On Shared Equity Leadership Series

Shared Responsibility Means Shared Accountability:

Rethinking Accountability Within Shared Equity Leadership

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American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle NW
Washington, DC 20036

Shared Responsibility Means Shared Accountability: Rethinking Accountability Within Shared Equity Leadership

Adrianna Kezar

Dean's Professor of Leadership;
Wilbur-Kieffer Professor of Higher Education; and
Director, Pullias Center for Higher Education
University of Southern California

Elizabeth Holcombe

Senior Postdoctoral Research Associate,
Pullias Center for Higher Education
University of Southern California

Darsella Vigil

Senior Research Analyst
American Council on Education

About the Study

With generous support from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California (USC) partnered to conduct a study of shared equity leadership. This effort benefits the higher education sector by filling a critical gap—providing a fuller understanding of what it means when leaders share leadership in service of equity goals. This project consisted of semi-structured interviews with groups of leaders at four institutions representing different institutional types, contexts, and regions, allowing us to learn more about shared equity leadership and the structures that support it.

About the American Council on Education

The American Council on Education (ACE) is a membership organization that mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. As the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, our strength lies in our diverse membership of more than 1,700 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations in America and abroad. ACE is the only major higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting institutions: two-year and four-year, public and private. Our members educate two out of every three students in all accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions.

About the Pullias Center for Higher Education

One of the world's leading research centers on higher education, the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the USC Rossier School of Education advances innovative, scalable solutions to improve college outcomes for underserved students and to enhance the performance of postsecondary institutions. The mission of the Pullias Center is to bring a multidisciplinary perspective to complex social, political, and economic issues in higher education. The Center is currently engaged in research projects to improve access and outcomes for low-income, first-generation students, improve the performance of postsecondary institutions, assess the role of contingent faculty, understand how colleges can undergo reform in order to increase their effectiveness, analyze emerging organizational forms such as for-profit institutions, and assess the educational trajectories of community college students.

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Executive Summary

Shared equity leadership (SEL) is a leadership approach that scales diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work and creates culture change by connecting individual and organizational transformation. Individuals embrace a personal journey toward critical consciousness to become equity-oriented leaders. Collectively, leaders embody a set of values and enact a set of practices that form new relationships and understandings, ultimately working to dismantle current systems and structures that inhibit equitable outcomes. In this report, the third in the On Shared Equity Leadership series, we describe the ways that campuses implementing SEL are grappling with accountability in environments where responsibility for DEI work is broadly distributed. What does it mean when more people are in charge of accomplishing DEI goals? How do we effectively and honestly measure progress on DEI goals? How do we ensure we are measuring the right goals while simultaneously holding the right people accountable for advancing campus equity goals? This report examines these questions and more, providing many examples for campuses struggling to rethink their accountability systems as they broaden responsibility for DEI work. Key takeaways include:

- As equity leadership is shared, the notion of accountability expands and the number of people who take ownership for leading accountability increases. The report describes how campuses using an SEL approach have reconceptualized both who is accountable for equity work and to whom leaders are accountable. Instead of only a chief diversity officer or other single leader being accountable for DEI goals, leaders at all levels and in multiple functional areas are accountable for the work under SEL. Further, self-accountability becomes critically important as more leaders step up to do the work. Additionally, the notion of who campus leaders are accountable to expands beyond just boards and other external groups to include the campus and local communities. Boards also rethink their roles in equity work and begin to hold themselves accountable for expanding their knowledge and conceptualization of campus equity goals.

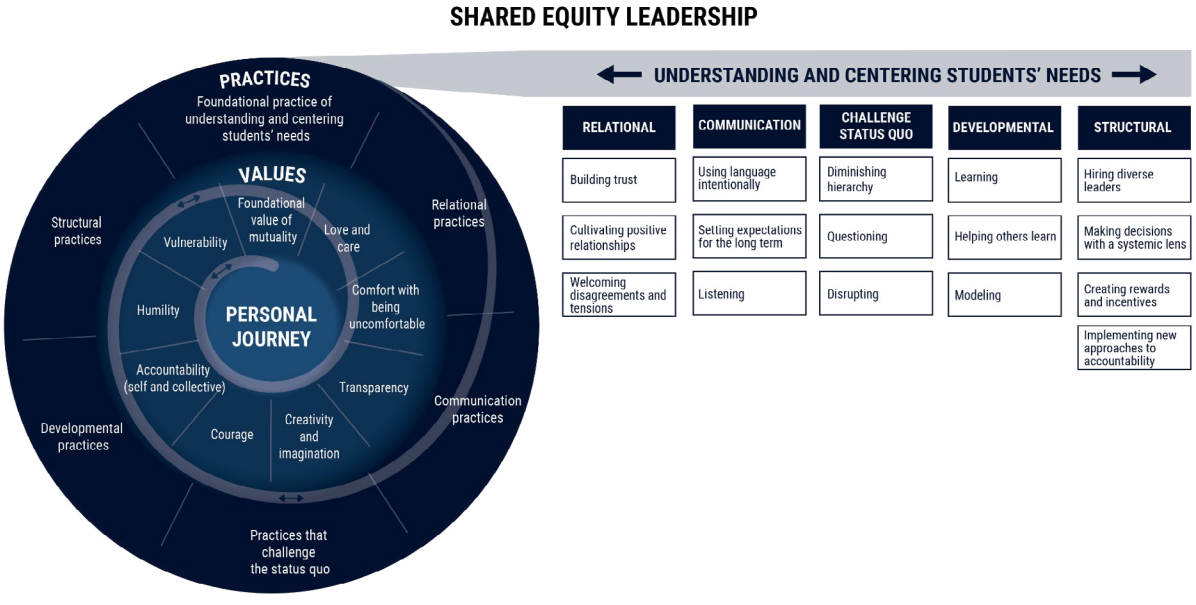
- Under shared equity leadership, three new areas for which people will be held accountable expand to match this greater ambition. First, culture change is a key goal of SEL, so campuses moved away from thinking only about outcomes to also understanding the importance of the environment that produces those outcomes—specifically, the experience of students and of being held accountable for the environment in which students are educated. Second, campuses expressed a need for multilevel metrics collected at unit and individual levels, so that accountability can be tracked further down into the organization beyond what is collected in institution-level metrics. Third, campuses wanted to utilize a longer timeline for accountability to effectively implement the goal of culture change.
- On campuses with SEL, equity leaders are establishing sophisticated accountability systems by creating complex, iterative, and multilevel plans and implementations. What is very different from the way these campuses have operated before is that the means for accountability are now as important as the ends. Accountability systems become a way to ensure that responsibility for the work is truly embraced by leaders across campus at all levels and units, as well as that campus constituents were making progress on this work. The "how" of accountability is expanded in the same ways as the "who" and the "what."
- Campuses experienced some key tensions and challenges in developing new accountability systems. They struggled managing the tension between measuring areas that are more difficult to assess—such as process or climate indicators—with those that are easier to assess, but potentially more limited indicators of equity—such as outcomes; adjusting faculty role structures and rewards and having budget or policies to do so; and addressing concerns about how data might be used in punitive ways.

An accountability toolkit is included at the end of this report to help campus groups think through what accountability should look like as they implement shared equity leadership.

