

DEI CHALLENGES IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING PROFESSION

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College Admission Counseling



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Executive Summary

NACAC commissioned this environmental scan of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices in college counseling and admission professions in concert with its other recent DEI-related research, training, and initiatives to address the urgent needs of today's students and institutions. Research and policy have explicitly established the benefits of DEI and its crucial importance for realizing ideal educational experiences and outcomes of students, and subsequently, their future prospects in the workforce and society.

This environmental scan consisted of a literature review, DEI position scan, and focus groups with college counseling and admission professionals to:

1. assess the current landscape, status, and satisfaction of professionals with DEI in the field;
2. identify DEI practices specific or applicable to college counseling and admission;

3. identify DEI-related challenges and needs for furthering DEI practices and satisfaction, including representation and success of students; and,
4. provide recommendations for additional DEI training, staffing, and other school and institutional practices beneficial to college counseling, admission, and student success.

Schools and institutions have implemented a number of DEI efforts in recent years, coinciding with numerous high-profile attacks and hate speech against people of color in the United States. Although most of the DEI examples cited in the literature are not specific to college counseling or admission, the principles outlined in the literature for fostering campus-wide DEI conversations, programs, and policies apply to both secondary and postsecondary college enrollment professionals. While many schools and institutions offer staff and faculty DEI trainings, few have made

the training mandatory, which presents a challenge because the staff and faculty who lack DEI training often do not understand its benefits and therefore, do not participate.

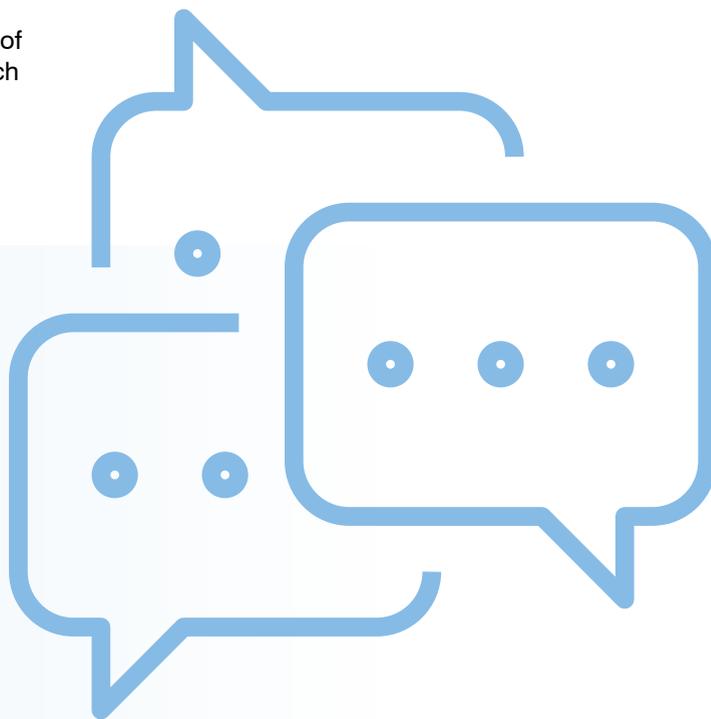
According to focus group participants, college counseling and admission staff represent students fairly well, but progress is still needed in the representation of Black males in particular. Additional diversity is also needed in the leadership ranks, both within college counseling and admission, and in education more broadly. One potential solution is to increase awareness of the college counseling and admissions career pathway options among underserved students of color. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an additional obstacle to increasing the diversity of staff, as more are leaving the field and opting for jobs that allow them to work from home.

The college admission field has added DEI-specific roles in recent years to help recruit more diverse student bodies. Admission staff would like to see increased access to NACAC conferences and trainings for staff of color, greater visibility of staff of color as conference presenters, and offerings such as staff development implicit bias training.

It is important to look beyond diversity numbers to fully address the “inclusivity” of DEI programs, policies, and practices. Schools and institutions must examine student experiences throughout the higher education pipeline, including policy and practice intentions, student needs, and historical, systemic barriers. Participants stressed that community work on healing and recovering from racist incidents takes time, and leadership priority and transparency are key for effective DEI efforts.

These collective findings gathered from relevant literature, a policy and practice scan, and focus groups with college counseling and admission professionals underscore the important role these staff play in increasing and supporting a diverse college student body. Efforts being taken to recruit and train college counseling and admission staff, as well as leadership, with an anti-racist lens should continue to be implemented, assessed, refined, and replicated.

Schools and institutions must examine student experiences throughout the higher education pipeline, including policy and practice intentions, student needs, and historical, systemic barriers.





Introduction

The diversity and *climate* of a campus – the policies and practices that reflect institutional priority on equity and inclusion – are critical for the successful engagement and outcomes of all students, and in particular for underserved students of color (Hurtado et al. 1999). Students of color need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance to enroll in and thrive at an institution. Institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)– including interracial interactions and campus-wide emphasis on diversity – is positively related to overall student satisfaction, leadership qualities, complex thinking taking multiple perspectives into consideration, intergroup relations, cultural understanding, and learning outcomes (Antonio, 2021; Astin, 1992; Hurtado et al.).

College admission professionals, consisting of both **school/college counselors** (secondary) and **enrollment management/admission professionals** (postsecondary), are critical to helping students navigate their educational

goals. As now NACAC CEO Angel Pérez (then vice president for enrollment and student success at Trinity College in Connecticut) stated, “From the minute they enter the recruitment process, students are evaluating whether or not they will feel comfortable on campus and how it will support them” (Paterson, 2021). While at Trinity, Pérez recommended increasing the diversity of admission staffs, waived the application fee for first-generation students, and advocated for test optional policies to increase access and diversity.

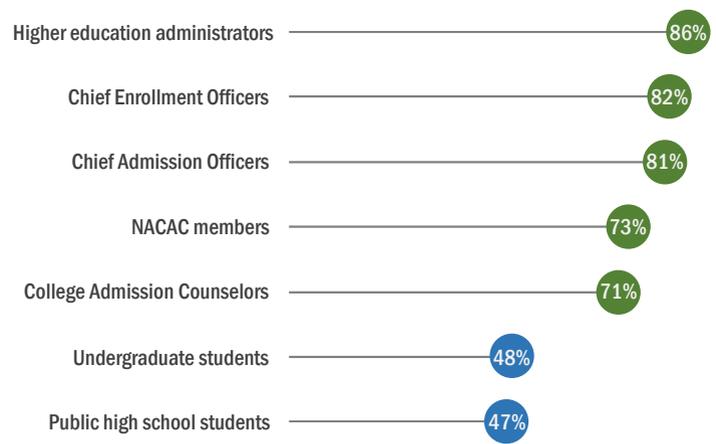
NACAC is interested in assessing the landscape of DEI in the college counseling and admission field, including professional development opportunities currently available to college admission professionals working in both secondary and postsecondary spaces. In 2020, NACAC established [the Ad Hoc Committee on Leadership and College Admission](#) to envision the future of an accessible and inclusive postsecondary education

and to determine how NACAC might best adapt to make those goals a reality. One of the key strategic drivers the committee agreed NACAC needed to address was DEI. As a result of the committee's recommendations, NACAC decided that an environmental scan would be an essential element to deepening its understanding of DEI topics in the college admission space.

