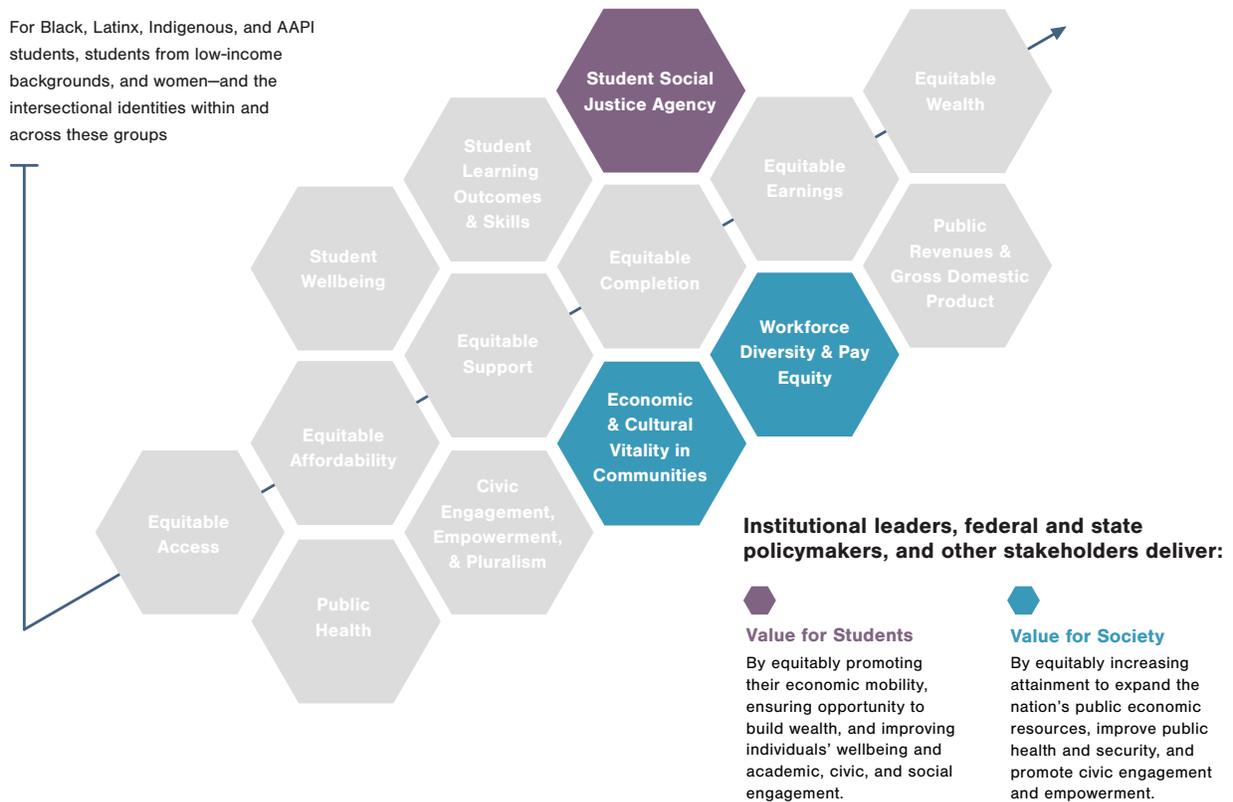


# EXPLORING MEASURES OF JUSTICE

## The Postsecondary Value Framework

### Pipeline to Equitable Value

For Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and AAPI students, students from low-income backgrounds, and women—and the intersectional identities within and across these groups



The Postsecondary Value Commission proposes a framework for how institutions and the bodies that govern them can ensure that Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and underrepresented Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) individuals, individuals from low-income backgrounds, and women have equitable opportunities to achieve economic mobility. There is no doubt that a combination of factors influences the structural discrimination that makes it difficult to realize such outcomes in modern-day American society.<sup>1</sup> Yet, institutional leaders and policymakers can create programs and policies that help limit these inequalities to create a more just society in which an individual's background alone does not determine their future.<sup>2</sup>

Institutions are first and foremost educators and should view their students as future change agents in their roles as employers and managers, teachers, police officers, nurses, doctors, policymakers, community leaders, judges, and more. Institutions can—and must—prepare their graduates to interrupt and dismantle the injustices found in their workplaces, communities, and relationships.<sup>3</sup> Institutions also serve as employers, and through their own hiring and compensation practices, they

can help create a more equitable labor market. Institutions are also important members of their communities and have the power to drive transformational change locally.