Background

This report is a part of a series that explores detailed facets of shared equity leadership.[1] Shared equity leadership (SEL) is a leadership approach that scales DEI work and creates culture change by connecting individual and organizational transformation. Individuals embrace a personal journey toward critical consciousness to become a different type of leader, and collectively leaders embody new values and enact a set of practices that form new relationships and understandings, ultimately working to dismantle current systems and structures that inhibit equitable outcomes. In our foundational report on this topic, we describe the personal, collective, and institutional work necessary to enact this approach to equity leadership (Kezar et al. 2021). At the heart of SEL is the notion that leaders must first turn inward and do their own personal work in order to then turn outward to transform their institutions—this is what we call the *personal journey toward critical consciousness*. In this process, leaders reflect on their own identities and experiences, as well as the broader structural and systemic nature of inequities and how they fit within those systems and structures. When a campus has a critical mass of leaders engaged in this personal journey effort, they can then work in concert using a new set of values and practices to meet equity goals and work for culture change. The SEL process, and all the values and practices that it features, are shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: SHARED EQUITY LEADERSHIP MODEL



1 The reports in the On Shared Equity Leadership series are based on findings from a three-year multiple-case study of eight higher education institutions across the country. As part of the data collection efforts, our research team collected and reviewed thousands of pages of documents and interviewed over 100 leaders across the eight campuses, including presidents, provosts, and other executive leaders; DEI professionals; student affairs staff; faculty in a variety of disciplines; and staff in facilities, alumni affairs, development, and fundraising. The quotations in the report specifically come from these interviewees in the study. When we refer to "campuses," we are referring to those campuses that were part of the study.

Other reports in the series focus on:

- Organizational structures for broadly distributing such leadership (Holcombe et al. 2022)
- Particular values and practices that leaders in varying roles are able to lean into that are associated with their position
- Capacity-building that can help implement and enhance SEL
- Navigation of the dynamics of emotional labor that are inherently part of processes aimed at ameliorating equity issues

This report, the third in the series, highlights new accountability mechanisms that campuses use when broadly distributing leadership for equity.

DEFINITIONS

In this report, we refer to *equity* as the state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. Equity is typically related to remedying conditions for groups that have been historically marginalized based on race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, and other social identities. But we further think about equity from a systemic perspective—systemic equity is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support, and sustain social justice. It is a dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2021). It suggests that the onus for ameliorating inequities is on the systems (campuses), not on individuals who have experienced harm. Campuses in our study generally adopted similar concepts of equity to the one we adopted as a research team, but they differed in their goals for equity—some focused more narrowly on student success, while others focused on all campus constituents who are attempting to create an environment in which faculty, staff, and administrators feel supported and can also thrive. Thus the institutions we studied had differences at the level of outcomes (e.g., access, retention, high-impact practices, faculty positions). When we refer to *leadership*, we use a non-positional- and non-authority-based definition that is focused on leadership as a collective process, rather than the actions or traits of a person.

Introduction

> *I think [accountability is] really [an] ongoing conversation. I think what we definitely are against is this managerial version of accountability, where there's somebody counting how many things have you done. That's not the accountability that we're really thinking about. I think the accountability that we're thinking about is more like how. . . . One unit could have the capacity to do more DEI work just because of what they're focused on. It's not about how much, but it's how you're interweaving it into your mission, or vision, or year[ly] plan. I think those are the types of conversations that we're interested in having, is how are you thinking about it? If you're not, let's talk about how we can. What are the microsteps that you can take to begin this conversation? Because for those that are not in it, it's scary. . . . It's not about how much but . . . what's the entry point into it? I think it's really finding that entry point for those that are not necessarily involved in this work.* (Campus leader)

Increasingly, state systems and institutions are creating new metrics to monitor student success as well as DEI. Due to the lack of progress after years of dedicated efforts to improve student success or campus climate, external groups (e.g., policymakers and accreditors) have grown concerned and are demanding results. Additionally, those who care about campus equity and social justice are equally concerned about demonstrating and seeing progress. There is a shared vision across constituents, both inside and outside campuses, that accountability for equity is a priority. Research supports this shared vision; Williams (2013) found that when institutions are implementing diversity agendas, many of these plans have limited success because of the lack of a robust accountability system.

In addition, recent changes to accreditation mean that institutions will be held accountable for DEI in their regular process of self-evaluation and reaccreditation. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), announced a standard around DEI and greater involvement in holding institutions accountable for DEI efforts. This recent step, which took effect on January 1, 2022, will continue to hold higher education stakeholders accountable for their DEI efforts.[2]

At a time when campuses are starting to be held accountable for meeting metrics around diverse student success, our research suggests that the path toward success is one paved with new forms of leadership—namely, shared equity leadership (SEL). As we note above, SEL involves a critical mass of individuals on a campus who are working in concert using a new set of values and practices to meet equity goals and change campus culture. On the campuses we studied, we saw leaders wrestling with the question of what it means to distribute responsibility for the work of DEI, while also having shared accountability for results.

Creating well-designed and appropriate systems of accountability is a complex challenge within SEL. Within traditional notions of leadership, a single individual can be held accountable for results. Typically this person is the senior leader with authority, such as the president or provost. On campuses that have delegated responsibility for DEI work to a chief diversity officer, this person is then usually accountable for progress, or lack thereof, related to key indicators or metrics of success. With accountability often focused on external stakeholders, a few simple metrics (e.g., graduation rates) generally suffice. Through our work, we learned that campuses using SEL are creating a distinct and new approach to accountability.

2 Learn more about CHEA's DEI requirements.

However, we should also note that many individual leaders in our study still wrestled with the question of responsibility versus accountability. Some leaders thought that responsibility was synonymous with accountability and, as a result, did not attach an accountability system to the distributed responsibility they had created within their SEL structure. Therefore, we begin this report by defining both accountability and responsibility, since they were often used synonymously and were sometimes a source of confusion in the SEL arrangements we studied. *Accountability* means taking ownership of the results that have been produced, whereas *responsibility* focuses on the expectations for the defined roles of each team member and what value they can bring to the table because of their specific position. While accountability is results- or outcomes-focused, responsibility is task- or project-focused. Previous notions of accountability have been narrow in scope in terms of responsibility. This quotation from one of our interviewees captures this tension: "But in most people's minds, our good intentions are good enough and there hasn't been as much reflection on the part of the leaders as to whether they are actually achieving or having the impact that they want to have with those intentions (being equitable outcomes)." It is important to understand that both responsibility and accountability are critical for achieving equity-focused results. In fact, SEL makes apparent the connections between a broader distribution of responsibility and the potential for greater impact.

Accountability **means taking ownership of the results that have been produced, whereas** ***responsibility*** **focuses on the expectations for the defined roles of each team member and what value they can bring to the table because of their specific position.**

In this report, we explore what we learned about developing a system of accountability within SEL, where responsibility is much more broadly distributed among members of the campus. When leadership is shared, accountability processes must change as well. Campuses move from broader institutional measures to narrower unit and individual measures, as well as from outcomes to behaviors and processes that are reflective of culture change. Furthermore, we identified a process of accountability that involves power sharing within which the parameters of accountability are not defined top-down, but rather in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. As more people are involved in the leadership process, it generates opportunities for inviting others who define broader and new measures and approaches into the creation of the accountability system. A new mindset emerges that shapes how accountability is defined and executed and involves more reciprocity and relationship-building. This new thinking about accountability can be seen throughout the report.

The first section of this report explores the ways that campuses are grappling with the question of *who* is accountable for equity goals. As campuses expand their understanding of who is responsible for equity work, so does their definition of who is accountable. Additionally, campuses are rethinking who they are accountable to when it comes to their equity work and experimenting with including the broader community in accountability conversations. The next section examines *what* campuses are holding themselves accountable for—what are the specific metrics and measures campuses are establishing, and then tracking, in SEL environments? Finally, we describe *how* campuses are monitoring accountability, or the accountability systems they have put in place to track progress. Our research demonstrated that campuses are establishing sophisticated systems of accountability that help move toward true culture change. Each campus has a DEI plan driving activities (e.g., hiring, professional development, student support), which is typical of many campuses. These changes are all aimed at a higher aspiration—transformative campus culture change that supports better DEI outcomes.

FIGURE 2: EXPANDING ACCOUNTABILITY IN SHARED EQUITY LEADERSHIP

Who Is Accountable?

As equity leadership is shared, the notion of accountability is also expanded and the number of people who are accountable for the work is also enlarged. This section first describes who has traditionally been held accountable for DEI work in higher education—a chief diversity officer (CDO) or sometimes a diversity committee—and then discusses the expansion of who is held accountable under shared equity leadership (SEL). Leaders at all levels are held accountable for different pieces of the work in different ways, as we describe throughout this report. Further, the leaders engaged in this work intentionally hold themselves accountable for their own learning and development, as well as for how their work helps to accomplish broader campus equity goals.