NACAC recognizes the need to increase the diversity of admission professionals. A recent NACAC report in partnership with the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), sponsored by Lumina Foundation, recognized the need to diversify admission staff to better represent student characteristics: "Students need to see themselves reflected in the face of postsecondary education. The more diversity we can encourage in postsecondary admission offices, the greater our ability to attract and relate to a diverse student population."¹ The report also made recommendations for a more equitable admission process, including regularly acting on feedback from Black students about their experiences with recruitment and outreach practices.

A 2014 NACAC survey (Phair, 2014) found that the majority of admission professionals, especially at the leadership level, are White. More recent data collected by NACAC on the demographics of its members indicate that the majority (73%) are also White, which is consistent with the composition of college admission counselors nationally (71%).² As enrollment and admission officers move in the ranks into chief enrollment and admission officers, that percentage is even higher – 82% and 81%, respectively, are White.³ More broadly, 86% of higher education administrators are White.⁴ However, White students comprise less than half of students enrolled in public high schools (47%)⁵

Figure 1. Percentage White staff and students



and less than half of all undergraduate students (48%).⁶ There is still much progress to be made to better represent students. Figure 1 summarizes the data above comparing the percentage of White admission staff to students at the high school and postsecondary levels.

NACAC has responded to the college admission field's call for increased DEI awareness, support, and staff representation throughout the higher education admission pipeline. Since 1980, NACAC has hosted the Guiding the Way to Inclusion conference (formerly known as the Counselors of Color Workshop) and the Antiracist Education Institute, both of which offer sessions on better supporting underserved students of color in the college counseling and admission process. NACAC also recently created the position of Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and provided DEI training to its staff.

¹ https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/images/about/lumina_report/nacac_nasfaa_lumina_report_0122_10.pdf

² <https://www.zippia.com/college-admissions-counselor-jobs/demographics/>

³ https://www.aacrao.org/docs/default-source/research-docs/career-profile/2019-chief-admissions-officer-report.pdf?sfvrsn=7ddf2f8b_6

⁴ https://www.cupahr.org/wp-content/uploads/cupahr_research_brief_minorities.pdf

⁵ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_203.60.asp

⁶ https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Search?query=&query2=&resultType=all&page=1&sortBy=date_desc&overlayTableId=28462

Diversity in the college counseling and admission field is important because “students can often be most inspired by counselors and other role models who have experienced the same challenges” (Abdul-Alim, 2015). Diverse and DEI-trained college counseling and admission staff are key not only for outreach to underserved communities, but also for offering guidance on secondary school course enrollment decisions, college preparation opportunities and information, college admission and financial aid processes, and enrollment decisions (Barnum, 2019; Hawkins & Nicola, 2017).

Methods

For this environmental scan, NACAC hired an independent research firm, ASA Research, to conduct a literature review and hold focus groups with college counseling and admission professionals to learn more about the status of DEI in the higher education enrollment pipeline, existing DEI efforts in the college counseling and admission fields, and areas of need.

ASA searched the literature for academic publications and policy reports relevant to DEI in college counseling and admission. There is not a great deal of literature specific to DEI in these fields; the broader literature on DEI in the higher education enrollment pipeline is more substantial and continually growing, and much of it is applicable to college counseling and admission staff.

NACAC recruited four separate groups from its membership to participate in online focus groups: front line college counseling and admission practitioners from both secondary and postsecondary spaces, secondary school leadership, postsecondary institutional leadership, and DEI admission specialists. A total of 24 participants representing a range of educational settings and individual characteristics participated in online focus groups.



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Literature Review

Background

Underserved college students – those who identify as Black, indigenous/Native American, and/or people of color (BIPOC), and those from low-income, first-generation backgrounds – face a host of challenges along the college application and admission pipeline. These students do not have access to the same level of college preparatory coursework or counseling at the K-12 level compared with their higher-SES peers, and face prohibitive test and preparation fees (Black et al., 2016; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Clinedinst, 2019; Cook, 2015; Ed Trust, 2019; Kim, 2021; Tierney et al., 2009; The Executive Office of the President, 2014). Compounding the problem, college and university recruiters are more likely to visit affluent schools with a higher concentration of White students, and disproportionately visit private high schools (Elfman, 2018).

These barriers can help explain why a higher percentage of students of color enroll at community colleges compared with White students, even those with a GPA of 3.5 or above (Marcus, 2018). White students are more likely to enroll at more selective, better funded institutions (Marcus, Soares, 2020). College counseling and admission staff play an essential role in diversifying the pipeline and student bodies of postsecondary institutions. From enacting policies and processes to recruiting more representative staff and weighing in on key decisions, college counseling and admission departments can influence the demographic composition of institutions and the success of students along the pathway to completion.

The promising practices identified below point to ways that NACAC can help better support its members through professional development. It is not enough to hire diverse staff; all staff interacting with and advising prospective students – at both the secondary and

postsecondary levels – and reviewing applications must be trained on DEI concepts, such as implicit bias, and have a better understanding of student backgrounds and experiences.

Admission Policies

Much of the literature on DEI in admission centers on related policies, particularly the effects of the increasingly common test-optional policies on historically marginalized populations. While this report does not delve into the nuances of policies that impact DEI, it is important for college counseling and admission staff to be aware of the effects that these policies and recent events have had on underserved students of color.

Test-Optional Policies

Standardized testing and college entrance exams, such as the SAT and ACT, have been criticized for disadvantaging students of color and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Rosales & Walker 2021). Critics point to the racist origins of these assessments, the potential for implicit bias in their multiple choice design and content, their cost, and the advantage affluent (and predominantly White) families have over other groups because they have access to better funded schools and extracurricular academic activities and tutoring (Jaschik, 2010; Price, 2019; Soares, 2020). For these reasons, and particularly given the additional burdens historically marginalized students have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, NACAC supports test-optional policies and has encouraged all public colleges and universities to make submitting standardized test scores optional (NACAC, 2021).

In response to these concerns, nearly 600 institutions dropped standardized testing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic and large, highly selective, private institutions saw major increases in applicants of color as well as low-income and first-generation students (O'Malley & Bohanon, 2021). However, a 2021 study found that actual higher education enrollment among Black, Latino, and Native American students at schools with test-optional policies only grew by

1% (Kim, 2021). Test-optional efforts to increase diversity caused the applicant pool to increase, and therefore be more competitive, which in turn led to more students of color being waitlisted. This finding implies that additional admission considerations may need to be examined. For example, more affluent peers may have greater access to college-preparatory coursework and extracurricular activities.

Race-Conscious Admissions

While beyond the scope of this paper to examine in detail, one cannot discuss equity in college counseling and admission without mentioning race-conscious admissions. Legal decisions regarding race-conscious decisions cite the benefits of campus diversity for a 21st century workforce and society, as well as the cultivation of leadership that reflects all population segments (ACE). Cases in the U.S. Supreme Court have upheld the “holistic consideration of race and ethnicity in college admissions...affirming the argument and research that shows student body diversity bestows myriad educational benefits” (ACE, 2022). Some of these benefits include a reduction in students' racial bias, improved student satisfaction and intellectual self-confidence, and enhanced leadership skills (Antonio, 2021; Astin, 1992; The Century Foundation, 2019). Indirect benefits may include improved economic outcomes, preparation to work in a diverse global economy, increased team productivity and creativity, and more broadly a better educated workforce.

