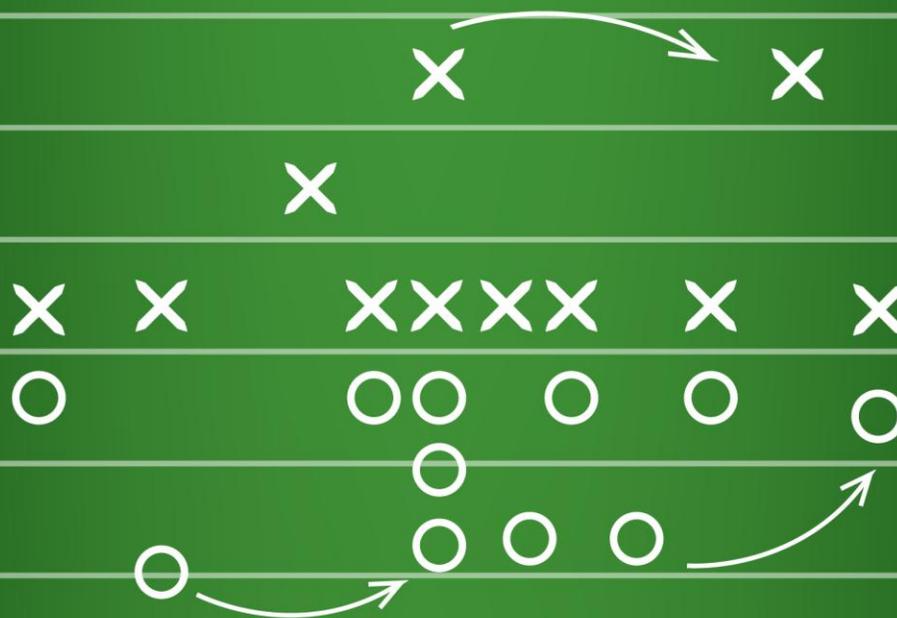


# THE PLAYBOOK

A Guide to Assist Institutions of Higher Education in  
Evaluating Race- and Ethnicity-Neutral Policies in  
Support of the Mission-Related Diversity Goals



OCTOBER 2014

*Arthur L. Coleman, Teresa E. Taylor, and Katherine E. Lipper*



### **Acknowledgements**

The Playbook was significantly enhanced by the contributions of many researchers, practitioners, and other higher education leaders, most of whom are cited in the endnotes and recommended reading boxes. Special thanks goes to the ADC's Advisory Council, which provided significant guidance throughout the development of the Playbook.

### **About the College Board's Access & Diversity Collaborative**

The Playbook was prepared on behalf of the College Board's Access & Diversity Collaborative by EducationCounsel LLC. Since its establishment in the wake of the landmark University of Michigan U.S. Supreme Court decisions in 2004, the Collaborative has established itself as the "go to" resources on policy, practice, legal and strategic guidance to colleges, universities, and state systems of higher education to support their independent development of their mission-based diversity goals and their strategies to achieve them. Building on the success of its first decade, the Collaborative pursues three core functions: (1) a voice of national advocacy; (2) a resource for sophisticated and pragmatic policy and practice guidance; and (3) a convenor for thought leadership and collaborative engagement on policy and practice development.

The Collaborative is sponsored by a dozen national higher education organizations and a diverse group of more than 40 public and private colleges and universities. For more information on the Collaborative, please contact Brad Quin ([bquin@collegeboard.org](mailto:bquin@collegeboard.org).) and visit the ADC website: <http://diversitycollaborative.collegeboard.org/>.

### **About EducationCounsel**

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*Please note:*

*The Playbook is intended for informational and policy planning purposes only and does not constitute specific legal advice. Legal counsel should be consulted to address institution-specific legal issues.*

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## A Note from the Authors

We are pleased to provide you with the Playbook, developed by the College Board's Access and Diversity Collaborative. This work is the product of several years' research and collaboration with enrollment experts and higher education leaders who have helped inform the structure and substance of this resource. We hope that this resource will be helpful to colleges and universities as they continue their quest to recruit, admit, and educate students who make up a robustly diverse campus community and who contribute powerfully to the education of their peers (and their instructors).