Who Has Traditionally Been Accountable for DEI Work?

As noted previously, a single leader is held accountable for results under traditional models of leadership. Many campuses have designated a CDO as that leader when it comes to DEI work (Williams and Wade-Golden 2013). The notion of having a leader in charge of DEI who reports directly to the president or provost has powerful symbolic value in terms of signaling the importance of DEI work. However, campuses frequently find that the establishment of this position can be limited in addressing DEI objectives and instead can silo or relegate responsibility for DEI work to the CDO and their direct reports. Some campuses also have diversity committees that are both responsible for DEI goals (Williams 2013). Diversity committees do expand responsibility beyond a single leader or office, but often these committees lack meaningful power and accountability, as well as the ability to hold others accountable for the work.

Expansion of Accountability to Leaders at All Levels

In an SEL environment, leaders at all levels and across multiple functional areas are held accountable for equity goals—not just a CDO or a diversity committee. While campuses in our study had different ways of defining precisely who was accountable for which equity goals, we noted numerous examples of how leaders whose roles are not DEI-specific were both responsible and accountable for DEI work. For example, one campus identified specific equity goals that each member of the president's cabinet was accountable for (e.g., provost, chief financial officer, chief student affairs officer) and then monitored progress on those goals in annual performance reviews. Faculty were also held accountable for DEI work in their promotion and tenure reviews, as we describe in more detail later in this report. In addition to these formal systems for holding leaders across the organization accountable for equity goals, some leaders described more informal cultural expectations around accountability for DEI work stemming from leaders' personal value systems. Later in the report, we will review the creation of a culture of accountability that speaks more directly to this form of expanding accountability.

Self-Accountability

Leaders on campus also spoke about the need to hold themselves accountable; indeed, one of the values in the SEL model is self-accountability (see Figure 1). When thinking about equity as an individual leader's responsibility, faculty, staff, and administrators talked about accountability becoming something personal. They were not just accountable to boards, state systems, or even to their colleagues in their unit or within their institution, but they also held themselves accountable. Self-accountability means that one sees their own behaviors, values, and mindsets as integral to meeting goals and metrics around accountability.

Reconceptualizing the Role of Boards

While boards traditionally hold campuses accountable for a variety of institutional metrics, boards have not traditionally prioritized equity. Most board members and boards as groups do not have the skillset to guide or lead in this area, as they often ascribe to a narrow, primarily fiduciary definition of their responsibility and oversight. Thus, one of the more significant changes we observed at the campuses in our study involved boards reconceptualizing their role and including equity as a key accountability metric. Some boards even established a subcommittee that explores equity measures and regularly reviews campus work on equity. Changing the ways that boards understand equity work and hold campuses accountable was a pivotal change for campuses engaged in SEL.[3]

3 For more information and details about how boards can make equity a central part of their work, see the Pullias Center for Higher Education's Getting the Boards Involved: Considering Racial Equity at the Highest Level of University Governance project.

Accountable to Whom?

In addition to an expansion of who is accountable for DEI work, shared equity leadership (SEL) is associated with an expanded conception of who leaders and campuses are accountable to. This section first briefly describes who campuses are accountable to under traditional systems of accountability. Then, we discuss two ways of reconceptualizing who campuses are accountable to when practicing SEL: first, an expansion of traditional external accountability sources, and second, a notion of broader community accountability.

Traditional Accountability to External Groups

Traditional accountability within hierarchical and authority-based systems of leadership has typically centered on external groups. Under these traditional accountability systems, campuses were required to meet indicators set by their boards and key external stakeholders, such as state university systems or legislatures.[4] However, these indicators generally have not included equity-specific metrics. When they are included, equity-specific metrics are often narrowly defined and exclude important campus goals such as racial climate (we describe this issue more in the section Accountable for What?). Further, external groups often lack important information about campus context that could shape more effective decisions about how to measure accountability for DEI. In the next sections, we describe how campuses are instead including more campus and local community stakeholders to help both define accountability and hold campus leaders accountable for their work toward equitable campus outcomes.

Accountability to the Broader Campus Community

In terms of community accountability, leaders spoke about the need to share data about results regularly with the *campus community*, breaking the tradition of sharing accountability results mostly with external stakeholders. Instead, with community accountability, campuses review their results publicly and consider the need for changes with community input and feedback. One leader described the need for greater community accountability in sharing the impact and results of the work:

> We wanted from the very beginning to think about accountability as accountability to the community. So the reports provide one sense of accountability, in the sense that we laid out what it is that every unit is supposed to be doing, and at the end of the year, we give a report on the progress that's being made in that space. Then that information is broadcast to the entire university and beyond. So as a member of the university community, you also have the right and the opportunity to call the university out for not doing what it said it was going to do as it related to this particular issue or that particular issue. Or if there's an area that you think is not happening, you have an opportunity to engage your unit or [central administration] and say, "This is something that needs to be addressed."

SEL also builds collective accountability among units, helping them to see that they are all contributing to

4 For more information on equity concerns specific to state systems, see the *NASH Equity Action Framework*.

overall goals and that their success or failures are mutually dependent. In terms of input from the campus to the accountability system, some of the new metrics we describe later in this report emerged from forums with campus stakeholders asking for input on measuring progress.

Accountability to the Local Community

Campus leaders also described the need to share results with the local community—beyond campus boundaries—in terms of progress and the impact they were having on equity. As we start talking about what campuses are being held accountable for, we see an increase in measures of equity that involve the local community, so it seems natural that they are also a key stakeholder to which the campus should hold itself accountable. One leader spoke about the need to be accountable to the local community: "As [community members are] a key partner in this work, we share the results of our work, our progress with them. We extend accountability to those who are invested in our mission." Rutgers University–Newark noted a particular commitment to being accountable to their local civic, business, and social/community leaders. They met on an ongoing basis with these groups, worked to develop mutual goals for performance, and then reported how they were doing on student success and equity goals. This is an example of the local community directly having input on the types of metrics to which the campus is holding itself accountable.

It is important to note that one reason measures and vehicles for accountability changed was due to campus leaders embracing the ideas that emerged from the stakeholders to whom those leaders were newly accountable. By requesting more input (as well as working to meet the goals of culture change), they came to realize that their existing measures and systems were inadequate and subsequently moved to change them. These new measures for accountability are described in the next section of this report.

Institutional Equity Metrics

Typically institutional metrics or outcomes are set by external groups such as boards or state systems, and equity has not been an area where accountability metrics existed. Emerging DEI institutional metrics include areas like access and composition of students, persistence, and transfer and graduation rates disaggregated by racial/ethnic, gender, or socioeconomic subgroups (or other categories). The leaders we spoke with on the campuses we studied noted the importance of working with their boards to establish equity measures or working with their state systems to meet equity measures. On our study campuses, the development of equity measures for external accountability was a key first step (see this Education Trust report for an overview of some of recently suggested equity metrics). Being sure that data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and other social categories was noted as another foundational step to move toward equity. Too often campuses are unaware of equity gaps, as they do not disaggregate data in ways that would make such problems visible.

Accountable for What?

In order to activate culture change and hold each individual leader accountable for that change under shared equity leadership (SEL), the areas for which people will be held accountable expand. Three key areas emerged in rethinking accountability metrics. First, campuses described rethinking or expanding metrics to align with broader goals of culture change. Working toward culture change moved campuses away from thinking only about outcomes to also understanding the importance of the environment in which those outcomes occur—specifically, the experience of students and of being held accountable for the environment in which students are educated. Second, campuses expressed a need for more than institution-level metrics, moving to include multilevel metrics at unit and individual levels so accountability can be tracked further down into the organization. Third was the timeline of accountability. Campus leaders noted that under an SEL approach, the goal of culture change requires that more long-term accountability measures are emphasized and developed where previously they focused on the short term. While one timeline may be more appropriate over the other depending on the equity challenge, both are ultimately required. We close this section with some of their recommendations about reconsidering timing for following equity metrics and data.

