



# MEASURING EXCELLENCE IN ACCESS AND DIVERSITY



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The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By the 2015–16 award year, a college ranking system, known as the Postsecondary Institution Ratings System (PIRS), will likely be in place to evaluate institutions on a number of factors. While it has not yet been determined what metrics will be used for evaluation, possibilities include: number of students receiving the Federal Pell Grant, average cost of attendance, student loan debt, graduation and transfer rates, and commitment to access and diversity. The goal of PIRS is to tie institutional allocation of financial aid funds to these ratings by 2018. The Department of Education (ED) has requested \$647 million for College Opportunity and Graduation Bonuses to award institutions who are successfully enrolling and graduating Federal Pell Grant recipients. While tying PIRS to allocations would require congressional action, ED has the current authority to create the ratings system, and has already begun the process. NASFAA leadership asked the Access and Diversity Committee (ADC) to conduct research on the feasibility of such an approach and to determine if there are tools currently available to assist an institution with their own evaluation prior to the development and implementation of a Federal rating tool. There have been many discussions on what the PIRS will reveal and what impact the rating will have on institutions. With the goal of informing how access and diversity might be measured in such a system, the information discussed in this paper reflects the challenges of defining diversity, what the research says about access, what schools are currently doing and the tools that are available to assist an institution with their own assessment of their commitment to access and diversity.

## ACCESS AND DIVERSITY

Access and diversity in postsecondary education are among the core values of higher education institutions. Yet the terms “access” and “diversity” can have very different meanings for various schools, depending on institutional type, size, location, mission, and culture. For example, diversity alone can be defined as race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

Race and ethnicity are the most commonly discussed diversity demographics. However, to improve access and increase diversity, institutions will need to identify and focus on factors that represent the greatest inequities and opportunities for improvement for their population of students.

Obtaining a college degree is one path for improving socioeconomic status. However the rising costs of higher education are becoming unaffordable for many families. President Obama’s goal to have the most college graduates in the world will have to address how to make colleges and universities more accessible. Federal student aid programs and most family incomes have not kept up with the increasing costs of a college degree. The funding incentives from the PIRS plan could help provide students with options for obtaining an affordable and quality education at an institution that demonstrates and is awarded for its commitment to access and diversity. The many factors surrounding student access and success in higher education have been explored from various angles with much of the research focusing on the interplay between socioeconomic status, gender, race, and ethnicity.

## Existing Measurements

**What does the research demonstrate?** *The cost of a college education, limited financial aid, and how institutions choose to use their institutional funds all have an impact on the behavior of students.*

- The high cost of higher education and insufficient funding deter students from attending college.
- Students will elect to attend an institution where their academic preparation exceeds the entrance requirements.
- The focus of financial aid has moved from expanding college access for low-income students to investing more in merit based scholarships to ensure a class that aligns with enrollment goals.
- A borrower's experience with student loans is related to socioeconomic status. Low-income students are more likely to incur excessive loan debt and face higher instances of default.
- Socioeconomic status can reduce students' ability to participate in the competitive environment of higher education.

## Next Steps

**What can institutions do to strengthen their commitment to access and diversity?** *The financial aid community is in a unique position to make a difference; however, there are other areas within the institution, e.g., admissions, academic affairs, student services, that have an equal opportunity to impact access and diversity. Here are some examples for consideration:*

- Follow NASFAA's mission and core advocacy principles.
- Align packaging policies with diversity goals.
- Focus on inequities due to socioeconomic status and on opportunities for improvement by making college more affordable.
- Student services and retention policies should support achieving and maintaining access and diversity.
- Engage their communities to support diversity in the life of their students and in the work environment within the community.
- Develop programs by creating and maintaining partnerships with businesses and industries while preparing students to work in a diverse and global environment.

**How does an institution measure their commitment and success in providing access and promoting diversity?** *There are a number of existing options/tools available to institutions to help them identify their commitment to access and diversity which will also give them an idea on how they would measure up to the PIRS.*

- The Equity Scorecard process, designed by Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown and Bartee (2010), allows an institution to disaggregate their own data by race and ethnicity in order to see where inequities exist.
- The College Board's Access and Diversity Toolkit is designed to facilitate conversation with stakeholders, provide tools to evaluate key information, and create institutional policies to align with access and diversity goals.
- The Association of American Medical Colleges created a process, known as the Experience-Attributes-Metric (E-A-M) model, which provides a shared framework for admissions staff to think broadly about

diversity. The E-A-M provides assurance that admissions procedures and criteria are mission and evidence based, promotes diversity and includes a balance between experience, attributes, and academic metrics.