The Playbook represents our best effort to synthesize relevant research and practice on race-neutral strategies to inform and guide institutional deliberations regarding diversity-related enrollment policies and practices. There are no silver bullets here – and, to continue the Playbook's sports theme, no miracle "hail Mary" passes or grand slam home runs. But these key resources should be helpful in focusing conversations among enrollment teams and enhancing deliberations by providing a brief overview of the many options available.

Before you dive in, we would like to share a few perspectives relevant to the material presented:

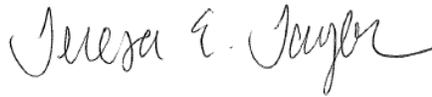
- 1. The Playbook is designed to inform – not to dictate – institutional judgments.** We aimed to present balanced, grounded information for each play, drawing from a variety of perspectives, research projects, and institutional experiences. And we've pointed to the relevant research foundations to which you may turn for further analysis. In that vein, we have distinguished as clearly as we can what we know (or can reasonably glean from sources) from what we don't know. There is no perfect body of information anywhere that would or should dictate conclusions without attention to the highly relevant context surrounding research conclusions. As a consequence, you will not find many (if any) categorical pronouncements in this resource – we designed the Playbook as a starting point for institution-specific analysis, not the end point.
- 2. Relevant research studies included in the Playbook may be of limited value, but are nonetheless important.** While there are exceptions, research efforts in many cases appear to be more focused on making a case about the wisdom (or not) of a particular race-neutral strategy considered in isolation, rather than fully articulating the fact- and policy-specific contexts in which a particular policy may achieve its intended goals – or how one strategy can and should interact with others. That said, core conclusions reflected in the research can serve as important foundations for devising effective and legally sustainable policies.
- 3. The Playbook may help institutions realize multiple benefits.** We recognize that the work of enrollment officials is highly complex given numerous distinct institutional aims are likely to be at play in any enrollment policy – something public dialogue does not always recognize. Thus, there are many objectives and benefits that may be relevant to the particular race-neutral plays discussed in this resource. For example, racial and ethnic diversity may well be a secondary benefit that comes with consideration of factors associated with socio-economic status, first generation students, or particular geographic areas. (Notably, nothing in federal law precludes, or makes more challenging, authentically neutral efforts that may enhance racial and ethnic diversity as a secondary benefit.) Similarly, and more broadly, efforts advancing admission of first generation students to achieve diversity goals are likely to complement broad-based access efforts.

Correspondingly, we hope that the Playbook helps inform discussions regarding legal compliance. After all, today's increased attention to neutral strategies has a legal origin: the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, which emphasized the consideration and use of race-neutral strategies when higher education institutions pursue race- or ethnicity-conscious measures. Thus, for those institutions, understanding federal law is a key foundation for good policy development. And the key legal questions can only be sufficiently answered in light of what the relevant policy and research landscape tells us.

This resource is one that we expect will evolve, in concert with institutional experiences and relevant research over time. Our hope, in fact, is to transform this static resource into an evolving one that, with an expanded set of plays, continues to provide meaningful, actionable information that can inform enrollment decisions among higher education officials.



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*October 2014*

## Introduction and Overview

The 21<sup>st</sup> century presents a host of new challenges and opportunities for institutions of higher education as they pursue mission-based, diversity-related goals. Changing demographics, pressures related to access and affordability, and shifting workforce demands – and, yes, the evolving legal landscape – necessitate deliberate policymaking that incorporates clear goal-setting, strategic action, and embedded evaluation that supports continuous improvement over time. A key step in this process involves a periodic survey of the landscape of diversity-related policies and practices – both on campus and in the field – as a foundation for making mission-driven judgments regarding particular institution-specific policies and practices to (and not to) pursue. This resource is intended to help inform those judgments.

**The Playbook is a guide to assist institutions of higher education in evaluating race- and ethnicity-neutral policies in support of the mission-related diversity goals.** This can be a daunting task, and institutions should not have to chart their course in isolation from the experience and lessons of others. Thus, the Playbook is designed to help institutions understand, comprehensively, many of the leading race-neutral strategies that have been adopted in higher education settings, with a principal focus on those with some evidence of impact and effectiveness.