In terms of the first area of rethinking or expanding metrics to promote culture change, campuses are looking to measure the climate, assess staff and faculty behaviors that shape the environment, and evaluate students' experience and success with processes-such as advising. Sometimes these metrics are qualitative in nature, while other times they are quantitative distillations of much more complex notions, such as climate surveys. Regardless, they require more robust and different types of data collection capacity than traditional institutional metric data. Certainly outcome metrics such as persistence and completion rates remain salient (especially those disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background, and other social identities), but campuses underscored the importance of making progress on more than just these quantitative structural measures in order to assess and ultimately change the campus environment and student experience. Campus leaders we interviewed also acknowledged that they still need to work on improving their outcome data and using it to make institutional changes.

In the second area, focused on moving beyond institution-level metrics and data to also include metrics at the unit and individual levels, leaders noted that this shift is a natural evolution in relationship to the SEL model. When accountability is primarily held by a president at the institutional level, then a set of institution-wide outcomes might be sufficient. However, as responsibility is distributed across more stakeholders, different forms of accountability become necessary to capture the work happening across the institution. The behavioral and process measures we describe in detail later in this section are notable examples of unit or individual-level accountability. By establishing both institutional and unit/individual level measures, campuses attend to the individual and collective accountability needed to realize SEL.

In this section we review these new measures (behaviors, processes, and climate) for which campus leaders are holding themselves accountable. It is important to note that details about these new measures were the most nascent or emergent area in our data. Campuses are still actively searching for new measures, so we also offer resources for campuses to consider from national organizations. This is a rapidly changing area that we imagine will be the focus of work across higher education associations in the coming years.

Resources on Metrics

- HERI provides an overview of various equity metrics campuses should consider
- University of Southern California Center for Education's Equity Scorecard
- Excelencia in Education's Seal of Excelencia Framework
- Ithaka S+R's *Measuring the Whole Student*
- "How to Measure Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" and other resources in the corporate, business, and not-for-profit communities provide information on accountability for DEI, which can help campuses and also sometimes reflect the idea of broader responsibility

Behaviors

Leaders described behavioral expectations they had of colleagues that were reinforced in hiring processes and orientation, and then included as an accountability measure in performance evaluations. These expectations and associated review processes establish a set of norms that guide the type of culture and environment campuses are trying to create. Our interviewees noted that institution-wide outcome metrics (e.g., graduation rates) are often privileged in discussions and implementation of accountability. However, they felt that behavioral accountability systems are also very important within models of SEL, as behaviors both reflect and perpetuate the culture and climate. Leaders described a need for mechanisms so that those responsible for this work (at the unit and even individual level) have a way to demonstrate their particular contributions and

results as well as their impact on larger institutional outcomes. As one interviewee noted: "I think of accountability both within self and institution—but too often only institutional accountability is focused on." The University of Michigan's Michigan Expectations Model provides an example of behavioral expectations and how they work on a campus (University of Michigan, n.d.a). Below is a list of the behaviors that individuals are held accountable for in evaluations under the Michigan Expectations Model. For example, "fostering and promoting diverse teams" is an expectation employees are held accountable for in their individual annual performance evaluations.

Mission

- Create value for the diverse communities we serve
- Create a shared vision
- Lead innovation and change

People

- Foster and promote diverse teams
- Collaborate and build inclusive relationships
- Coach and develop others

Self

- Adapt
- Act with courage and confidence
- Communicate

Execution

- Achieve results
- Solve problems
- Build positive culture

Staff at the University of Michigan talked about how the Michigan Expectations Model is used across the board to facilitate expectations during hiring and early socialization then reinforced through annual performance evaluations, as well as a guide for designing professional developmental opportunities. Further, Michigan's DEI Lifelong Learning Model lays out specific diversity-related domains and behaviors, as well as a rubric for measuring different stages of competency in awareness, practice, and modeling the behavior for others.[5]

5 Learn more about the University of Michigan's DEI Lifelong Learning Model.

Some campuses have very formal and standardized systems, like the one at the University of Michigan, while at other campuses behavioral expectations are customized and developed by leaders within particular units. While these other campuses may not have a standardized list like the Michigan Expectations Model, they were working to develop clear behavioral expectations of employees related to DEI that could be used for performance appraisals.

Processes

Campuses are also holding themselves accountable for equity-related results in a range of operational processes ranging from planning to hiring to professional development to evaluation. Firstly, planning efforts are processes that campuses held themselves accountable for. Boards look to DEI plans as mechanisms that institutions are accountable for. Many campus leaders spoke about making plans visible to external and internal stakeholders, regularly conducting assessments and recalibrating plans, as part of accountability for an intentional planning process.

For example, looking more broadly across operational processes, the University of Michigan documented that 100 percent of their schools and colleges used DEI as part of faculty annual reviews and 48 of 50 units used it in staff evaluation processes. Out of 19 units, 14 completed diversity training for their faculty search committees, and 12 of 19 schools participated in anti-racist trainings (University of Michigan 2021). At Foothill College, they are holding themselves accountable for classroom practices including culturally responsive teaching, creating anti-racist curriculum, and training about implicit bias (Foothill College, n.d.). At the University of Richmond, they are tracking processes of professional development, pedagogy, hiring, and student recruitment (University of Richmond, n.d.). Units and individuals are held accountable for the important work that contributes to outcome metrics when the results of a variety of processes like these are made visible.

In addition, all the campuses are looking at broader cross-functional processes and progress on representation, belonging, and building capacity for DEI work. One leader described this work to hold campuses accountable for their processes around meeting equity goals:

> One of the things that we're doing this year . . . is we're asking units to be reflective and to account for us, what are the ways in which they more tightly coupled or linked DEI to their institutional processes, policies, practices, and procedures? So giving us examples, whether that's embedding it into their annual faculty activity recording or their staff review process. Any number of ways that within their unit they have moved forward with the work of 'we're tightly integrating it.' And from an institutional perspective, we're doing things like . . . many of our schools have requirements that all faculty on search committees have to undergo unconscious bias . . . training.

As these examples illustrate, campus leaders are looking closely across their many campus operational processes and ensuring they are guided by equity so that they have a better chance of meeting equity outcomes.

Climate and Culture

Leaders describe the importance of measuring the climate on campus as well as within different units and departments. Solely looking at outcomes without any concern for the quality of the experience was considered to be inadequate. For example, at the University of Michigan they developed the following climate indicators institutionally, and also encouraged schools and colleges to develop their own climate measures that were important to their environment.

Climate Indicators

- Student, faculty, and staff 12-month satisfaction with the overall campus or school/college or unit climate/ environment, depending on constituency
- Student, faculty, and staff assessment of aspects of the general climate and DEI climate of overall campus or school/college or unit, depending on constituency
- Student, faculty, and staff assessment of institutional commitment to DEI
- Student, faculty, and staff feelings of sense of affirmation and academic or professional growth, depending on constituency
- Student, faculty, and staff feelings of discrimination in the prior 12 months (University of Michigan, n.d.b)

Another unit we studied within a larger campus developed its own survey with nine climate indicators that they monitor on an ongoing basis with their employees. They conducted the survey annually to assess their progress on behavioral and process outcomes. Therefore, the nine different climate measures were also used in conjunction with one another to understand overall impact. One campus leader noted how the focus on accountability for climate had progressed, and without these new measures and ongoing collection of data they would not have been able to demonstrate the impact:

> If we didn't have that measurement strategy, we wouldn't know if what we were doing was actually working. And so I think setting some concrete metrics—I mean, the university's climate survey . . . is very robust. . . . And so based on what was really important to our executive team in terms of the kind of culture and climate that we felt was just vital in our organization, we picked these nine findings that we felt were most reflective and would be the best measures to see whether we were making progress toward our vision. . . . We're not at a hundred percent yet. We do have some teams that are at a hundred percent on some of those climate metrics, which is really exciting. But organizationally, we're not, and so we still have room. But if we weren't tracking [climate] and measuring it consistently, we wouldn't know. I think that's such an important part of real change.