Institutions are already required to provide disaggregated data for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and other sources so the groundwork has been laid for the Federal rating system.

As a result, institutions are already providing metrics that can be utilized in the measurement of access and diversity. In order to assess their level of commitment, it is necessary for institutions to work as a cohesive unit to identify, assess, and critique its current involvement and commitment to determine if adjustments are necessary to achieve institutional goals. NASFAA can serve a role with assisting institutions on measuring their level of commitment by adding to the Self-Evaluation Guide a component on how to use existing metrics.

## INTRODUCTION

As the cost of college has risen sharply for decades while federal financial aid has stagnated, students and their families are left footing an ever-increasing share of the bill. College ratings have become a national obsession, placing enormous pressure on colleges and universities to improve their rankings to attract the best and brightest students, secure institutional recognition and prestige, and attract donations from wealthy philanthropists. Ranking systems such as U.S. News and World Report's annual "Best Colleges" report tend to focus on selectivity of admissions, retention and graduation rates, academic reputation of the institution and its instructors (including faculty salaries and the preponderance of advanced degrees), per student institutional spending, and alumni giving rate. Often these factors are closely related to the wealth of the institutions and the students they enroll, while quality of teaching and learning as perceived by students at the institutions ranked does not appear to be a factor in these ranking systems.

In 2015–16, the White House plans to unveil a federal college rating system that will tie financial aid funding to performance measures and provide greater transparency to students and families as they navigate the college selection process. This federal college rating system will provide a different perspective than the usual selectivity and endowment-oriented systems, though the tie to federal funding for higher education has generated significant concern in the higher education community, particularly among institutions that serve significant numbers of underrepresented, low-income, and first-generation students. Institutions with access and diversity among their core values have suffered in traditional college ranking systems precisely because of the wealth-rewarding metrics used by U.S. News and World Report and its competitors. If the federal college ratings system does not provide an adequate counterpoint to existing college ranking publications, such access and diversity-oriented institutions could face reduced funding, which could cripple the greatest engine of economic and social mobility available to the very students most in need of higher education opportunities.

This paper explores the current landscape and climate in U.S. higher education in terms of commitment to access and diversity. First, the ways in which diversity is defined at an institutional level is described and reasons for differences among institutions are discussed. Next, the paper describes the factors that determine college access and affordability for students and families. Examples of existing matrices to measure institutional commitment to diversity, access and affordability are explained and discussed. Finally, the paper concludes by highlighting the need for institutions to proactively address issues of inclusion on their campuses, which includes an evaluation of current financial aid practices. NASFAA could support this effort by developing a self-evaluation guide.

## DIVERSITY

If mission statements are any indication, institutions of higher education overwhelmingly value diversity (Wilson et al, 2011). However, the definitions of diversity can be as unique as the institutions themselves. A study of 80 institutional mission statements revealed that while 75% mentioned diversity, the ways in which diversity was described varied widely and could be divided into two primary categories: demographic diversity and cultural diversity. Interestingly, institutions rarely mentioned both categories, and cultural diversity was referenced more often than demographic diversity.

While the most commonly discussed demographic diversity factors are race and ethnicity, many other factors are included in conversations regarding diversity. These include socioeconomic status, national origin, gender,

sexual orientation, religion, and disability, among others. In order for institutions to make efforts to increase diversity and improve access, it can be helpful to identify and focus on those factors that represent the greatest inequities and opportunities for improvement.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that different institutions can and should have different diversity goals. For instance, a community college will draw the vast majority of its students from the local community, and therefore its student demographics will likely reflect those of the surrounding geographical area. Conversely, highly competitive institutions in the northeast generally draw much of their enrollment from further locations, and may have more opportunities to cultivate greater diversity through recruitment and retention strategies levied at the national level, through their admissions standards may present some challenges. Institutions falling somewhere between these two extremes will generally have limitations related to their geographic location, selectivity, and educational offerings that affect their diversity efforts and goals.