The plays in the Playbook reflect the wide array of leading race-neutral strategies that an institution may consider and employ as part of its broader efforts to achieve its mission-based diversity goals. With a research-based analysis and focus on real-world examples, the Playbook catalogues many of the race-neutral strategies ("plays") that have been adopted in various higher education settings, including both "individual" plays – student characteristics, experiences, and skills that contribute to diversity – and "institutional" plays – institutional strategies and actions that can enhance student diversity.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Playbook . . .**

- ✓ **IS a resource to help institutions understand the array of options related to race-neutral strategies**
- ✓ **IS a collection of different resources and research findings**
- × **IS NOT a substitute for inherently institution-specific judgments on whether (or not) to pursue certain policies and practices.**
- × **IS NOT a pro forma checklist or a substitute for an institution's own review of neutral strategies in light of its unique mission and goals**
- × **IS NOT intended to represent new research**

For this first iteration of the Playbook, we selected those plays that appear to be among the most common, have some evidence of effectiveness, and have concrete examples to illustrate how they work in practice. The plays do reflect overlapping themes and elements. For example, though no "distance traveled" play is included here, the concept is embedded in discussion of socio-economic status (especially the discussion of the University of Colorado – Boulder's "disadvantage" and "overachiever"

indices), geographic diversity, and first generation students. Though other organization schemes for the plays are possible, our aim was to provide as clear a distinction for each play as possible.

And, just as a coach's playbook for a sports team requires significant practice and conversation to ensure that plays are executed as intended, the Playbook is intended to trigger robust inquiries and conversations among relevant enrollment officials charged with establishing, implementing, and evaluating institution-specific diversity-related policies. It is not intended to offer simple, cookie cutter solutions to highly context- and fact-based challenges that require institutional focus, analysis and deliberation in light of institutional goals.

**Notably, the Playbook is designed for all higher education institutions pursuing diversity goals—including those that may also pursue race- and ethnicity-conscious strategies as a complement to their race-neutral efforts. For those institutions, in particular, the Playbook is also intended to assist with federal compliance requirements.** To that end, a brief primer on key legal and policy considerations associated with race-neutral strategies (with a focus on requirements under the "strict scrutiny" framework) follows this section. It closes with a case study of a recent resolution agreement between the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and Rice University, which addressed in significant ways the use and impact of race-neutral strategies in light of Title VI federal obligations applicable to virtually all colleges and universities.

#### **Recommended Reading from the ADC on Race Neutral Strategies and Diversity Policies Generally**

**Arthur L. Coleman, Scott R. Palmer, & Steven Y. Winnick, *Race-Neutral Policies in Higher Education: From Theory to Action* (College Board 2008),** [http://diversitycollaborative.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/document-library/race-neutral\\_policies\\_in\\_higher\\_education.pdf](http://diversitycollaborative.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/document-library/race-neutral_policies_in_higher_education.pdf).

This guidance provides highlights key, operationally relevant principles that should guide institutional policy development and implementation related to race neutral policies, based on relevant law and lessons learned through practice.

**THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (ed. Richard Kahlenberg) (Lumina Foundation and Century Foundation 2014),** <http://tcf.org/assets/downloads/FOAA.pdf>.

This volume includes chapters from a variety of authors on the current state efforts to promote racial, ethnic, and economic inclusion at selective institutions, including a discussion of the legal challenge, research on promising race-neutral strategies, different state experiences, and public policy approaches. Arthur Coleman and Teresa Taylor contributed a chapter ("Emphasis Added: Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin and Its Practical Implications for Institutions of Higher Education") that provides a thorough analysis of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Fisher* and its practical implications for institutions, with a close examination of the Court's language related to legal requirements related to race neutral strategies.

## Foundations for Using the Playbook

With these key legal and policy considerations in mind, discussion moves into the plays themselves. The analysis, examples, and research presented should help institutions understand what options are available, what elements are embedded in effective policy design, and in what settings options are most likely (or unlikely) to be effective. More specifically, the Playbook addresses the following sets of questions regarding each play:

1. What kinds of institutions tend to use this strategy? What leading examples of success exist?
2. What conditions (including necessary investments) should likely be present to maximize this strategy's likely success?
3. What initial questions and prospective roadblocks should be considered as this strategy is considered?