Climate Surveys

There are many helpful resources related to climate surveys, including:

- USC's National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates, which outlines key areas for exploration
- Explorations and evaluations of the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments Scale
- Some are focused on particular groups, such as this one from HERI related to staff
- Some best practices for administration are also offered by the Department of Justice

Campuses also noted the importance of considering another area for expanding accountability—knowledge and understanding of DEI issues. While specific measures for this area have not been developed at the campuses we studied, some had developed DEI certification programs where staff, faculty and administrators were encouraged to develop their knowledge and discussions were happening around eventually holding people on campus accountable for growing this type of knowledge.[6]

Timing

Typically, accountability has been conceptualized in short time frames to fit the needs of external groups and show more immediate results (Alexander 2000; Kelchen 2018). However, in taking a more distributed approach that is focused on deeper culture change, the leaders we spoke with described the need for longer time frames when thinking about accountability. Longer-term metrics—plans that extended to five years and beyond—were noted as critical to addressing issues of DEI that do not conform to typical short-term (a semester or year) planning cycles. Instead, leaders talked about the need to balance short-term accountability demands with longer-term cultural accountability considerations. One leader described this issue in the following way:

> [Our group] is trying to think out ahead and think bigger about getting at causes, not just symptoms. It is a hard thing to explain in the context of a culture that is go, go, go, short time cycles for solving problems, always looking for low-hanging fruit, the quick win. I think because of the turnover and the pace of higher ed and certainly here it is the case that complex problems are contorted to fit the methods for addressing them that we have and in the time cycles that we have.

It is also important to note that in some instances shorter time frames are appropriate—for example when responding to a racist incident on campus.

6 A forthcoming report in the On Shared Equity Leadership series will describe more ways that campuses are working to support and build this DEI knowledge, along with knowledge and skill for shared leadership.

How Are We Holding People Accountable?

As we have described throughout this report, traditional accountability systems usually revolve around an annual report on decided-upon institutional metrics. These accountability systems tend to be fairly simple and straightforward, with an eye to external stakeholders who have limited time and involvement.

On campuses with shared equity leadership (SEL), we saw something quite different. Instead, these campuses are establishing sophisticated systems to hold leaders accountable (individually and collectively), creating complex, iterative, and multilevel plans and implementation aimed at building a more robust system of accountability to the multiple stakeholders they currently report to. The means for accountability are now valued as much as the ends. Accountability systems have become a way to ensure that responsibility for the work is truly embraced by leaders across campus at all levels and across all units and that campus constituents are making progress on this work. The "how" of accountability is expanded in the same ways as the "who" and the "what."

Not a Typical DEI Strategic or Accountability Plan

Because SEL means broader distribution of responsibility for DEI, strategic planning processes differ in that they often list specific offices and individuals as being designated accountable for specific goals, and units are often encouraged to develop their own plans. Increasingly, we see a movement away from a single strategic plan for the overall institution to multiple plans with more detail and specific accountability pieces assigned to many different leaders.

Simply having a plan (or multiple plans) in place was not deemed sufficient to ensure accountability. At these campuses, *plans were linked to particular offices and roles*. One individual described the importance of this mapping to ensure that accountability was distributed and clear: "It actually has people's names in them, which I have not seen in other plans for the most part. Most plans have no one listed, sometimes a title or role. And our plan has people's names. . . . When you look at the document and it has your name in it, you'll react very differently than if it's just your title, [which] doesn't have a personal connection to it. [This way,] you're like, 'Oh, I'm going to be held accountable for that.'" The designation of specific people with responsibility and accountability for goals was noted as critical for making sure that SEL would be clear in terms of who is doing work and accountable for results.

At some campuses, *particular individuals were tasked with more responsibility* and therefore also accountability for DEI work. At one campus, deans of the various colleges and vice presidents of particular units fell into this category. One dean described the ways they were held accountable for DEI work: "Deans have metrics around making sure they have a diverse student body, they're recruiting a diverse student body, and they have diverse faculty and staff. And that comes up in their annual budget discussions. So, it is definitely a metric that although there's no one metric to define and to assess DEI, it's wide-ranging, but we give space for people to, they need to demonstrate what they're doing around DEI. I think that's really good about that gets to accountability." At another campus, each vice president is explicitly named in the DEI plan as accountable for very specific DEI-related goals.

Some campuses *require units to develop their own plans* that are then tracked down to the smallest unit. Especially at large campuses, having an overall plan at the institutional level was not enough to monitor responsibility down to the various units that can shape the environment (or multiple microclimates) of the campus. As a result, each unit on campus—from a school or college to an administrative unit—may be required to develop their own plan that is connected to the larger overall institutional plan to ensure alignment. Plan development at the unit or college level also allowed for customization to particular environments, so units are accountable for plans that are responsive to their own unique challenges. This customization was universally touted as advantageous for accountability, as it can be easy to discard measures developed by others if they seem misguided or potentially mismatched.

Implementation of the Plan

With SEL, leaders with varying amounts of authority played distinct roles in implementation across various levels of leadership, from central and senior administration down to decentralized, unit-level and more mid-level and ground-level leadership. In terms of implementation of plans and accountability, the *role of senior leadership in signaling that DEI work was going to be a serious issue* for deans and unit heads helped make accountability real. As one administrator noted:

> But I think the most essential thing, honestly, was having the senior leadership signal this—that this mandate came from the top. It was—the president that sent out a charge to the community. And every single campus unit was required to produce a DEI plan that was aligned with the university's goals and objectives. And so that, I think, was—that accountability piece was super important, and that it was required. It . . . wasn't an opt-in thing. Everybody had to do it. It was a mandate from the president.

Moving DEI from being optional to being everyone's work was a major change that needed to be communicated frequently by senior leaders.

One of the key issues for activating distributed accountability is conveyed through the *expectation that leaders at each level (institutional, college, and unit) are checking in constantly about the progress on plans so that plans become living documents* that staff and faculty are accountable to enact daily. Interviewees noted how ongoing dialogue and conversation drove the work. Leaders knew they would be asked about progress on an ongoing basis. As one individual described:

> Let's say you have the entire unit that is overseeing an objective and several action items, but we would identify a point person or people who were the accountable party leads who I would meet with to get general updates around where they are with their progress and action items, get a better understanding of some barriers that they might be facing, working with them to address some of those barriers, and also using as a space to just have them ask questions in general either about the process for other things happening in [our division], about things that they would like for me to connect with them about. So that model of just general check-ins, constantly bringing the work into everyone's face and making it relevant and recent, has all been really helpful in sharing the responsibility.

Similarly, at another institution an interviewee noted how leaders at all levels are always checking in on progress on plans and goals:

> The collective accountability is day-to-day. For example, [the president will] send out a message to you [and say], "We've got to do something about this." And then, you know, every couple of days it's, "So what's going on?" It's just kind of constant following up, where are we, what's the solution, what's the obstacles. Part of it is just the constant conversation, and it's the constant conversation in sort of a collective way.

In addition to having specific names on the plan, leaders described the importance of *regular reporting and a very robust tracking system* as leadership is distributed, so they can keep track of the many more moving pieces involved here than there are in a typical planning process. If employees are not regularly held accountable, it's easy for people to ignore the plan. Some planning processes have goals where the timeline for assessment extends to three, five, or seven years, which means that people can forget or overlook the goals if interim goals are not also tracked. Individuals therefore talked about the importance of having regular reporting and a very good tracking system:

> We have a pretty robust tracking system. It's an online Tableau tool, where we actually have all the leaders across our organization input all the various activities that they're doing with their teams. They put in a little description and how often they're doing it. And then we also ask them to tag the climate metrics that we're tracking, to say which of those the activity that they're doing is tied to, that they're trying to advance.