Promoting diversity in higher education serves a number of worthy purposes. The persistent inequities in the K-12 system and the ways in which institutions of higher education replicate and even amplify these inequities are well known and documented (Georgetown Public Policy Institute, 2013), and efforts to promote diversity in higher education reflect colleges' and universities' intentions to diminish these effects and improve equity in educational opportunity. Multiple studies have shown that experiences with diversity enrich all students' intellectual growth and contributing significantly to critical thinking skills (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, pp. 194-196). Therefore, promoting demographic and cultural diversity is not simply a matter of social justice, but also supports the institutional mission of education in multiple ways. Given the degree to which socioeconomic status influences a student's chances of entering and completing college (Kahlenberg, 2004; Bailey and Dynarski, 2011, pp. 117-132), institutions should ensure their financial aid policies align with their diversity efforts to the extent possible, provided they have the flexibility and resources to do. Federal financial aid rules provide schools with limited leverage in this respect, leaving much of the heavy lifting to institutional aid.

## **ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY**

Many Americans are now fully aware that the price of a college education has increased dramatically over recent years. According to Long (2010), "From 1979–80 to 2009–10, the average cost of a public, four-year institution increased from \$738 to \$7,020, a multiple of three times after accounting for inflation" (29). Simultaneously, neither family incomes nor available financial aid have kept pace with the mounting costs of higher education (Long, 2010; Long & Riley, 2007).

Research demonstrates that the combination of increasing costs and limited financial aid has an impact on student behaviors after high school. Bound, Hershbein, and Long (2009) demonstrate that high school seniors are now subject to high levels of competition in the college application and selection process. Many high school seniors seek to increase their academic and extracurricular profiles in order to stand out in the college admission process (Bound et al, 2009). As Bound, Hershbein, and Long (2009) observe, a student's socioeconomic standing relates their ability to participate in this extremely competitive environment, resulting in, "an increasing disadvantage for low-income students" (143).

Another result of the confluence of increasing costs and limited aid is that students may be deterred from choosing higher education at all and, if they do, they may select an institution for which they are overqualified

(Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Long, 2010; Long & Riley, 2007). Even among some of the most academically qualified students, inequities remain. For example, among students who scored over 1200 on the SAT, 57% of African American and 56% of Hispanic students go on to earn a certificate, an associate degree, or baccalaureate degree, in comparison to the 77% of White students who go on to do so (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Hoxby and Avery (2012) attribute some of this inequity to the concentrated social networks in which high-achieving, low-income students exist. They find that relationships with teachers and mentors are key to ensuring high-achieving students apply to selective colleges, which are also more likely to meet a larger portion of a student's financial need. Unfortunately, many students are never reached by these important networks, and remain excluded from higher education. Other researchers have also documented the inefficacy of traditional outreach methods when it comes to reaching low-income students and providing them with accurate knowledge about the college application and financial aid processes (Venegas, 2006; Venegas & Hallett, 2008).

The education research also indicates that high costs alone can be a deterrent for students considering postsecondary education. Even nearly twenty years ago, Heller (1997) documented that low-income students show lower rates of postsecondary enrollment in the face of increasing tuition and decreasing financial aid. More recently, McDonough and Calderone (2006) demonstrate that disparate sociocultural understandings of money influence student's perceptions of college affordability. Many students make college application decisions based on sticker price, and do not have access to a knowledgeable mentor to talk about net price (McDonough & Calderone, 2006). These researchers found students may also neglect to apply for admission or scholarships to certain institutions based solely on the perception of exorbitant cost.

Long and Riley (2007) have discussed the possibility that the financial aid programs that do exist are limited in their ability to assist low-income students. Educational tax credits, the advent of 529 and Coverdell savings accounts, and the removal of home equity from the federal methodology are cited as examples of expanding government aid to middle and upper-income families. At the same time, many colleges and universities have shifted institutional aid away from need-based priorities to merit-based awards designed in line with an institution's enrollment goals according to these researchers. The result has been growing unmet financial need for many families, especially for lower-income groups. Lower income students who do go to college are increasing their reliance on student loans in order to make ends meet, which is problematic in its own right (Long & Riley, 2007).