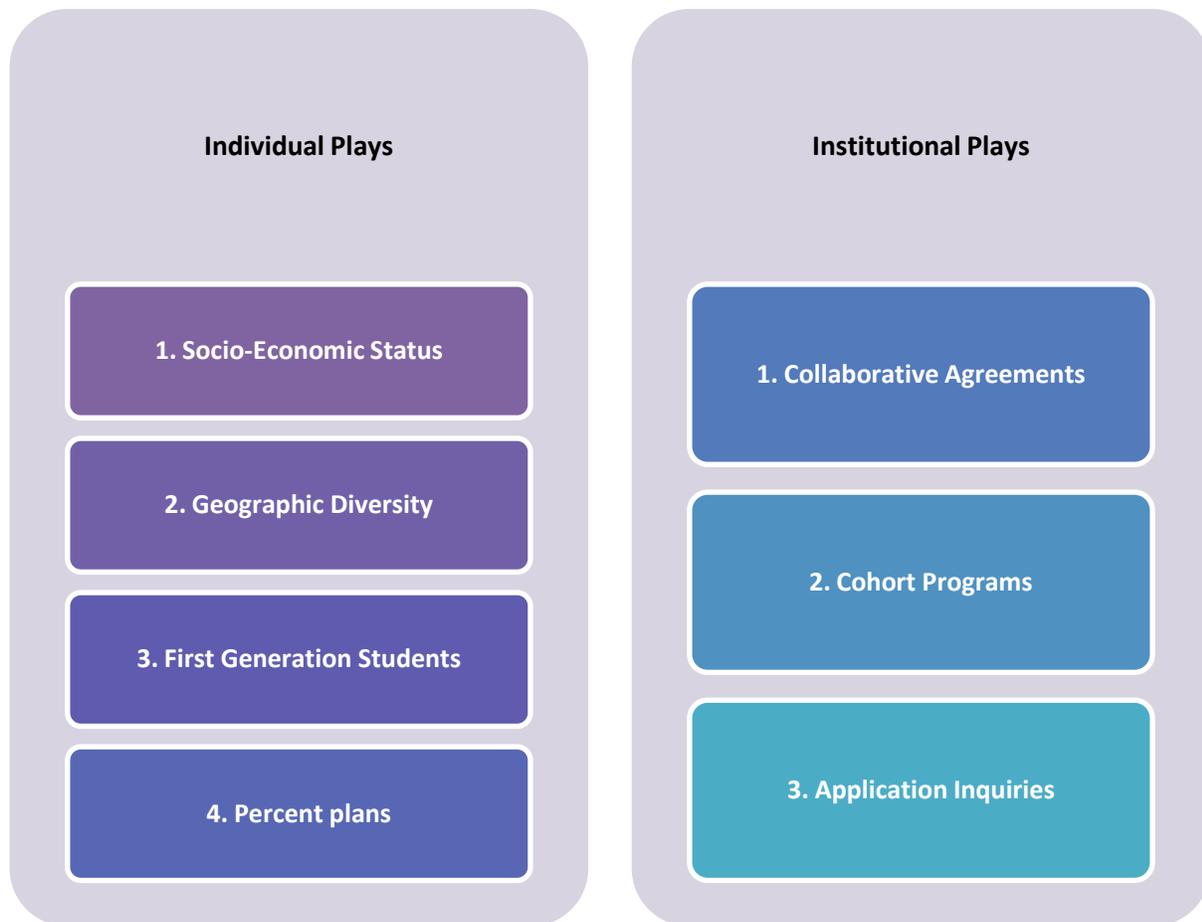
The plays are grouped into the following enrollment strategy and action segments:

**Individual Plays** address the individual qualities, characteristics, experiences, and skills of applicants or potential applicants (other than race or ethnicity) that institutions of higher education may seek. The Playbook includes specific discussion for: socio-economic status, geographic diversity, generation students, and percent plans. As a reflection of effective enrollment management, the Playbook includes considerations for each individual play related to:

- **Outreach** – the broad provision of general college information or pre-college academic enrichment to prospective applicants and students, including through academic support programs in middle and high schools, weekend and summer enrichment opportunities, and motivational and family support programs.
- **Recruitment** – efforts to highlight institution-specific features to prospective students to attract an applicant pool with the desired qualifications and background characteristics. Recruitment activities not only build an awareness of an institution, but also increase confidence in students who might otherwise believe that a university or college is out of their reach.
- **Admission** – the considerations that go into a holistic, individualized review of prospective students' applications in order to admit students to an institution. Admissions involve attention both to individual student applicants and to the entire incoming class composition.
- **Financial aid and scholarships** – grants, scholarships, and loan programs to attract students to an institution and help them be able to afford tuition and associated costs, including living expenses, instructional materials, room and board, and insurance and health care.
- **Retention** – programs for enrolled students focused on building skills and creating an inclusive campus community to promote academic achievement and postsecondary completion.

**Institutional Plays** refer to the neutral strategies an institution of higher education may pursue that require broader change within an institution. These plays can contribute to the achievement of an institution's diversity goals, and also create structures that may improve access and completion. The Playbook includes specific discussion on collaborative agreements among institutions to create pathways for students and cohort programs.

Just as a coach never covers every play in the playbook in a single game, an institution is unlikely to use all of the strategies presented in this Playbook at any one time. And, just as a coach may shift strategy from game to game, so may an institution change its diversity strategies over time as part of its period review process (an element of effective policymaking and, for race-conscious policies, a legal requirement). (Indeed, we hope to update the Playbook as the picture of race-neutral strategies continues to evolve and lessons emerge from new research and experience.)



## Different "Leagues" in the Law: *Practice Pointers for Institutions Pursuing Race-Conscious Practices*

### A. An Overview of Different "Leagues"

College and universities pursuing diversity goals inhabit two different "leagues" with respect to the law, based on the means by which they seek to achieve their diversity goals:

- ◆ **Some institutions pursue race- and ethnicity-neutral policies in concert with race- and ethnicity-conscious policies.** These schools must follow federal "strict scrutiny" rules that, though triggered by their consideration of race and ethnicity as factors in enrollment policies,<sup>2</sup> also bear on the process and underlying substance related to their consideration of race-neutral strategies.
- ◆ **Other institutions pursue only race- and ethnicity neutral strategies,** either as a matter of institutional choice or pursuant to state mandates that prohibit public actors from certain race- and ethnicity- conscious practices. The federal "strict scrutiny" rules likely do not apply for these institutions.

To draw the lines between the leagues, it is essential to understand the difference between "race-conscious" and "race-neutral." Generally, race-conscious policies are those that: (1) involve explicit racial classifications as well as those that may be neutral on their face but are sufficiently motivated by a racial purpose; *and* (2) confer material benefits or opportunities to individual students to the exclusion of others. In contrast, race-neutral policies are those that, with respect to both language and intent, confer no benefit associated with individuals' race or ethnicity. As described in the Playbook, race-neutral strategies can include a wide variety of policies and practices, including the use of factors other than race and ethnicity when making decisions about individual students (such as in admissions) and broader programmatic efforts employed at an aggregate level (such as developing pipeline partnerships).<sup>3</sup>

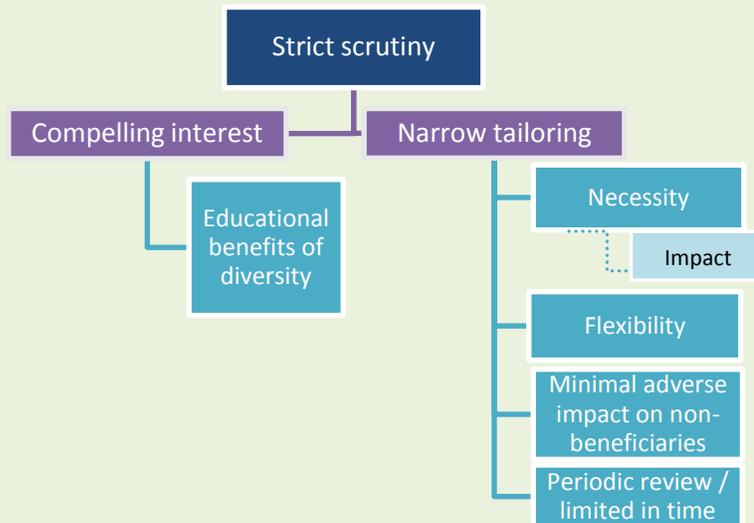
Race-conscious and race-neutral policies – though they trigger different levels of scrutiny by reviewing courts<sup>4</sup> – should not be considered and evaluated in isolation. Institutions should not approach their diversity policies as an "either-or" when it comes to race-neutral and race-conscious policies – the most effective policies likely involve "both-and." Institutions should consider the full array of enrollment strategies and how different policies affect and interact with each other, all in the context of the institution and its mission-driven diversity goals. And, though institutions can and should learn from one another's experience with race-neutral strategies, each institution must identify its own blend of race-neutral and (when appropriate) race-conscious policies needed to achieve the educational benefits of diversity in its unique campus environment.