Sophisticated tracked systems also allowed for *ongoing changes in plans and to reset goals as progress is made*. They also helped to motivate employees who could see progress on goals, creating more engagement in SEL.

Leaders in one unit saw a 20 percent increase in the perceived inclusivity of their climate and could see that the work they were doing was having an impact. They could connect the impact to work done, so they could adjust their processes and amplify certain approaches. As a leader in this unit noted:

> In our work…we have created a pretty significant measurement strategy to be able to measure progress. We keep track and hold accountability for the leaders to actually do what we're asking them to do and to demonstrate what they're trying. And then we have an employee engagement survey that we do every two years. . . . so we're able to track progress over time and report back to that. We've actually seen some really significant progress, which is not only great in terms of sort of validating that what we're working on and the approach we're taking is actually moving the needle, but it's also super motivating to people. The leaders—to have that feedback that what they're doing is actually working is super helpful. We've seen double-digit increases in most of those climate scores. Well, actually, in all of those climate scores, we've seen double-digit increases. And some of them are in the 20-plus point increases.

Creating *regular forums where data and progress are reported out to the entire campus community* is another part of the strategy that engages everyone regularly in accountability processes. Engagement might involve reflecting on progress, brainstorming revised plans, or rethinking targets and goals. One leader noted the ways that public reporting served as a critical part of their accountability strategy: "The senate committee reports every month about our work to a group and then our report gets distributed across campus, so there is visibility, there is accountability. It has to be visible and goal-oriented. We've systematically publicized here's where we're at, here's where we're going, and here's what's been achieved this year." Publicly sharing progress increased the visibility and transparency of accountability, while also allowing the community as stakeholders to provide crucial input and feedback on the progress that was shared with them.

Leaders underscored how making progress public was absolutely critical to being able to ensure accountability, but some actions or consequences are necessary when a given unit does not make progress. In some cases, it might mean additional support for that unit; in others it might mean more regular follow-up on their work; and in other cases, it might mean negative consequences, such as a poor review for the leader of that unit. One leader noted this link between making work public and repercussions for lack of results:

> We wanted from the very beginning to think about accountability as accountability to the community. So the reports provide one sense of accountability, in the sense that we laid out what it is that every unit is supposed to be doing, and at the end of the year, we give a report on the progress that's being made in that space. Then that information is broadcast to the entire university and beyond. As a member of the university community, you also have the right and the opportunity to call the university out for not doing what it said it was going to do as it related to this particular issue or that particular issue. Or if there's an area that you think is not happening, you have an opportunity to engage your unit or centrally and say, "This is something that needs to be addressed."

Finally, it is important to *train staff and faculty to be able to conduct the work of accountability* in terms of collecting, interpreting, and sharing data with colleagues and, for large campuses, with their local schools/colleges/communities. For campuses to do the work of SEL, the responsibility for activating accountability systems (collecting data, interpreting data) also needs to be shared across campus. On some campuses this means that data collection happens down at the school or college level, while at others it means having faculty or staff be able to interpret and communicate data from a central office to local communities. In either case, individuals throughout campus need to be trained in the work of being data experts. Some campuses trained their DEI liaisons in each college or unit in how to collect and understand data so that they can contribute to broader accountability efforts. Other campuses have hired individuals who are solely responsible for data collection, interpretation, and dissemination related to DEI in order to support these capacities across campus.

Attaching the Plan to Performance Systems and Budgets

As noted above in the section about behavioral accountability, campuses are building performance management systems to hold people accountable for DEI work. The performance management systems can look quite different for administrators, faculty, and staff. For example, the deans of each college on a campus may be held to particular goals around hiring, promoting, and training of faculty and staff, as well as student performance, with their annual reviews tied to these goals. For faculty and staff, evaluation systems have been revised to include items related to DEI, with an expectation that employees will participate in trainings and professional development as well as lead efforts in DEI.

Faculty spoke about filling out information related to DEI goals as part of their annual evaluation and how this had changed the nature of their work: "In the faculty annual reviews there are questions about DEI work and my dean holds me accountable. So we're held accountable in lots of different ways and for different issues. . . . So it is not a one-off, but there are many different criteria I am held to."

Similarly, staff also had requirements related to DEI that they are expected to meet in annual reviews:

> We want staff, when they go through part of their annual evaluations, to be able to say that they've availed themselves to at least eight to 10 hours of DEI education and programming that's available to them on campus. And there's a wide range of things. There's seminars. There's book clubs. There's guest speakers. And we make staff aware of those, and encourage them to—we give them time, release time, so to speak, to participate in that.

One campus we studied relies heavily on their performance management system to hold senior cabinet-level leaders accountable for results. The senior leaders delegate work to others in their unit, but in the end it is the cabinet members who are held accountable in performance reviews with the president with consequences for lack of progress. As one leader described: "The senior leadership team has a performance management system [that guides equity work]. And in there, you have the goal set by your supervisor and it rolls up to the top. And every goal is designated to specific people that rolls up into—[the president], there are goals that are explicitly about equity. And so—that was very intentional on our part."

Required annual goals and reports hold individuals, groups, and units accountable for the processes that they manage. These reports are used as part of evaluation processes for the individuals and units. One administrator talked about accountability for different processes:

> So diversifying students, for example. I'm held accountable [for that] because I oversee admissions. . . . HR is held accountable in terms of staff diversity. The faculty search committees are held accountable in terms of how they conduct the search processes to recruit a more diverse faculty. So the teams of each unit are held accountable for that. So each of the processes in our plan is also mapped in terms of accountability to certain groups. And then that is part of our annual evaluation.

Another leader spoke about how DEI goals that employees are held responsible for in their evaluation each year are embedded in each role: "So enrollment management reports to me. One of the goals that I put in was recruiting to increase enrollment from [our local community] by 2 percent next year because that will increase equity. And so those kinds of goals built into each role are important for accountability." As these quotations suggest, leaders in charge of each unit are held accountable for goals through annual evaluations that actually review their progress on the stated goals and plans.

Changing Performance Systems and Budgets to Support DEI

National data show that altering tenure and promotion standards to include DEI is becoming more commonplace: "DEI criteria were found in tenure standards at 21.5 percent of institutions. . . . while there were differences among institutions based on Carnegie Classification, with 29.2 percent of doctoral institutions reporting the practice, compared to 18.5 percent and 17.9 percent at master's and bachelor's institutions, respectively, the largest difference was by size, with 45.6 percent of large institutions reporting having DEI criteria in tenure standards, compared to 15.5 percent and 14.5 percent at medium-sized and small institutions, respectively" and "forty percent of institutions had provided training on implicit bias to members of promotion and tenure committees in the last five years" (AAUP 2022).

It is important to note that a few campuses have comprehensively implemented DEI into their performance systems for faculty; learn more about IUPUI's success with changing their promotion and tenure standards.

Diversity statements have been added to the University of California system personnel handbook, another example of placing more value on DEI work and rewarding it as part of faculty work.

While including DEI in performance systems is still relatively rare, campuses are including DEI more readily in processes related to performance management, such as hiring.

The Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute at the University of Wisconsin–Madison has a set of resources to advance equity and diversity in hiring, retention, and promotion.

In addition to performance systems, campuses are also considering how to build accountability into budget processes. Campuses have had discussions about tying funding to performance in DEI measures. While campuses have not implemented such measures to date, it is part of their long-term plans of accountability. Some campuses have begun requiring that DEI goals be clearly articulated in budget requests from individual units, and leaders of these units must provide rationale for how these funds will be used to meet DEI goals. As one participant noted:

> What I have liked about what [our campus] has done is that they've embedded the DEI request as part of their budgetary ask, which I think is a good thing. In the budgets you have to identity how much money you need for particular DEI things

> and it's part of the process. And I think that's important because nothing's worse than having a position for a thing, but one not giving anybody the authority to do anything or the budget to do anything. So I think by the way that they're trying to embed it in the fabric of everything is really good.