Legacy Policies

Ending the policy of giving an advantage to applicants whose family members attended an institution has shown positive increases in diversity. For example, 10 years after Johns Hopkins University removed its legacy policy, the percentage of students of color and Pell-eligible students both increased by more than 10 percentage points (Weissman, 2020). Legacy applicants – the majority of whom are wealthy and White – were three times more likely to be admitted to universities with legacy policies.

Holistic Admissions

The rapidly growing trend of the holistic application process takes into consideration a candidate's "personal attributes and experiences," and includes being aware of candidates' disadvantages and any personal biases when reviewing test scores (ETS). This approach is a shift from more traditional application review and requires training. The University of Texas at Austin, which recently pivoted to holistic admissions, provided videos, materials, and workshops on promising practices. Implementing holistic admissions requires a broader school/institutional commitment to DEI.

A holistic approach has also been applied to reviewing application questions. In an anti-racist assessment of its application questions, The Common App found that Black students were about 3.5 times more likely to be suspended than White students, and subsequently removed the discipline question to give Black students more equal footing (Rickard, 2021). Likewise, a recent report recommended eliminating questions about "involvement with the criminal justice system," as people of color are disproportionately affected by the criminal justice system, so that standard is not equally applied to all groups (Bussey et al., 2021).

NACAC and the Character Collaborative surveyed secondary school counselors and college admission offices to understand what kinds of character development programs were being offered by secondary schools in the United States, and to establish a baseline for tracking college admission decision trends around the treatment of character attributes⁷. About one-quarter (26%) of college admission officers surveyed indicated that character attributes were "considerably important" in the selection process, and an additional 44% considered them to be "moderately important." Private and highly selective institutions were more likely to consider character attributes as part of their admission decisions. While the majority (58%) of secondary school counselors indicated that their schools offered character education

programs, private schools and schools with smaller enrollments and smaller student-to-counselor ratios were more likely to have these programs in place.

Recommended DEI Practices

While the literature on DEI practices specific to college counseling and admission is limited, many institution-wide DEI practices are relevant and transferable to both secondary and postsecondary spaces.

DEI Guidelines

The National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) recently published an institutional anti-racism framework, which identified 10 priority areas including hiring and professional development, admissions and access, as well as areas such as campus climate and policies and procedures (NADOHE, 2021). Their recommendations for institutional policies and practices relevant to admission include the following:

- Tapping into enrolled students and alumni of color to assist with recruitment, and recruiting prospective transfer students from two-year institutions.
- Hiring staff that mirror student characteristics, develop collaborations both on and off campus, including advocacy organizations and HBCUs.
- Demonstrate DEI through data such as climate survey results, and communicate that information effectively to represent the campus environment.
- Ensure that staff and faculty understand and operationalize key anti-racism terminology, concepts, and the historical context.
- Explain the benefits of anti-racism training at the individual, institutional, and community levels.

⁷ https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/knowledge-center/nacac_testingrequirements_publicuniversities.pdf

- Through training, address the importance of equity in access and representation, respect for cultural identity and inclusion and belonging, as well as other key terms such as implicit bias, microaggressions, and White privilege.

Promoting Equity-Minded Practice

Witham, Malcolm-Piqueux, Dowd, and Bensimon, in their publication for the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), define equity-mindedness⁸ as “taking stock of the contradictions between the ideals of democratic education and the social, institutional, and individual practices that contribute to persistent inequities in college outcomes among different racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes”. (Witham, K. et al, 2015)

Developing an equity campus mindset includes being aware of historic practices of institutionalized racism and discrimination, and putting the onus on institutions to be responsible for supporting the success of historically marginalized students. Equity-minded practices include analyzing student outcomes by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, recognizing historic barriers and roles in unequal treatment that produced differential outcomes, understanding student experiences and struggles, providing resources to help level the playing field, and assessing remaining barriers in place and proposing solutions to alleviate structural racism.

The Center for Urban Education (CUE) outlines five principles for institutional equity efforts: 1) “Clarity in language, goals, and measures...”; 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 student’s learning—not to treat all students the same”; 4) “Enacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data,

and questioning assumptions about relevance and effectiveness”; 5) “Equity must be enacted as a pervasive institution- and system-wide principle” (CUE, 2019). These principles can be applied not only school- or institution-wide, but also by college counseling and admission departments as they seek to address institutional deficiencies in the enrollment and success of underserved students of color in higher education.

Promoting a Culture of Belonging

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) made recommendations for promoting a culture of belonging among staff on college campuses, including recruiting diverse staff and faculty and providing pathways to leadership (Mendez, 2021). These recommendations are institution-wide but apply to staff in admission departments, and are also relevant to college counselors:

- Provide new hires with cultural intelligence training, to enhance the ability of staff and leaders to interact effectively with colleagues and students of different backgrounds and cultures.
- Review DEI-related terminology in job descriptions, diversify selection committees, develop consistent rubrics, make job listings visible to underserved communities, and review job yield metrics.
- Develop clear pathways for advancement including mentorship opportunities.

A network of diverse representatives across all departments can help ensure that institutional (and secondary school) DEI principles are applied across functions.

⁸ *Equity-mindedness is a concept developed by Estela Bensimon at the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California (USC).*

Institutional Statements

Following the murder of George Floyd and others in the summer of 2020, institution leaders nationwide addressed statements emphasizing the importance of DEI on college campuses. An analysis found statements that specifically called out structural racism and the need for change, and included actionable items were the most effective (Wesley et al., 2021). Actions taken following statements included listening sessions, task force implementation, policy audits, and surveys.

While a similar analysis has not been done for secondary schools, according to the Council of the Great City Schools, at least 50 public school districts released statements on the killing of Mr. Floyd and acknowledging their ongoing commitment to DEI within the education space, with some districts hosting community conversations about race or approving resolutions on racial equality.⁹

Cultural Competence

The literature on student affairs has established multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills as key competencies for effectively supporting students (Pope & Reynolds, 1997). These competencies apply to college counseling and admission staff as well, for example when reaching out to underserved communities or reviewing applications. Among the key multicultural competencies include “a personal commitment to justice and social change” and the “ability to identify and openly discuss cultural differences and issues,” among others. It is important to embed these competencies into secondary and postsecondary staff training programs and graduate school curricula.

Example DEI Practices

The literature provides examples of institution-wide practices that appear successful and may be applicable to college counseling and admission staff.

⁹ <https://www.cgcs.org/domain/321>

¹⁰ <https://www.amherst.edu/news/antiracism/anti-racism-plan-new>; <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/about/inclusion>

Anti-Racism Plans

Several colleges have recently developed anti-racism plans.¹⁰ While the plans are institution-wide, below are examples of components that apply to college counseling and admission departments:

- Provide an opportunity for students and alumni of color to share experiences and suggestions to help improve processes, policies, and practices and further DEI progress.
- Establish a standing DEI committee that ensures that DEI is part of every division’s goals, including diverse hiring and anti-racist training at all levels.
- Use inclusion and anti-racism initiatives to build social climates and learning environments that are welcoming and beneficial to all faculty, students, and staff.
- Empower faculty and staff to facilitate anti-racist conversations and curricula with the campus community.
- Prioritize funding for DEI positions and diverse hiring.