The following pages outline ways in which institutions might measure their own roles as educators of change agents, as equitable employers, and as engaged community members.

- *Institutions as Educators of Change Agents:* The Postsecondary Value Commission tapped the expertise of Tiffany Jones (formerly of The Education Trust)<sup>i</sup> and Kayla Elliott (The Education Trust) to identify metrics in existing national and campus-level surveys that could serve as a useful foundation for measuring whether and how colleges are preparing students for racial and economic justice during and beyond their collegiate experience. Jones and Elliott also provide suggestions for designing a comprehensive assessment of student preparation for combating racial injustices.
- *Institutions as Equitable Employers:* Using research conducted by Gina Johnson at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) using publicly available Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) examined racial and gender inequities in current institutional hiring and compensation trends. Colleges and universities can serve as leaders of equitable employment practices and help address long-standing wage inequities that depress the value that students of color and women receive from postsecondary education.
- *Institutions as Engaged Community Members:* Leveraging discussions with commissioners and Research Task Force members, IHEP explored how institutions—by viewing their communities as partners and stakeholders—can build a more just and equitable society. By serving as equitable economic engines, which includes attracting new businesses and philanthropic resources, and equitably deepening the skills and knowledge of the community’s residents, institutions produce value for local economies. As hubs of research, innovation, discourse, and creativity for many communities, institutions can also help address local challenges and improve the lives of those living nearby, especially residents of color and residents from low-income backgrounds.

While it is challenging to assess institutions’ roles as equity-minded educators, employers, and community members, the Postsecondary Value Commission hopes that the following research and measurement recommendations inspire the field generally and policymakers more specifically to continue to explore the potential of postsecondary education to serve as a trailblazer in helping to dismantle injustices and build a fairer and healthier democratic society.

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<sup>i</sup> Jones is currently with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

# ENDNOTES

- 1 Carnevale, A.P. (September 2, 2020). White flight to the bachelor's degree. *Medium*. Retrieved from: <https://medium.com/georgetown-cew/white-flight-to-the-ba-e604ee4e3967>  
Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N., & Gulish, A. (2018). Women Can't Win: Despite making educational gains and pursuing high-wage majors, women still earn less than men. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/genderwagegap/>  
Solomon, D., Maxwell, C., and Castro, A. (August 7, 2019). Systemic inequality: Displacement, exclusion, and segregation. Center for American Progress. Structural inequality in America series. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2019/08/07/472617/systemic-inequality-displacement-exclusion-segregation/>  
Solomon, D., Maxwell, C., and Castro, A. (August 7, 2019). Systemic inequality and economic opportunity. Center for American Progress. Structural inequality in America series. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2019/08/07/472910/systemic-inequality-economic-opportunity/>  
Solomon, D., Maxwell, C., and Castro, A. (August 7, 2019). Systemic inequality and American democracy. Center for American Progress. Structural inequality in America series. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2019/08/07/473003/systemic-inequality-american-democracy/>
- 2 The Postsecondary Value Commission's definition of justice—wherein one's background does not predict outcomes—is based on input from Commissioners and Research Task Force Members. Commissioners expressed a deep interest in leveraging the project's work to promote *equity, freedom, and justice* for students in the postsecondary context. To further the Postsecondary Value Commission's understanding of the role institutions can play in advancing justice, four members of the Research Task Force authored papers on what a just society would look like: Baker (Forthcoming), Flores (Forthcoming), Perry (Forthcoming), and Jones (Forthcoming) in this series. Common themes in their papers shaped the commission's definition of justice.
- 3 T. Jones (panel discussion, August 19, 2019) raised this point during a Research Task Force meeting.