While many students do take on student loans in order to meet the high cost of an undergraduate education, it is important to highlight that a borrower's experience with student loans is also related to socioeconomic standing. The Caliber Associates (2003) have called into question the efficacy of loans in reaching low-income student populations. From the 1992–93 to 1999–00 academic year, they found the percentage of students choosing to borrow loans from the lowest income quartile showed no increases. This is in contrast to middle-income students, where 32% accepted a loan in 1992–93 and 45% accepted a loan in 1999–00, and upper-income students, who more than doubled their loan acceptance rate over the same period. We also know that low-income students who borrow are more likely to incur excessive educational debt burden post-graduation (Price, 2004a; Price, 2004b), and they face higher instances of default (Price, 2004a; Loonin & McLaughlin, 2012; Volkwein et al, 1998).

In the face of these multiple and complex challenges financial aid administrators are uniquely positioned to make a difference. They have the opportunity to work with students throughout their postsecondary

education; educating them about college cost, financial aid application processes, financial aid awards, and loan repayment once a student has left school. In addition, NASFAA member institutions express a commitment to the NASFAA mission and core advocacy principles, including:

- Increasing access to higher education, including early awareness and outreach;
- Simplifying student aid systems;
- Encouraging college persistence and completion;
- College savings and financial education;
- Minimizing student indebtedness and emphasizing grant and work aid; and
- Supporting the primacy of need-based aid.

A new priority of the association is to find a way to highlight institutions that make a strong commitment to addressing the problems described above and to the NASFAA mission and core advocacy principles. Recognizing that NASFAA serves a broad array of institutions, each with their own unique mission, developing a rating system to track and quantify this commitment would be a difficult, although important, task.

## **EXISTING MATRICES TO MEASURE COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY**

### **THE EQUITY SCORECARD PROCESS**

In their edited volume, *Confronting Equity Issues on Campus*, Bensimon and Malcom (2012) call attention to ways in which institutions have proactively examined their own institutional mission and data in order to make improvements for students from diverse, traditionally underserved, backgrounds. They frame inequity as a problem of practice, not from a student deficiency perspective, and encourage college administration to engage in a thoughtful examination of their own campus to identify inequity. In their own words, “we hypothesized that direct involvement in a collaborative inquiry into racial equity in one’s own institution would raise awareness of racial disparities among practitioners and a greater chance that they would confront their own practices” (2).

In order to facilitate and guide this collaborative inquiry, Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, and Bartee (2010) have designed a process called the Equity Scorecard. The Equity Scorecard is not a pre-packaged practice or intervention, but rather a process that institutions can choose to undergo to see their own institutional data from a new perspective. It also shifts the focus away from diversity, often understood in purely compositional terms, and towards equity, which provides a more complete understanding of the student experience on campus. Through the Equity Scorecard process, administrators and institutional researchers disaggregate their own data by race and ethnicity to see where inequities exist. Institutions can then create their own unique, attainable goals to narrow the gaps.

An exemplary case of the Equity Scorecard process can be seen at Loyola Marymount University (Robinson-Armstrong, Clemons, Fissinger, & Saucedo, 2012). Through this process, the university’s president convened a committee to complete the scorecard, including representation from intercultural affairs, institutional research, and a member of the faculty. The committee examined data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, initially called the campus “vital signs,” which included enrollment, enrollment by major, retention,

graduation, and the racial and ethnic composition of the faculty by department. Examining the vital signs led the committee into their own line of inquiry and interventions that were specific and meaningful to Loyola Marymount University. Since they implemented the Equity Scorecard process, more students of color have enrolled in the University's Honors Program and faculty have participated in professional development aimed at inclusive instruction (Robinson-Armstrong, et al, 2012). The Equity Scorecard team believes their campus will continue to see growth over time.