## A Primer on Strict Scrutiny for Race-Conscious Enrollment Practices

If a policy qualifies as race-conscious and is challenged in court, it will trigger the most rigorous type of judicial review – "strict scrutiny."<sup>5</sup> (Strict scrutiny should not apply, though, to policies and practices that are authentically inclusive and do not exclude individual students from a benefit or opportunity based on their race or ethnicity.) For an institution to meet the strict scrutiny test, it must establish:

- ◆ **A compelling interest**, which is the end that must be established as a foundation for maintaining lawful race- and ethnicity-conscious programs that confer opportunities or benefits to students. Federal courts have recognized a limited number of interests that can be sufficiently compelling to justify the consideration of race or ethnicity in a higher education setting, including a university's mission-based interest in promoting the educational benefits of diversity among its students.
- ◆ **Narrow tailoring**, which refers to the requirement that the means used to achieve the compelling interest "fit" that interest precisely, with race or ethnicity considered only in the most limited manner possible to achieve compelling goals. Federal courts examine several interrelated criteria to determine whether a given program is narrowly tailored, including:
  - Necessity of using race or ethnicity,
  - Flexibility of the program,
  - Burden imposed on non-beneficiaries of the racial/ethnic consideration, and
  - Whether the policy has an end point and is subject to periodic review.

The Court also has considered the impact of race-conscious policies as part of a narrow tailoring inquiry in a K-12 context.<sup>6</sup> That analysis may be relevant to postsecondary education contexts as well.



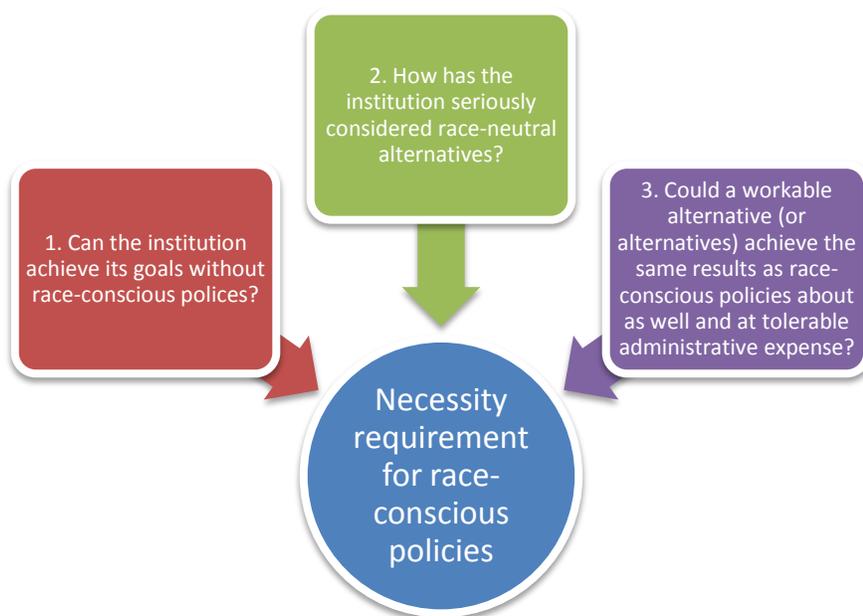
### B. Requirements for the League of Institutions Pursuing Race-Conscious Strategies