Boards

Ultimately, as noted in earlier sections of this report, boards are responsible and accountable for the success of the institution; therefore, they become a key group in the implementation process of SEL as well. Campuses in our study actively involved their boards with their DEI efforts (see also Morgan, LePeau, and Commodore 2022; Rall 2020). In addition to the presidents of each institution committing to make DEI issues a part of the board agenda, they also created an infrastructure to support the board work in this area, usually a board subcommittee focused on DEI. Boards were responsible for approving and monitoring DEI plans at each of these campuses. The degree to which the board embraced its role in accountability for DEI shaped the culture of urgency and commitment. Board commitment could also be a challenge, however, especially at colleges where alumni are deeply connected to Greek life and often loath to commit to action that would change culture in this sphere, where there is often active racism and sexism.

The Association of Governing Boards has several useful resources on board roles (more information about these are included in the Other Resources section at the end of this report):

- "Increasing Diversity on the Boards of Colleges and Universities" (2020)
- *Review and Enhance Institutional Policies Related to Campus Climate, Inclusion, and Civility* (2016)
- "Trustees Need to Address Racism" (2020)

A Culture of Accountability

Campuses emphasized accountability as a formal process, but spoke almost as often about accountability as needing to be part of their culture. They leaned on the values and practices in the SEL model (see Figure 1) as a way to activate this new culture that supported accountability. The values emphasized in SEL around *transparency*, for example, helped to support data sharing, a focus on results, and holding each other accountable for progress. The importance of *communication and setting expectations* ensured ongoing conversations about equitable outcomes and processes. It took *courage* and *humility* to acknowledge and own institutional flaws, equity gaps, and mistakes in the process of equity work. It also took *honesty*, *vulnerability*, and *comfort with being uncomfortable* to have the conversations with campus leaders' teams and community about what did not go well, what role individuals played in it, and what an individual and their team should have done differently to reset the approaches and goals. These values and practices were emphasized in accountability in the SEL model because of the unsettled, elusive nature of tackling equity issues collaboratively, when not a single perspective or solution is certain and complete and the work and responsibilities are shared. As we described in an earlier section of the report, the value of *self-accountability* was invoked to guide people toward professional development so they could have a greater impact and make progress on outlined goals.

Everyone's participation was expected, and they saw how their day to day actions either supported or detracted from meeting goals. This quotation captures how campus leaders saw an evolution in their colleagues toward self-accountability:

> I think that you can see an awareness for them has been—not awoken—that's too dramatic of a word—but like they're developing this awareness to realize that they can make a difference in collaboration with others on some of these issues that maybe they didn't feel like they had ownership of before. And also how critical they are to making a difference. That by not being at the table fully and knowing that they have a role to play that they actually hinder the ability for an institution to move because you've got to have a set of leaders that have responsibility for all the different parts of this place—working together and in sync in order to move forward.

While this collective expectation or culture of accountability was not formally measured and looked different for every leader, it was equally as important as the formal processes that contributed to progress made on DEI goals.

Some of the accountability mechanisms helped to foster a culture of accountability. For example, the Michigan Expectations Model set out norms for interacting that both support an equitable and inclusive environment and respect diversity. Campus members are hired with these in mind, socialized that these are expectations for behavior, and then given feedback based on these expectations. These norms provide a way to guide self-accountability.

Challenges and Tensions to Modifying Accountability Systems in SEL

As we alluded to earlier in this report, leaders encountered some challenges as they shaped and built systems of distributing accountability. Some of these challenges are not inherently embedded in the activity of distributing accountability, but became more prevalent as a result of these new approaches. Campuses may want to think about these issues as they engage and develop their own shared accountability system.

Challenge One

The first challenge described was that *people may orient toward easy-to-achieve, short-term goals rather than more difficult long-term and cultural efforts* when specific goals are connected to particular individuals. One leader we interviewed described this challenge:

> And so you're put in this position [where] we kind of have to choose. You're either going to sort of fail according to their metrics that are established essentially in this highly structured way, but [if] you ignore that, that's going to kind of end up on the

> lose column when you're being graded. Or you have to then choose what are things that you can definitely check off on the win column that you know that they're going to be less ambitious and less impactful.

Some individuals offered suggestions for addressing this issue by creating smaller subgoals in the short term that could lead to larger-scale cultural changes:

> If you are able to kind of break up your issue that you were tackling over a three to five year timeline in your head, then you can articulate it that way. And that—I think it's been sort of our success in balancing those two tensions. So if you read our plans you will see a lot of—we will consider, or we will explore, or we will investigate. And then the following year—or we will do a needs assessment. Right? So the needs assessment can be done within a year. But our real objective is not to do the needs assessment; our real objective is to address systemic ableism by our institution. And so biting off what you can reasonably chew in a single year so that when you report on these evaluation tools you can honestly and transparently say that you achieved the objective for the year. But you know that you're trying to do something much more ambitious. So I know that this tension creates a lot of anxiety for some of my counterparts on campus, where something is no, you didn't achieve it that year and it is seen as a failure.

Balancing short-term and long-term goals and progress forward is an area of continued work as we sort out accountability in a shared environment.

Challenge Two

A second challenge around accountability is the *orientation to emphasize simplistic processes or behaviors that can be identified and tracked easily over complex processes/measures such as climate change* that are harder to move on. Some described accountability for only activities (e.g., multicultural celebration events) or outputs (e.g., retention) when there is a need for both. One leader described this dilemma: "We had about 420 or so events and activities that happened last year; 175 were specifically DEI-focused activities, and there's a lot of activity going on that people report, but does that mean we are making any changes?" Individuals in our study cautioned that the type of data collected should be expanded to include processes and behaviors and to ensure that these are balanced with outputs and outcomes.

Challenge Three

A third challenge was *faculty role structures and rewards*. The autonomy that faculty typically enjoy as a part of their role made establishing accountability measures specifically for them challenging for some campuses. We found that performance systems are more likely to be attached to administrators and staff, with faculty often lagging behind in terms of accountability systems. At one campus struggling with including their faculty in the accountability system, a staff member made the following comment: "That constant collaboration and focus on outcomes, which leads to accountability, is just not there [with faculty]. . . . what are they doing individually in their course to support equity, is really what we need to be talking about but [we] can't get there." Reexamining faculty work structures and rewards to make it easier for them to participate in the work is important. The work campuses are doing on performance systems is one way to address this.

Challenge Four

Fourth, there were also *concerns about the way data might be used punitively* against individuals. As we've established, campus stakeholders know that metrics are important and people should be held accountable for them. However, as accountability extends through distributed leadership, campus constituents raised issues about when assessments might be used in formative and developmental ways to help faculty or staff change, as opposed to being used in summative ways related to an evaluation.

Campus leaders described the importance of separating out these different forms of data use and metrics and being careful to communicate these distinct purposes of learning versus accountability. One of the leaders we spoke with described how equity gaps were being examined in relation to classroom performance and faculty teaching. Faculty raised concerns about comparisons among instructors that were leading to problematic distinctions, such as being labeled as racist if students are not performing in a course: "And that gets framed, as 'Oh, yeah, there's exactly how institutional structural racism shows its head by resisting.' And it sort of becomes caught up with a rhetoric rather than really saying, 'What's going on here? What's really at the heart of it [lack of student performance]?'"

Campuses need to start with a discussion about the ways data can be used in both formative (improvement) and summative (accountability) ways.[7] Yet this is not to say that campuses should not explore consequences

7 This challenge is very similar to those experienced within the assessment movement. See the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment's resource for a similar issue and a way to address the challenge.

for those who are not performing up to standards or who repeatedly lack progress on accountability metrics. This tension is a complex one that will require thoughtful and deliberate planning to resolve.