The potential that something similar to the Equity Scorecard could be compiled as a resource to NASFAA member institutions exists. By completing a given set of "vital signs," financial aid administrators can be encouraged to see their own data in a new way, which will help illuminate areas where unique changes could be made for that campus. Examples of indicators may include the following, all disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and in expected family contribution (EFC) bands where possible:

- FAFSA application activity
  - Are certain types of students applying early? Applying late?
  - Are on-time applications grouped in any one geographic area or high school? How can the institution build on that success?
  - Who is not applying?
  - Does the financial aid office host or offer financial aid nights? At what schools? Is the application activity for students from these schools different from those at schools that did not receive outreach services?
- Packaging activity
  - Does the institution award merit-based aid? What is the ethnic/racial breakdown of the recipients?
  - How much of an institution's merit expenditures meet demonstrated need?
  - Is a priority deadline in place for limited funds, such as Federal Perkins Loan or Federal Work-Study? Are certain students missing the deadline?
- Award acceptance activity
  - Are students accepting their awards on time?
  - Are students always accepting the "best" aid first?
  - Are certain groups of students disproportionately awarded with any particular type of aid?
  - Are students utilizing different forms of financial aid disproportionately?
- Disbursement and billing activity
  - What is the average time-to-disbursement for students?
  - What are common factors that delay disbursement for students?
  - What type(s) of students are accruing late fees on their bills?
  - If your institution offers an emergency loan, which type(s) of students are more likely to need it?
- Loan activity
  - Who is borrowing and how much?
  - Who is delinquent?
  - Who is in default?

This only a small sample of the types of questions NASFAA could choose to include on an initial vital signs scorecard. It is of key importance that the scorecard be presented to institutions as a means to engage in a thoughtful examination of their practices. The scorecard is not an indictment on the part of the student or of the institution. Rather, it is a means by which institutions can identify inequities on their campus, without the obligation to report to external entities and the vital signs are a data-driven starting point for institutional policy development.

A unique aspect of this process is that each institution's responses will be different. The scorecard does not prescribe solutions; rather, it relies on the institution's commitment to the NASFAA mission and advocacy principles. It assumes that institutions, upon discovering inequities, will act to fill them in a way that makes the most sense for their campus. The scorecard process is not punitive and would not result in a grade or ranking.

The scorecard approach is not without its faults. Among other challenges, it assumes that aid offices would have the access to the time and resources that they need in order to complete the process. Robinson-Armstrong et al., (2012) discuss that at Loyola Marymount University, the impetus for the scorecard had to come from above (in its case, the president) but the sustained energy to keep the process moving came from engaged committee members. The scorecard can only be as successful as the campus and the committee that implements it. It is also important to keep in mind that equity goals are generally long-ranging and it may take time before campuses can see results. For this reason, sustained, consistent energy must be devoted to the project.

Implementing an equity scorecard with research-driven metrics can begin the conversation on campuses, based on data as opposed to anecdotal information. It also provides campuses with the opportunity to address their own unique inequities, using methods that the scorecard committee believes will be the most successful on that campus.

## **ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLEGES' PROCESS**

In order to measure the effectiveness of institutional commitment to diversity, access, and affordability, the institution must first determine its definition of these areas. One such model of this determination is through the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). The AAMC model (AAMC Experiences –Attributes-Metrics Model) is composed of various bands. The innermost band, or center focus, is “Excellence”, with the outer bands reflecting the various definitions of attributes (diversity). The AAMC model does not directly address socio-economics as a diversity factor. It does look at education background and life experiences but does not address students coming from low-income backgrounds.

## **THE COLLEGE BOARD**

Another tool, developed by the College Board through its Access and Diversity Collaborative initiative, provides a toolkit for institutions to use when defining and determining the level of diversity that currently exists. The toolkit suggests that all institutions should perform two key action steps:

1. Review all policies, websites materials and other publications to ensure coherence, consistency, and transparency on the institution-specific meaning of key terms.

2. Ensure that key enrollment and external relations staff are trained on the correct definitions of key terms and concepts – and they connect them to their work.

<http://diversitycollaborative.collegeboard.org/toolkit>

## **THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT MEASURE**

The Student Achievement Measure (SAM) is designed to assist in defining diversity, access, and affordability at specific institutions. The Student Achievement Measure Project is a joint initiative of six national higher education presidential associations: the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of American Universities (AAU), and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU). More information can be found at [www.studentachievementmeasure.org](http://www.studentachievementmeasure.org).

## **NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) they are five benchmarks that colleges should use to determine educational effectiveness (Kuh, 2014). They are:

- Levels of academic challenge,
- Active and collaborative learning,
- Student-faculty interaction,
- Enriching educational experience, and
- Supportive campus environment.