DEI Data

At George Mason University, equity task forces identified a number of institutional data needs related to equity, including qualitative data to illustrate experiences and supplement quantitative data about demographics (Vesely et al., 2021). In addition to demographic data about students, the data committee recommended tracking data points to reflect practices for diversity in hiring, promotion, retention, and compensation, such as the number of faculty of color who serve on committees or have been trained on implicit bias in the search process.

Staff Diversity

Many secondary schools and postsecondary institutions face challenges recruiting staff and faculty that mirror the demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, of their student populations. Schools and institutions are developing strategic goals and implementing targeted policies and practices to diversify their staff and faculty.

Several proven practices for increasing faculty diversity apply to staff hiring as well. For example, implicit bias training is essential for anyone involved in the hiring process, from drafting the job description, to candidate outreach, application screening, interviews, and final selection. Implicit bias training can help ensure that staff are aware of any intrinsic biases they may hold, and refrain from allowing biases to influence key hiring decisions (Wood, 2019). Additionally, job descriptions can include in their criteria experience working with underserved communities.

The University of California, Davis' strategic plan includes objectives for increasing the diverse student, staff, and faculty pipeline.¹¹ Among its steps for recruiting diverse staff and faculty include expanding diverse faculty hiring initiatives with mentoring components, such as its Center for the Advancement of Multicultural Perspectives on Science (CAMPOS) Faculty Scholars program.¹² UC Davis matched this the National Science Federation (NSF) grant, which aims to expand the representation of women and faculty of color in STEM through mentorship, networking, a leadership institute and community of scholars.

A recent coalition led by the Hunt Institute launched the “One Million Teachers of Color” campaign to increase the diversity of teachers and better represent underserved students of color (Superville, 2021). The campaign is basing its model on the North Carolina Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education (DRIVE) task force, which made the following recommendations to the governor of North Carolina for increasing school staff and teacher diversity (DRIVE, 2021):

- increase access to postsecondary education and education career pathways;
- incorporate diversity goals into school and district-level key performance indicators;
- invest in teacher preparation programs at minority serving institutions;
- include anti-racist pedagogy in state teaching standards and programs;
- invest in professional development and networks for educators of color; and,
- track and report on progress based on educator diversity data and implementation of recommendations;

It has become more common for schools – especially those in diverse and urban districts – to ask teacher candidates questions about supporting students of color (Will, 2021). Recent studies have shown that teacher biases can lead to lowered expectations for students of color and increased disciplinary practices. Further, increasing teacher diversity can help improve successful outcomes for students of color (Lindsay et al., 2022).

Schools often screen candidates for biases by asking questions about cultural competency, commitment to DEI, and past experiences working with students of color. Such questions can also be asked of prospective college counseling staff who will be working with students of color and helping them determine their postsecondary pathway. Schools and districts implementing these hiring practices want to ensure that teachers have the best interests in mind of students of all backgrounds, and know how to best support their success.

¹¹ <https://diversity.ucdavis.edu/pipeline-recruitment-and-retention>

¹² <https://diversity.ucdavis.edu/campos>

Admission DEI Practices

The literature on DEI practices specific to college counseling and admission is sparse, and largely relates to recruitment and outreach at the postsecondary level.

Recruitment/Outreach

Many postsecondary institutions recruit students out-of-state or in wealthier neighborhoods and schools, but to increase diversity, institutions should focus their time and efforts in-state, recruiting locally among minority populations, low-income and rural areas, and neighboring community colleges (Bussey et al.).

Community Partnerships

A U.S. Department of Education publication (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016) highlighted promising practices for increasing college student diversity, including the following actions specific to outreach:

- Proactively develop relationships with elementary and secondary schools in the communities, particularly where large populations of students of color are served.
- Provide support to communities including assistance with FAFSA completion, test preparation, and/or partnering with high schools that have a large population of underserved students to give exposure to college-level coursework and prepare them for college-level courses.
- Develop transfer or articulation agreements with other institutions including community colleges, increase recruitment from community colleges, and offer targeted financial aid.

Community College Partnerships

Through its Center for Community College Partnerships (CCCCP), the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has established partnerships with local community colleges that serve large populations of historically underserved students (O'Malley & Bohanon, 2021). In addition to developing relationships with the colleges, CCCC offers transfer preparation programs to help increase the pipeline of low-income, first-generation, and historically underserved students of color.¹³ The number of community college transfer students applying to UCLA increased by 10% this past year (O'Malley & Bohanon, 2021).

DEI Messaging

DEI is a factor in choosing a college for all students, according to a recent poll (Jaschik, 2021). Students reported “actively pursuing information about DEI on campuses,” and found this information “impactful” in their decisions about where to apply and enroll. Students report that high levels of DEI on college campuses imply a culture of safety and belonging. College guides recommend that students and their families ask about DEI-related policies, demographics of faculty, strategic DEI goals, and supports for students of color (Moody, 2021). Students should also pay attention to “red flags”, such as schools’ reluctance to answer broad questions about diversity and a lack of transparency with bias incident reports. Admission staff in outreach and recruitment can help convey information about the status and efforts of DEI on their campus. Such information must be conveyed honestly and transparently.

K12 Counseling Practices

In addition to admission practices at postsecondary institutions, K12 schools can help to increase the diversity of college applicants and enrollments by providing targeted college access counseling including FAFSA assistance or directing students to college access programs. Federally-funded programs such as TRIO (Upward Bound, Talent Search) provide academic support and personal mentoring to help underserved students apply to and enroll in college.

¹³ <https://www.aap.ucla.edu/units/cccp/>

A NACAC publication in partnership with Excelencia recommended the following practices for increasing college enrollment of Latino students, which can apply to all underserved students of color (Hurley & Coles, 2015):

- allocate sufficient resources toward hiring, training, and providing tools to secondary school college counselors to serve students of color in pursuit of college access and success (including providing college admissions materials and financial aid information in Spanish); and,
- provide students and families with the opportunity to meet one-on-one with college counselors and college representatives.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recently began offering training specific to preparing DEI specialists in secondary schools.¹⁴ Course topics include self-reflection, investigation of personal biases, and developing school and district partnerships to promote systemic change. Such training is essential for all college counselors, especially those working with marginalized populations, to better understand their own implicit bias, reduce microaggressions, and better relate to their students and their backgrounds in order to help address their challenges and support their higher education aspirations (Tate, 2021).