Challenge Five

A fifth challenge that emerged was related to *conflicting perspectives around motivations* to do the equity-based work. Some people believe that not everyone should be held accountable for DEI. They felt that people should be internally motivated and not pushed into doing the work, because if it is an expectation of the institution and its leaders the work will not be authentic. This concern was also present when thinking about incentivizing and rewarding people for being involved with DEI work. The challenge of thinking there should be no incentives and people should be internally motivated was described by a staff member:

> If [the college] is going to pay you, like, a $750 stipend or a $1,000 stipend, or give you professional growth units or a course release to really, really, really revamp your course to focus on DEI or learn something new or do some research or whatever that is—if that [reward] is something that that entices you and you end up becoming a better instructor for it, or a better administrator or a better staff person who can better serve our students and have that equity piece at the forefront of your mind a little more frequently, to me, that's the goal. We are doing workshops where you pay people just to show up for the one hour to learn how to use a cool new syllabus platform. We're doing that, but some people criticize us for this approach.

Campuses would benefit from having discussions about the need for people to learn and grow, the value of authentically doing DEI work, and whether incentives should be offered. Many campuses ultimately did offer incentives, but airing concerns around these issues is important.

Challenge Six

Sixth, many people that we spoke with expressed c*oncerns about whether traditional DEI accountability metrics can truly measure the desired culture changes*. Even as they expanded to behavioral, process, and climate metrics, there was this ongoing concern that we are falling short and not measuring the right things. One of our participants discussed this challenge:

> For me, the levers to get there are not dumbed-down requirements that we force on people and let them check a box and move away. I just want to think about accountability differently. I really do. I want to think about what institutional accountability means, and what it means to instantiate a practice of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging that we're all practicing all the time, and that we're all explaining when harm is done, and that we're all trying to repair. That it's a practice. And what would it mean if we were all—faculty, staff, and students—to make sure we're all in the practice of this work? Because checking boxes does nothing. It doesn't make anything different. It doesn't make anything better, except you get to say 100 percent of your people went through this training.

This is what makes having various forms of accountability in place—behavioral, process, climate—important. Complex accountability measures and systems have the potential for moving beyond superficial changes toward culture change. But campus leaders cautioned that vigilance was necessary to both examine existing measures and continue to imagine better ones. All sensed that higher education does not have the right system in place yet.

Challenge Seven

Seventh, as noted in the introduction, there were various individual campus leaders who *struggled to understand the differences between responsibility and accountability*. When leadership is more broadly distributed, individuals are engaged who may not have had experience with formal campus accountability systems in the past. Some leaders believed that creating systems of responsibility then meant they had accountability, and there were no accompanying mechanisms to check on impact or results. Having discussions about the differences and connections between responsibility and accountability is important to properly set clear expectations and have a well-functioning accountability system.

Challenge Eight

Eighth, some described how creating a new system creates *challenges of educating administrators, faculty, and staff on that system*—for longtime employees entrenched in a system, this can mean a lot of unlearning. So even as campuses develop a more robust accountability system, if the system is not largely understood across the large number of individuals now responsible for DEI, then the plan may not be executed well. Systems are often not well-communicated campus wide, clearly understood or consistently followed. We saw efforts to educate employees but this will remain an ongoing tension as accountability systems continue to evolve and shift.

Challenge Nine

Finally, some leaders noted a *challenge when external groups such as state systems quickly provide support for equity and expect accountability*, but don't allow campuses time to develop their infrastructure for accountability. One administrator described this challenge of not having time to educate their community and get people on board, particularly in a process during which broad responsibility and accountability are desired: "Equity—it just happened, I wouldn't say happened overnight, but all this money started coming from the state like, hey, you folks need to do equity and be accountable for it. But we didn't have the time to get prepared." And others described how unions and collective bargaining agreements can make changes to accountability challenging, especially if agreements are already set for several years with no flexibility to make changes.[8] Meeting with external stakeholders early on to set or negotiate realistic expectations for accountability timelines and providing progress reports along the way is key.

8 The California legislature established the Student Equity and Achievement (SEA) Program in 2021 with the purpose of supporting California Community Colleges (CCC), the largest community college system in the nation, in implementing initiatives that advance system goals by eradicating achievement gaps for traditionally underrepresented groups through student equity plans.

Conclusion

Shared and distributed models of leadership within business and government have struggled to rethink the work of accountability. As we transition DEI leadership in higher education to less hierarchical forms, we also need to rethink these other structures to be able to support new and more collaborative forms of work. The work of equity also brings important nuance and tensions to the work of accountability—figuring out how to share work and allow people space to learn, ensuring the work is authentic, deciding whether work should be mandated so that all are formally accountable for DEI, and being accountable for the right measures so that progress is real and not performative are just some of the tensions that emerged in our study.

Campuses are navigating these tensions, building these new accountability systems, and measuring progress. Now is an ideal time for philanthropic interests and state and federal governments to step in and help campuses with this work. We need to build more capacity when it comes to accountability in SEL environments. Philanthropic organizations have been asking higher education for a commitment to scaled culture change, but there needs to be more investment in building more sophisticated planning and accountability systems (as well as capacity building—to be addressed in upcoming reports) to do this well so that campuses have a better framework of accountability to support their new SEL work.

As we know from past efforts at accountability, having accountability systems in place doesn't always mean that campuses are making adequate progress on DEI goals. Campuses need support for developing and capturing best practices in implementing accountability systems—not just designing them.

Accountability Toolkit

Reflecting on Campus Accountability

Directions: The following questions are designed to help leaders as they begin to rethink accountability structures on campus. Use the reflection column to write your responses to the questions.

Questions	Reflection
What current DEI metrics are in place on our campus?	
Are there new DEI metrics we may want to consider—behavioral, process, or climate?	
To whom are DEI metrics communicated? Who has input on metrics? How are they tracked? What is the role of the board with our metrics? Community members? State, regional, and local leaders? Are there new groups that should be included?	
How do senior leaders signal the importance of the accountability plan? How could—or should—they do this differently?	

How are DEI metrics tracked? How often? By whom? Who is assigned accountability? How might the system be more iterative with regular check-ins or monitoring points?	
How are equity progress and outcomes communicated? By whom? With whom? Are there new groups that should be included? How might sharing of progress and results be improved?	
Are accountability plans developed at multiple levels of the campus? Specify here.	
Are specific people assigned accountability for metrics? Who? How might more groups or individuals be included?	
How are plans operationalized? How are data and measures tracked? Are regular forums held to share data?	

How are people trained in the new accountability system? How are we building people's capacity to enact the accountability system?	
How is the budget process aligned with DEI metrics? Specify here. If not, how might we envision it?	
How are the performance systems aligned with DEI metrics? Specify here. If not, how might we envision them?	
How might we move toward a culture of accountability?	

Addressing Tensions

Tensions can arise when developing a more robust accountability system. Use the space below to consider ways that the team can proactively address these potential tensions:

- **Balancing short-term and long-term goals**

- **Balancing process or behavior measures with other measures that are harder to make progress on**

- **Adjusting faculty role structures and rewards and having budget or policies to do so**

- **Addressing concerns about how data might be used in punitive ways**

- **Navigating conflicting perspectives around motivations to do the equity-based work**

- **Using traditional DEI accountability metrics or exploring new ones that can truly measure the desired culture changes**

- **Struggling to understand the differences between responsibility and accountability**

- **Addressing external circumstances, such as funding tied to unrealistic timelines or unions that may prevent sharing responsibility for SEL**

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Other Resources

"AGB Board of Directors' Statement on Governing Board Accountability for Campus Climate, Inclusion, and Civility" (Association of Governing Boards)

"Forum: Trustees Need to Address Racism" (Association of Governing Boards)

"Increasing Diversity on the Boards of Colleges and Universities" (Association of Governing Boards)

NASH Equity Action Framework (National Association of System Heads)

NERCHE Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education (New England Resource Center for Higher Education)

A New Decade for Assessment: Embedding Equity into Assessment Praxis (National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment)

A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration (Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy)


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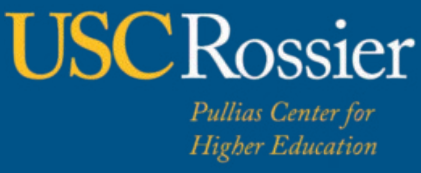
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