The National College Access Network (NCAN) and other leading academic organizations have similar clusters of college retention initiatives. Similarly, the College survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) identified three areas of student engagement: Student faculty interaction, collaborative learning, and support for learners.

## **PROMISING PRACTICES: ACCELERATED STUDY IN ASSOCIATE’S PROGRAM AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

One successful program that has been receiving national attention is the City University of New York’s (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate’s program (ASAP). CUNY reported a 53 percent graduation rate within three years. This rate is more than four times the national average for an urban community college. The original goal of the ASAP program was to graduate fifty percent of students with three years.

The Chronicle of Higher Education (2010) published the graduation rates within 150 percent of traditional time. African Americans have the lowest graduation rates at public four year, private four-year, for-profit four-year, public two-year and for-profit two-year. Each year hundreds of low-income students face barriers to college access and success. Black males have the highest dropout rate among every racial, ethnic, and gender sub-group, at 55% in community colleges, lower than Black females (Harewood, 2013; Wood, 2011)). Several studies pointed out that Black males are the group most likely to be at risk of not succeeding in college (Bush & Bush, 2010; Esters and Mosby, 2007; Hampton, 2002; Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2009;

Suggs, 2003). Enrolling students in college is not the only key to success and efforts should be put in place to prevent them from failing or dropping out (Jasnick, 2006).

Mason (1998) reported that the following were successful in retaining Black male community college students: coordinated advising, financial aid workshops, job placement, faculty and staff development workshops, and student activities.

The College Board, the Lumina Foundation and Achieving the Dream have all conducted research that documents with institutional practices and organizational leadership all students could have an equal chance of succeeding. Research concluded that coordinated student success efforts, assessment and reporting, positive climate of diversity, financial aid, orientation, advising, early warning letters, and student support services are essential if the President's goal of graduating more students is to be accomplished. (College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2013).

"Completing a postsecondary education is the ticket to a seat at the table of opportunity. Today, our prisons are bursting at the seams, populated largely with poor men; many of color who failed even to graduate from high school." (Smith 2005, 8). The cost to our society will be enormous, if America fails its minority students.

Research shows that students who are actively engaged by the college are more likely to succeed than those who are not. Engagement must be a part of a college's mission. It is imperative that the college president, the cabinet, professors, faculty, and support staff all play a part in ensuring the success of every student. When a college purposely and actively seeks to engage its students, they are more likely to be retained (McClenney, 2007). Hellman (2012) states, "When more people invest in higher education, it results in broader societal benefits such as greater economic productivity, lower crime rates, and more engaged citizenship, which ultimately improves the nation's overall quality of life" (1).

## CONCLUSION

Research indicates that access, affordability, and diversity are recurrent challenges for institutions of higher learning. To remain competitive in higher education there must be a university-wide commitment in these areas. A shared goal among quality institutions of higher learning is to have a vibrant community of students and staff from a variety of backgrounds. In order to accomplish this, universities must attempt to ensure that a quality education is affordable to people from all economic backgrounds.

Without financial assistance, attending college would not even be an option for many high-achieving low and middle-income students. Funding a college education must be a shared responsibility of the family, federal and state governments, and the institution.

It is important for financial aid administrators to continue to advocate for the continued advancements of federal grant, loan, and work-study programs as these programs have played an important role in allowing many lower-income students to help fund the cost of college. Unfortunately, college costs have increased at a rate that is much higher than the increase in funds for federal financial aid.

Access and affordability are key components to improving diversity. It is clear that there are numerous ways to define diversity within higher education. When an institution has a population of students and faculty who

differ in very obvious ways such as gender, race, and ethnicity, it is said to be diverse. It is also important to realize other types of diversity, which are not quite as obvious, such as socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability status, and many others. At the same time, we challenge institutions to move past compositional definitions of diversity. Embracing a holistic view of equity may yield a more complete view of how students afford and experience their college education.

This paper has argued that a self-evaluation guide, developed by NASFAA and its members, could be useful tool for campus administrators who have the time and resources to benefit from it. In addition, utilizing the self-evaluation guide to give a preliminary view of PIRS rankings would be especially relevant and timely for campuses.

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