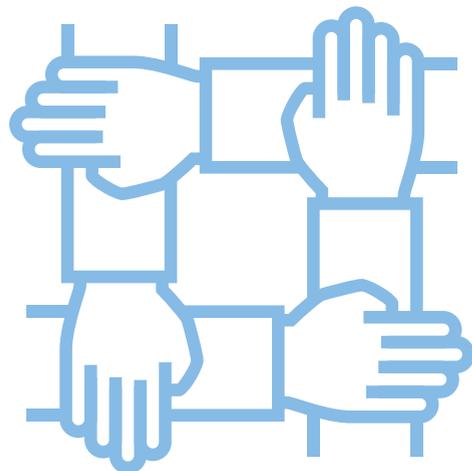
In addition to DEI training, schools and districts can conduct equity audits – an iterative, community-based process that helps to identify, assess, and address issues of inequity in a school’s practices and policies so that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of background. Equity audit frameworks and protocols for districts can be adapted to the school leadership and school counseling department levels (Hanover Research, 2021).¹⁵

College Admission DEI Positions

In addition to the literature, we scanned higher education job listing websites for position descriptions specific to DEI in college admission. Admission DEI specialists are increasingly common positions on college campuses designed to interact with local communities and students of color to increase their representation. We identified 12 current openings at a range of institutions.

Table 1 displays the 12 positions by institution type, job title, and responsibilities and requirements.

Regardless of the job title – counselor or director – each position’s primary responsibility is recruitment and outreach aimed at increasing the diversity of the student body. In addition, nearly all (10 of 12) position descriptions indicated that responsibilities include developing both internal and external partnerships. The majority of listings include strategic planning and application review/evaluation (9 and 7, respectively). Less commonly mentioned were collaborating on shaping admission policy (3) and leading staff in DEI professional development activities (2) – these duties seem more common among senior-level positions. No other major differences appear by institution or job type.



¹⁴ <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/a516a333-49ef-48de-99bf-af09b2bdbf51/DEI-Specialist-Syllabus.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://west.edtrust.org/diploma-matters-educational-opportunity-audit-blueprint-for-action-resources/>

Table 1. Sample DEI Admission Positions – Institution Type, Position, Responsibilities, and Requirements

| Institution Type | Position | Diversity Recruitment | Application Evaluation | External Partnerships | Cross-campus Coordination | Policy Development | Professional Development | Strategic Planning | Coaching/ Mentoring | Other DEI Responsibilities | DEI-Related Requirements |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2 yr public | Recruiter | x | | x | x | | | x | | | x |
| 4 yr private | Assistant Director | x | x | x | x | | | x | | x | x |
| 4 yr private | Associate Director | x | x | | x | | | x | | x | x |
| 4 yr public | Counselor | x | | x | x | | | x | | x | x |
| 4 yr public | Assistant Director | x | | x | x | | x | x | | x | x |
| 4 yr public | Associate Director | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | x | x |
| 4 yr private | Assistant Director | x | x | x | x | | | | | x | x |
| 4 yr public | Senior Associate Director | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| 4 yr public | Specialist | x | | x | x | | | x | x | x | |
| 4 yr private | Assistant Dean | x | x | | | | | | x | | |
| 4 yr private | Counselor | x | x | x | | | | | | | |
| 2 yr public | Assistant Director | x | | x | x | x | | x | | | x |
| TOTAL | | 12 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 8 | 8 |

Table 2 includes additional detail about DEI-specific job duties beyond standard recruitment and outreach, and DEI-specific candidate criteria. For example, some institutions include in their descriptions the nurturing of relationships with enrolled students and involvement in campus-wide DEI committees (note: it may be possible that additional responsibilities are included in ‘other duties’ and not explicitly listed in the position descriptions). Eight of the 12 position descriptions listed qualifications specific to DEI expertise and experience, including understanding students with diverse backgrounds and a commitment to social justice.

Also noteworthy are the promising practices from the literature on recruiting diverse staff applied to these job listings. All but one included Equal Opportunity Employer statements, and half included statements about diversity values. Below are examples of detailed DEI information institutions included in the descriptions:

- One institution provided detailed information about the importance of DEI to the institution and community, including the strategic plan emphasis on DEI, institutional values, a national diversity award, local multicultural communities and festivals, and links to DEI-related pages on the institution’s website.

“We believe that a student body that is both highly qualified and diverse in terms of culture, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, background, work and life experiences, skills and interests is essential to the educational process and will provide additional contributions and dimensions to the community.”

- Two institutions emphasized the value of a diverse student body, one stating that diversity “enhances the overall educational experience for all students.” Another institution expanded on the dimensions and benefits of diversity: “We believe that a student body that is both highly qualified and diverse in terms of culture, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, background, work and life experiences, skills and interests is essential to the educational process and will provide additional contributions and dimensions to the community.”

- One institution stressed the importance of this role in helping the institution meet its goals: “The associate director will play a critical role in the institution’s commitment to reducing barriers to education, supporting diverse students, and building a sense of belonging for all.”

Including such statements about the importance of diversity to the institution, and the importance of this role to diversity, help demonstrate the institution’s intentions and commitment and may help encourage candidates of color to apply.



“The associate director will play a critical role in the institution’s commitment to reducing barriers to education, supporting diverse students, and building a sense of belonging for all.”

Table 2. Additional DEI-Related Responsibilities and DEI-Related Requirements

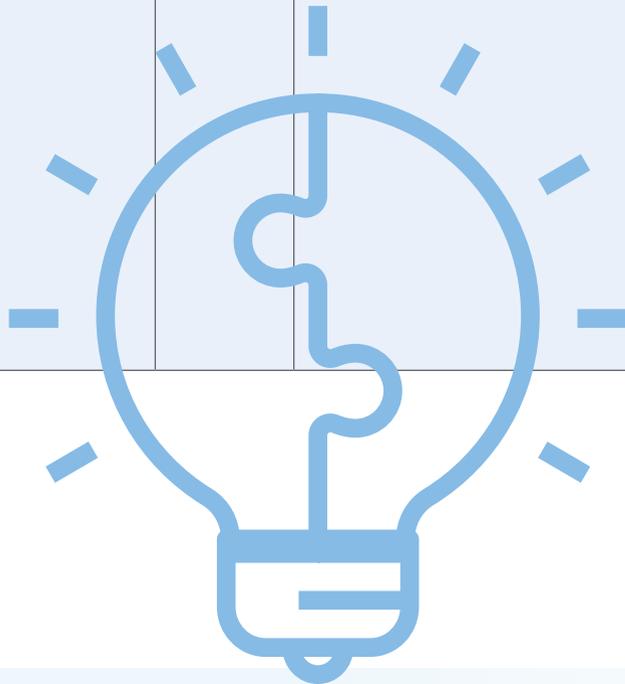
| Institution Type | Position | Other DEI Responsibilities | DEI-Related Requirements |
|------------------|--------------------|---|---|
| 2 yr public | Recruiter | Not specified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in diversity recruiting, specifically the creation and implementation of strategies and programming to source and recruit from diverse communities in the region. • Experience in and understanding of working with students from diverse populations is preferred. |
| 4 yr private | Assistant Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain close working relationships with students, faculty, staff, alumni and other key constituents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience working with underrepresented and/or marginalized groups in admissions, financial aid or student affairs. |
| 4 yr private | Associate Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture a climate of inclusion within the Admissions team; • Work closely with other DEI leaders within the school to address pertinent issues; • Assume leadership role within newly formed Admissions Diversity Steering Committee; • Partner with marketing team to build branding that demonstrates institution's commitment to DEI; • Spearhead regular reviews of the Admissions website and other marketing collateral to assess the clarity of our commitment to DEI and the representation of all populations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated history of leading strategic recruitment initiatives; Minimum 5 years of experience including experience with diversity and inclusion planning, development and implementation. • Demonstrated ability to work with diverse populations with a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion; understanding of social justice, the dynamics of power and privilege and social identities. • Demonstrated ability to work effectively within a diverse workforce and affect change by applying best practices, influencing skills, and research-based solutions. • Experience designing, delivering, and evaluating diversity and inclusion learning programs and resources. |
| 4 yr public | Counselor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aid in the retention efforts in cooperation with the Center for Student Inclusiveness; • Assist with coordination of the Multicultural Leadership Conference. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience working with multicultural students. |
| 4 yr public | Assistant Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as the department contact for all diversity initiatives and the liaison with the Center for Student Inclusiveness; • Serve as the liaison with the Black Alumni Council and Center for Student Inclusiveness. | Not specified |