Institutions with race-conscious policies must adhere to strict scrutiny standards are required by federal law to establish the necessity of their race-conscious policies by "seriously considering" race-neutral

alternatives to those policies as they determine how to create and reap the benefits of a diverse student population on campus.<sup>7</sup> Institutions may not use race or ethnicity if a workable race-neutral strategy "could promote the substantial interest [in diversity] about as well [as the race-conscious strategy] and at tolerable administrative expense." In other words, to justify the use of a race-conscious policy or policies, institutions of higher education should be able to answer the following questions to demonstrate the necessity of those policies:

1. Can the institution achieve its goals without race-conscious policies? Why or why not?
2. How has the institution seriously considered (and, when appropriate, tried) race-neutral alternatives?
3. Could a workable alternative (or alternatives) achieve the same results as race-conscious policies about as well and at tolerable administrative expense? Why or why not?

The institution should be able to explain its answers to these questions with sufficient supporting evidence and information.



These are challenging questions, but, notably, they remain grounded in an institution's ability to incorporate its "experience and expertise" into its decision to use race-conscious strategies.<sup>8</sup> Not every race-neutral strategy will work for every institution, and no strategy will work in exactly the same way in every context. Though courts do not expect perfection from institutions seeking to achieve mission-based diversity goals, they do expect that an institution choosing to use race-conscious policies to fulfill its mission-based diversity goals can show clearly why such policies are necessary. The institution must be able to show a robust effort to set meaningful goals, design appropriate policies to meet those goals, and assess those policies' performance over time. A central part of that inquiry involves consideration of race-neutral alternatives – meaning that institutions seeking to achieve the educational benefits of diversity should focus as deliberately on race-neutral practices as they do on race-conscious practices – an exercise that the Playbook is intended to help jump start.

## Making the Case: Assessing the Use of Race-Neutral Strategies under Title VI

Each institution's experience with and perspective regarding race-neutral strategies should be uniquely its own; but institutional judgments regarding the plays to (and not to) pursue can be informed by the experience of others—particularly in cases involving issues of federal compliance. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights [OCR] resolution of a complaint investigation at Rice University is one notable example.<sup>9</sup>

In September 2013, OCR reached a resolution with Rice University on its consideration of race-conscious admissions policies.<sup>10</sup> The complaint alleged that race-conscious strategies at Rice were unnecessary because, in the complainant's view, Rice was able to satisfy its diversity goals without using race-conscious policies from 1996-2003 (the period between the *Hopwood* and *Grutter* decisions<sup>11</sup>) and, therefore, had no need to reinstate them.

Relying on U.S. Supreme Court precedent (notably including *Fisher*, for the first time), OCR concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support the conclusion that Rice violated federal law with its race-conscious policies:

The conclusions drawn after Rice's serious, good-faith consideration of race-neutral alternatives supported the decision of then-President Gillis that adding race and national origin to supplement – not supplant – the existing holistic admissions process was necessary to pursue Rice's compelling interest in diversity, an interest not yet satisfied. Whether this interest had been satisfied ... in accordance with *Grutter* is not about enrollment numbers per se, but about whether the benefits of the compelling interest have been achieved.

Playing a significant role in OCR's decision was Rice's robust effort to inventory its race-neutral strategies and explain why these policies and practices, alone, were insufficient to meet its diversity goals.

Rice's efforts began with a charge from institutional leadership. Immediately after the *Grutter* decision in 2003, Rice's president convened a working group to examine the effectiveness of Rice's race-neutral policies, which concluded that neutral policies alone would not allow Rice to achieve the level of diversity it seeks, specifically because "these [neutral] efforts have not sufficiently provided the experiences and viewpoints that are often found in students from underrepresented minority groups." Rice's Board of Trustees and Faculty Council adopted separate resolutions supporting these conclusions. Rice's president then approved the reinstatement of race-conscious policies, starting in the fall of 2004; Rice would also continue to use most of the neutral strategies it had adopted.

