

Coaching for Change
**Assessing Your College's
Commitment To Equity**

by Debra D. Bragg

Purpose of the Tool:

Coaches should use this tool to assess a college's commitment to equity by evaluating the college's own current public-facing statements and materials as a starting point for reflection. Using the information gathered with this tool, a college's future commitment to equity can be clarified and improved through setting priorities for collective action to advance an equity agenda. Colleges are encouraged to conduct this assessment at all levels (college, division, program, and personal) to provide the most comprehensive, institution-wide picture of a college's commitment to equity.

How to Use the Tool:

To use this tool, coaches and college personnel should first work together to define and reach consensus on the meaning of equity. Using the concept of equity-mindedness may be useful to advance this work. By equity-mindedness, we mean deepening individual thinking and knowing about how systems, policies, cultural norms, and everyday practices that appear to be race-neutral may negatively impact historically underserved student populations, particularly racially minoritized students (Center for Urban Education 2019; Witham et al. 2015). The following Five Guiding Principles for Equity by Design created by the Center for Urban Education provide a foundation for a college's assessment of its current commitment to equity.

These five guiding principles state:

1. Clarity in language, goals, and measures is vital to effective equitable practices.
2. Equity-mindedness should be the guiding paradigm for language and action.
3. Equitable practice and policies are designed to accommodate differences in the contexts of students' learning—not to treat all students the same.
4. Enacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions.
5. Equity must be enacted as a pervasive institution- and system-wide principle (Center for Urban Education 2019, 1).

Instructions for Coaches and Colleges to Use this Tool

1. Coaches work closely with college personnel, including college-designated team(s) involving personnel from across a college, to study and deliberate on the Five Guiding Principles for Equity by Design (Center for Urban Education, 2019).
2. Coaches and colleges identify a comprehensive sample of documents, materials, and artifacts, including but not limited to a college's mission, vision, and values statements.
3. Paste the names and electronic locations of selected documents, materials, and artifacts in column 1 of the grid below.
4. Read the selected documents and artifacts so that coaches and college personnel are very familiar with the contents of these materials.
5. Work systematically through each of the Five Guiding Principles listed in column 2 to assess the extent to which the selected materials explicitly or implicitly exhibit a commitment to equity.
6. Record individual and team observations about the alignment of the materials to the Five Guiding Principles, including misalignments and gaps.
7. Critically reflect on the results and plan next steps to deepen the college's collective understanding of equity and actions to enhance the college's commitment to equity.

College's current commitment to equity represented in current public-facing documents, materials, and artifacts	Five Guiding Principles on Equity by Design (Center for Urban Education 2019)	Where are areas of alignment between the college's materials and the Five Guiding Principles?	Where are areas of misalignment between the college's materials and the Five Guiding Principles?
<p>Provide the names and links to documents, materials, and artifacts for assessing the college's current commitment to equity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College/unit mission, vision, and values • Strategic plans • College/unit policies, procedures, and programs • Course catalogues, program-of-study guides, and program marketing materials • Student recruitment and scholarship materials • Websites and social media • Other: _____ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarity in language, goals, and measures is vital to effective equitable practices. 2. Equity-mindedness should be the guiding paradigm for language and action. 3. Equitable practice and policies are designed to accommodate differences in the contexts of students' learning—not to treat all students the same. 4. Enacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions. 5. Equity must be enacted as a pervasive institution- and system-wide principle. 		

Summarize what current documents, materials, and artifacts suggest about the college's commitment to equity:

Summarize alignment and misalignment between the college's commitment to equity and the Five Guiding Principles of Equity by Design (Center for Urban Education 2019):

Recommend next steps for advancing the college's commitment to equity:

Critical Reflection on the College's Commitment to Equity

Critical reflective practice is important to supporting assessment and priority setting that make educational systems more equitable (Earl and Ussher 2016). Reflection on action and reflection for action (Schön 1983) are strategies to move colleges toward more equitable student outcomes (Bragg and Gerhard 2017). Using the summary information above, consider ways critical reflection can assist the college to advance its commitment to equity:

Reflection on action:

- As an individual, what did I learn about my own understanding of our college's commitment to equity?
- As a college team, what did we learn together about our shared understanding of our college's commitment to equity?

Reflection for action:

- As an individual, what have I learned about what I know and need to know to be a more equity-minded practitioner?
- As a college team, what did we learn together about what we should do and how we should engage with others in our college to embody an equity-by-design approach to student success?

Additional Suggestions for Using this Tool

1. Before using the tool, coaches and the college develop a plan for study groups involving college employees, students, and other stakeholders on the Five Guiding Principles of Equity by Design (Center for Urban Education 2019).
2. Coaches assist the college to get an even more comprehensive picture of the institution's commitment to equity by identifying and assessing historical documents, materials, and artifacts to compare past and current commitments to equity.
3. Coaches encourage employee engagement at all levels of the college to participate in assessing the college's commitment to equity, including involving employees in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data.
4. Coaches help the college develop a strategy for gathering student perspectives about the college's commitment to equity by using student focus groups to evaluate documents, materials, and artifacts.
5. Coaches model critical reflection of the assembled college materials, looking for what is and is not said explicitly about equity, preparing questions to delve into implicit messaging, and surfacing clues about how organizational structures, policies, and practices may produce inequitable outcomes.
6. Coaches work with college teams to broaden participation in productive dialogue on the college's commitment to equity, including engaging faculty, staff, and students in "courageous conversations" (Singleton and Linton 2006).
7. Coaches facilitate critical reflection to reach new understandings of equity by individuals, college units, and the college as a whole.
8. Coaches help the college design a blueprint and roadmap to move forward in setting priorities and developing plans to be implemented to advance the college's commitment to equity.

References

Bragg, D. D., and G. Gerhard. 2017. “Memorandum for the Record #3—Adaptive Leadership & Reflective Practice.” Memorandum to J. Yoshiwara and L. Garcia-Hanson, July 17, 2017, <https://www.washington.edu/ccri/memo-3-reflective-practice-2017-07-17/>.

Center for Urban Education. 2019. “Five Principles for Creating Equity by Design.” Los Angeles: Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California.

Earl, K., and B. Ussher. 2016. “Reflective Practice and Inquiry: Let’s Talk More about Inquiry.” *Teachers and Curriculum* 16, no. 2.

Schön, D. 1983. *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

Singleton, G. E., and C. Linton. 2006. *A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools: Courageous Conversations about Race*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Witham, K., L. E. Malcom-Piqueux, A. C. Dowd, and E. M. Bensimon. 2015. *America’s Unmet Promise: The Imperative for Equity in Higher Education*. Washington, DC: AAC&U; Los Angeles: Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California.

Suggested Citation: Bragg, D. D. 2019. *Assessing Your College’s Commitment to Equity*. Seattle, WA: Community College Research Initiatives, University of Washington.