Table 2. Additional DEI-Related Responsibilities and DEI-Related Requirements (Continued)

| Institution Type | Position | Other DEI Responsibilities | DEI-Related Requirements |
|------------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| 4 yr public | Associate Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure alignment of efforts with the Division of Diversity and Inclusion, the Office for Multicultural Success and Retention, academic and administrative units, and regional campuses and centers, for diversity-related initiatives; • Develop and lead a series of trainings that educate Undergraduate Admissions and University partners around best practices related to the recruitment and yield of diverse student populations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The successful candidate will embrace the division's commitment to incorporating diversity, equity, access, inclusion, and social justice into decision-making and processes; • Extensive knowledge and ability to serve as a subject matter expert on best practices and issues related to the recruitment, admission, and enrollment of students from diverse backgrounds. |
| 4 yr private | Assistant Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a diverse workforce and participate in the College's efforts to create a respectful, inclusive, and welcoming work environment; • Manage alumnae of color program in collaboration with coordinator of alumnae admission volunteer program; • Engage with current students dedicated to diversity and access work on campus. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience working with domestic multicultural communities required. |
| 4 yr public | Senior Associate Director | Not specified | Not specified |
| 4 yr public | Specialist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-campus programming focused on the university's strategic goals of learning, diversity, and collaboration; • Assist in strategic guidance of the Diversity Ambassador program; • Attend the Chancellors Diversity Councils. | |
| 4 yr private | Assistant Dean | Not specified | Not specified |
| 4 yr private | Counselor | Not specified | Not specified |

Table 2. Additional DEI-Related Responsibilities and DEI-Related Requirements (Continued)

| Institution Type | Position | Other DEI Responsibilities | DEI-Related Requirements |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|--|
| 2 yr public | Assistant Director | Not specified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates with a commitment to working in a culturally competent environment are especially valued; • We encourage applications from candidates who reflect the increasing diversity of the institution’s student body and community, enhance and promote engagement with other cultures, and have demonstrated a commitment to working with and as part of a multicultural faculty and diverse student body and community; • At least two years of experience in diversity training/education initiatives, community outreach that supports educational practices, and enrollment strategies. • Ability to interact professionally and tactfully with people of different levels of education, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences; • Demonstrated knowledge of programming initiatives and support services related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. • Knowledge of past and current social trends affecting underrepresented, non-traditional, and underserved students. |



“The associate director will play a critical role in the institution’s commitment to reducing barriers to education, supporting diverse students, and building a sense of belonging for all.”



Focus Group Findings

Findings from four focus groups with 24 college admission professionals at various levels and institutions from both secondary and postsecondary spaces appear below, organized by commonly identified themes. Participants were asked open-ended questions about the status of DEI at their schools/institutions, existing DEI efforts and challenges, and their remaining DEI needs, both in their specific contexts and more broadly. Participants also provided recommendations for how NACAC can meet the DEI needs of its members.

Institutional DEI Practices

Participants cited a range of DEI initiatives and efforts at their institutions, many implemented since 2020. One participant at a predominantly White postsecondary institution felt the recent DEI efforts are “performative” in response to recent calls for anti-racism, “...but I’d rather it be performative, and start there, than do nothing.” Regardless of the

impetus for this institution’s DEI efforts, however, “we are in a much better place than we were.”

Specific institution-wide DEI practices cited by participants are summarized below. In addition to these, participants referred to the overall culture or climate at their school/institution as a facilitator for DEI.

DEI Leadership/Culture

Several participants expressed satisfaction with campus inclusion, and recent shifts to anti-racism and increased DEI work. Race-related conversations have become more urgent and open, and institutions are adding DEI leadership roles. As a charter school representative noted, a culture of inclusivity stems from the leadership, and a diverse leadership is beneficial to students: “It is important for students to see who they could be.” Institutions are following through on leadership DEI statements with

actions such as facilitated campus dialogues and assessments that lead to strategic reports.

DEI Goals

Several institutions have measurable goals related to DEI. Six participants reported their schools/institutions include DEI-related goals in their strategic plans, such as increasing the diversity of faculty, staff, and students (student diversity often includes not only race/ethnicity but also Pell eligibility and first-generation status).

One postsecondary institution noted providing accountability to diversity goals by tying them to performance-based funding calculations. Another requires departments to complete antiracism manifestos. Other participants, however, questioned the value of strategic goals without mechanisms to enforce them or funding for practices to help meet the goals. Furthermore, the more quantitative goals are easier to track but understanding student experiences and fostering inclusion is more difficult to monitor.

DEI Curricular Components

Four participants mentioned their schools and institutions have incorporated anti-racism into the curricula, through competencies, additional texts, and a specific focus on Black history or culture.

DEI Task Forces

Four participants' schools/institutions formed task forces, action groups, or committees on racism. In one case the task force led the rewriting of a student handbook with more fair and equitable student policies. The other institution's task force has not been transparent about its activities.

K12 Outreach

At one postsecondary institution, every office has a DEI representative, and the institution recently funded counselors dedicated to supporting underserved students of color at local K12 schools. The institution also provides an African American studies course to high school students.

Other DEI Efforts

Other school/institutional DEI efforts cited by participants include surveys, a strategic plan, data analysis and goal setting, employee groups, roundtables, a DEI office, DEI representative, and a film viewing and discussion.

DEI Initiative Effectiveness

It is difficult to determine the effectiveness of DEI task forces and committees. One high school counseling participant stated, "we have action committees, and it is a lot of talk, but no action." On the other hand, another counseling participant shared that a student-organized campus discussion following the George Floyd murder with students, staff, and faculty following a film viewing was "powerful." Underserved students of color shared their perspectives and experiences and faculty listened; "students felt heard." Faculty "learned to be mindful about how their actions impact people." The event "opened up awareness and inspired more conversation and understanding in different communities."

Institutional DEI Training

Several participants' schools/institutions recently began offering DEI trainings for both staff and students. Many trainings are intended to help staff understanding biases and promote a safer environment. While several institutions encourage participation, trainings are typically not mandatory. The concern, however, is when DEI trainings are not mandatory, the staff who need the trainings the most are the "least likely to show up."

Required Training

One institution's enrollment management division requires DEI cultural competency training. Another institution requires anti-racism training, but the participant noted that other marginalized groups are left out when the focus is just anti-racism. He has implemented a mandate for at least one professional development goal related to DEI for staff in his department.

