intersection of diversity, equity, and inclusion within higher education. Mr. James holds a B.A. in church leadership with a focus on youth ministry from Newberry College (SC) and a M.A. in higher education from John Brown University (AR).