Encouraged Training

One institution, while not requiring DEI training, asks about engagement in DEI trainings in performance evaluations. Some institutions encourage their staff to attend the NACAC Guiding the Way to Inclusion (GWI) conference.

Training Effectiveness

Several participants are concerned their school/ institutional DEI trainings are not effective. One K12 participant felt the training offered on their campus was “lip service” because it did not include school leaders or conclude in an action plan. In some cases, the training was not well received because “People didn’t like to be told that they were exuding privilege,” whether that was based on gender or race. A postsecondary participant noted a White male presented an anti-racism training, which was not effective given that he lacked the perspective of a marginalized population.

A participant found an implicit bias training helpful. This particular secondary school training addressed teacher recommendation letters and provided suggestions for reducing “comments that seem to be innocent but are really a stereotype.”

Training Accountability

Some feel additional accountability is needed to follow-up on training sessions. Otherwise, “everyone goes on their way” once trainings are over, without identifying actionable next steps, and may not retain the content they learned.

Counseling and Admission DEI Practices

When asked about DEI practices specific to college counseling and admission, only a handful of participants responded that their departments have implemented DEI practices. The most common practices are providing DEI trainings and hiring DEI specialists to conduct outreach and recruitment to increase the diversity of students. Additionally, several postsecondary institutions track strategic admission DEI goals through recruitment activities.

Note, the majority of examples below were provided by admission staff from postsecondary institutions. However, the same practices apply to and are needed at college counseling departments and K12 schools.

Admission DEI Roles

Several postsecondary institutions developed DEI roles in admissions in the past two years, in response to the events of 2020. Two participants in DEI roles indicated these positions have been on campus for over 10 years. Some of the staff in these roles, however, shared that the title is sometimes more symbolic, due to other job demands not allowing time for tasks dedicated to DEI.

In most cases, admission DEI staff oversee diversity recruitment, including scholarships and outreach to historically underserved communities. Often, student applicants with diverse background criteria, such as race or first-generation status, are directed to a specifically designated DEI staff member. Some institutions hire specialists to target other populations, for example one has a dedicated Admission Counselor to support adult learner recruitment.

DEI Trainings

Both K12 and postsecondary participants have developed or facilitated DEI trainings specific to college counseling and admission. A postsecondary participant shared that their institution developed and implemented implicit bias training to help with the application review process, which recently transitioned to be more holistic. Another postsecondary institution’s admission department trains staff on counseling differently abled students through the admissions process.

While some schools and institutions utilize consultants who specialize in DEI trainings, others have created their own. A postsecondary participant developed a training series that has been well received. He incorporated DEI into every session, whether or not that is the main topic of the training, so attendees receive DEI training “whether they know it or not.” Another postsecondary institution relied on its Office of Multicultural Engagement and Center for Latinx

Studies to develop a DEI training. A postsecondary staff of color shared that he is often asked to create DEI trainings, but does not have the capacity or compensation to do that.

Counseling and Admission Representation

Importance of Representation

Participants shared that the counseling and admission field needs additional diversification, among staff and particularly among leadership. It is important to have diverse recruitment staff who can go into communities and relate to prospective students. As a postsecondary participant shared, “students are always looking for counselors who look like them.”

Need for Black Males

Institutions have seen recent progress, but one specific area where admission and counseling departments need to make additional strides is in the number of Black male staff. At one postsecondary institution, the majority of men of color who students see are maintenance and janitorial staff, not administrative or managerial staff.

Institution-Wide Representation

Two participants shared their admissions offices are more representative than the rest of the institution. This can be a challenge, however, because students who enroll may find that staff and faculty are not as representative of students as they had expected based on interactions with admission and recruitment during the application process. Diverse hiring is needed throughout the institution.

Diverse Diversity

A counseling participant shared that having a representative staff means not only a diverse staff in terms of race/ethnicity but also a range of different socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientation, languages, age, etc.

Recruitment Challenges

Many schools and institutions face challenges attracting diverse candidates. Three participants shared that a recent “exodus” of staff due to COVID, or the “great resignation,” has further compounded staffing challenges. One reason it may be difficult to increase diversity of counseling and admission staff and education more broadly is that students of color are typically directed to higher paying fields. A participant concurred that admission staff often end up in the field by chance; they do not set out on a pathway to admissions beginning in college. Another participant has found the field attracts young, entry-level staff who are not committed to the progressing in field as a career.

Hiring Practices

Participants made a number of suggestions for hiring more representative staff at both K12 schools and postsecondary institutions:

- **Transparency.** Provide clear job descriptions. Be open and honest about the DEI needs and expectations. Include DEI responsibilities because the work is needed, not “out of performance.”
- **Visibility.** Seek out candidates of color, for example at meetings and conferences for diverse professionals, through local communities, and HBCUs.
- **Accountability.** Place staff of color on hiring committees to review job vacancies beginning with position descriptions to application selection, interviews, and decisions.
- **Exposure.** Make students of color aware of college counseling and admission as career pathways, including the requirements, responsibilities, and opportunities for areas of focus and promotion.



Recommendations and Conclusions

What NACAC Can Do

Focus group participants provided several suggestions for ways that NACAC can help support their DEI efforts.

- **Encourage men of color.** One area raised by several participants is how to get young men of color interested in college counseling and admission (and higher education more broadly) as a career pathway. Black participants feel a burden of taking on DEI responsibilities due to a lack of qualified men of color in the teaching and counseling professions. Having role models on staff is helpful to encourage men of color to persist and pursue careers in education. Participants suggested additional training in the field for men of color, as well as resources such as publications and guides. They are also looking to NACAC for messages to bring to their leadership, who typically do not attend NACAC conferences.
- **Increase conference representation.** A participant shared he is also looking for NACAC to give professionals of color the platform to present at conferences, to serve on conference session selection committees to ensure that presentations reflect their interests, and to increase the representation of HBCUs at conferences. Another participant would like to see community colleges and other institutions beyond selective institutions addressed, both through relevant conference sessions and inclusion in panels.
- **Increase conference accessibility.** Participants also requested making professional development opportunities more affordable to increase the attendance of diverse backgrounds.

DEI Training Needs

Participants expressed the following DEI training needs in addition to existing efforts at their schools/institutions. In some cases, institutions can meet these training needs; in other cases, NACAC may wish to consider adding these topics to its portfolio of professional development.

- **Staff bias training.** Three participants expressed the need for bias training for counseling and admission staff. One is concerned that he and other admission staff may be more inclined to accept students who represent their own backgrounds. Another agreed that training is needed to help people understand their implicit biases, but those who are aware of privilege and bias are the ones who attend the trainings while staff who would benefit most from the trainings do not believe there is a problem, and do not attend. One counseling participant suggested making annual “bias check trainings” mandatory, similar to required trainings on reporting child abuse or suicide.
- **Addressing individual student needs.** In addition to anti-racism training, participants would like to see training to address the needs of the LBGTQ, differently abled, and non-traditional aged students. Another participant added that “seeing students as a monolith” is a problem, and there is a need for training to help demystify stereotypes.
- **Staff development.** Participants expressed a need for better supporting college counseling and admission staff of color, including addressing the emotional burden, sense of belonging, inclusionary environment, and navigating the admission career pathway. Also, supporting diverse staff beyond race/ethnicity (i.e., intersectionality, gender identity, age) and promoting “missing voices” to leadership positions.

- **Supporting students.** Admission staff can build relationships with students and support their success beyond enrollment. Staff can connect with students to help them feel accepted and promote a sense of belonging “when they don’t look like the rest of the community.”
- **Practical guidance.** Participants would like to see actionable, hands-on professional development beyond conversations, for example “how to talk to administrators.” One participant shared she would like training for diversity recruitment specifically.

In addition to these topics, a participant would like to see more training from people of color, and more upfront discussions to address concerns. Another participant suggested having DEI “pods” where staff can join different interests or deliveries, such as documentaries or podcasts, to conduct a deeper dive into DEI.

DEI Challenges

Training Pushback

An institution has received pushback from White staff who called the DEI trainings “reverse racism.” Additional information to emphasize the importance of these trainings is needed from leadership. For now, the trainings have been suspended – they were “brushed under the rug” rather than being dealt with head on. As stated above, it is often the people who need DEI training the most who do not think it applies to them – requiring training may be helpful to ensure that all staff attend.

DEI Action

Some participants expressed concern that leadership does not always follow up on statements about DEI with actions. Many institutions have approached DEI by starting book clubs, but there is often no follow-up with next steps about tackling DEI on campus. One campus’ leader “publicly indicated that she wants to be a premier anti-racist institution” but “in order to get behind that...how are we structurally dismantling” historical racist barriers. Another participant worries that current actions are trendy

or temporary: “When media coverage dies down and being ‘woke’ isn’t happening anymore, how do we keep having these conversations?”

Systemic Inequities

One counseling participant pointed to broader systemic inequities in college access that cannot be addressed through DEI training but rather through policy changes, such as ending legacy admissions, implementing need-blind admissions, and considering the advantages of wealthier students who attended private high schools. “It is not a level playing field” for low-income and first-generation students, and “if we want to look at equity...we need to look at the barriers to access.”

While systemic inequities cannot be solved through professional development offerings, it is important for college counseling and admission staff to be aware of the disadvantages that historically underserved populations face. Having this contextual understanding can help staff approach the admission process through a holistic lens and consider individual and societal circumstances when making policy and admission decisions.



Looking Forward

It is important to look beyond diversity numbers to fully address the “inclusivity” of DEI. Schools and institutions must examine student experiences throughout the admissions funnel, including policy and practice intentions, student needs, and historical, systemic barriers. As a focus group participant stated, “Is DEI work being done performatively, or is it because we want them to come to the University, be successful and graduate?” It is also important to consider the full student experience on campus, including the curriculum, to assess the progress of DEI efforts. Participants stressed that community work on healing and recovering from racist incidents takes time, and leadership priority and transparency are key for effective DEI efforts.

These collective findings from relevant literature, documentation, and focus groups with counseling and admission professionals support the need for college admission to play a role in increasing and supporting a diverse student body. Efforts being taken to increase the representation of counseling and admission staff and leadership, and to train admission staff on implicit bias and other aspects of DEI, should continue to be implemented, assessed, refined, and replicated. NACAC can consider a number of ways to further support DEI in the field, through targeted professional development, access to and visibility at national meetings, and presenting an admission career pathway to underserved students.

Schools and institutions must examine student experiences throughout the admissions funnel, including policy and practice intentions, student needs, and historical, systemic barriers.



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Appendix B. Research Instruments

NACAC DEI Environmental Scan: Focus Group Protocol

Background/Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time from this particularly busy and challenging year to meet with us about this important topic. We look forward to learning more about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at your school/institution and department, and we hope this discussion will be a helpful way for you all to reflect together.

ASA Research is a small, women-owned research firm located outside DC specializing in postsecondary research. We are conducting this focus group on behalf of NACAC to learn more about the status of DEI efforts in the college enrollment/admission profession. We would like to learn more about DEI at your school/institution/

department and appreciate your honest feedback based on your experiences; your insights will allow NACAC to identify core skills/requirements and key challenges related to DEI. That should then help dictate NACAC's overall DEI orientation and direction for training.

Question: Do we have your permission to record this call? The recording will be used strictly to clarify our notes; these recordings will not be shared with NACAC or your school/institution, or with anyone beyond ASA's internal project team. Responses will remain anonymous, and no individual or institution will be named in any reporting without permission.

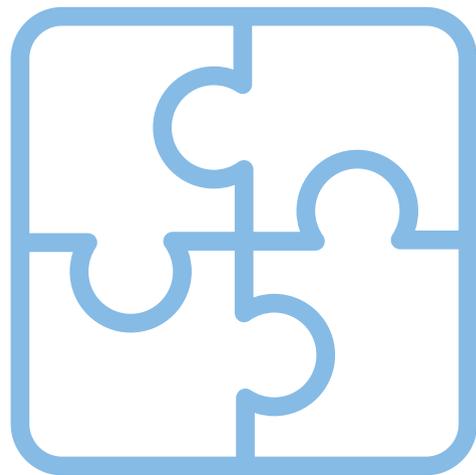
Introductions: Please tell us your name, role, and school/institution.

Note: As you consider these questions, reflect on your campus culture and leadership priorities, as well as specific policies and practices.

1. How inclusive would you say the campus culture is? Your department? Please describe.
2. Would you say the staff in your department represent the student characteristics well? What about the field overall? Please describe.
 - a. If not, how do you think it can be improved? [prompts if needed: Have any practices been effective at increasing staff diversity/representation? Are there policies in place to promote equity in hiring and promotion? What challenges, if any, have you faced to further increase diversity/representation?]
3. Does your institution/school/department offer any DEI professional development opportunities? Have any been required? [Prompt, if not mentioned: any trainings in multicultural competency?]
 - a. Please describe any DEI trainings you have participated in. [prompts if needed: Were you satisfied with the outcomes/do you think the training was helpful? What additional PD opportunities, if any, would you like to see? If you could improve/change one thing about your campus' DEI environment and/or training, what would it be?]
 - b. Is training conducted to promote equity in admissions decisions?
4. Does your institution/school/department have any specific goals related to DEI? If so, please describe.
 - a. [prompts if needed: What steps have been taken to make progress towards those goals? Who has led the efforts at developing goals/making progress towards them? Where are these goals listed (i.e., within departments, college-wide strategic plan)?]
5. Thank you for sharing examples at your school/institution and department. What would you say the major DEI challenges are to the field more broadly? And what can NACAC offer to help?
6. [Ask if these haven't come up in conversation already in response to previous questions]
 - a. What priority would you say leadership places on equity [institution overall/department]? Please provide examples.
 - b. To what extent does your campus track diversity/representation? How? Would you say your student body is diverse?
 - c. Have recent events – COVID, calls for social justice, other – impacted DEI efforts at the institution? How? Who initiated these activities? Have the DEI activities continued throughout the last year?
 - d. Has your institution recently implemented any DEI-related policies or initiatives? Please describe.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences, we greatly appreciate your insights. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any follow-up thoughts or questions [provide contact information].





NACAC

National Association for
College Admission Counseling

About NACAC

NACAC is an organization of professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education.

NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process.

To learn more, visit nacacnet.org.



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