As part of its assessment that race-neutral strategies alone would not suffice, Rice had a unique conception of critical mass, defined in terms of its learning and student living environment, placing a strong emphasis on having a diversity of voices in each of its nine residential colleges. Each residential college was a "self-contained community," each with its own dining hall, student government, club sports teams, budgets, traditions, social structures, and even unique classes for credit outside the normal departmental class schedule. Without sufficient diversity among students ("racial, ethnic, and otherwise") in each college, Rice determined that its goals related to the educational benefits of diversity could not be met. Rice also presented a comprehensive review of its race-neutral policies:

### **Outreach & recruitment**

- ◆ Emphasizing the recruitment of applicants “who have distinguished themselves through initiatives that build bridges between different cultural, racial and ethnic groups.”
- ◆ Assigning additional duties to two Assistant Admission Directors, one as Coordinator of Minority Recruitment and another as Coordinator of Hispanic Recruitment.
- ◆ Including current students on the Student Admission Council in the Office of Admissions partly to encourage prospective students with "high diversity contributions" to apply to Rice.
- ◆ Enhancing recruitment efforts for underrepresented groups, including recruitment trips to "non-feeder" high schools; direct mail efforts to underrepresented groups; participation by admission staff in community sponsored events aimed at informing underrepresented groups; partnerships with organizations such as the Urban League that serve underrepresented groups; and telemarketing to encourage students from underrepresented groups to apply.
- ◆ Operating or participating in more than 70 different outreach programs for K-12 students and teachers, including tutoring programs, summer programs, and other support for low income, first generation, or other underserved students, focusing on Houston and South Texas.
- ◆ Operating or participating in 38 programs focusing on the professional development of K-12 classroom teachers and administrators, including a large effort aimed at training high school teachers (including those in underserved school districts with high populations of minority students) to prepare their students for Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

### **Admission**

- ◆ Revising admission guidelines to include consideration of many other factors in addition to standard academic metrics such as GPA and standardized test scores: (1) potential contributions that will enrich the educational experience of all students (including contributions to Rice's residential community that "fosters creative, inter-cultural interactions, and is a place to confront and dispel prejudices"); (2) geographic, socioeconomic, and cultural origins; (3) first generation status; and (4) challenges applicant faced in life (including succeeding academically in an environment relatively indifferent to intellectual attainment).
- ◆ Expanding socioeconomic diversity within its student body, actively recruiting students from varying socio-economic backgrounds and offering a need-blind admission process (an applicant's financial needs are not considered until after admission, with the university committed to then meeting the demonstrated financial need of everyone it admits).

### **Financial aid & scholarships**

- ◆ Creating scholarship opportunities focused on students who have made efforts to help bridge racial and cultural divisions.

Rice also concluded that some neutral strategies were not workable. For example, given its relatively small student body (with freshman classes typically less than 700 students) and the competitiveness of its applicant pool, Rice concluded that a percent plan would "require sacrificing Rice's mission of providing a top quality education to a purposefully small body."

## INDIVIDUAL PLAYS

Individual Plays address the individual qualities, characteristics, experiences, and skills of applicants or potential applicants (other than race or ethnicity) that institutions of higher education may seek. The Playbook includes specific discussion for:

1. Socio-Economic Status
2. Geographic Diversity
3. First Generation Students
4. Percent Plans

Discussion for each play begins with a brief overview of what the play entails, what institutions use it, conditions for likely success, necessary investments, and questions to consider. Discussion then moves to the rationale behind the play, its potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity, relevant national context and – as a reflection of effective enrollment management – considerations for each individual play related to outreach and recruitment, admission, financial aid and scholarships, and retention. We also include recommended reading on each play.

# 1. Socio-Economic Status

## What is it?

- Socio-economic status (SES) considerations can involve a number of factors, including, most directly, applicants' financial background, including parental income and family wealth. In addition, other factors associated with SES and potential disadvantages that may have affected their academic performance.

## Who uses it?

- Institutions seeking to increase socio-economic diversity among their students.
- Public institutions that are legally barred from using race/ethnicity in admissions (through, e.g., state laws in AZ, CA, FL, MI, NE, NH, OK, WA).

## Conditions for Likely Success

- Support, from the outset, from institutional leadership, institutional counsel, financial aid staff, student and academic affairs staff, and other key institutional stakeholders
- Large, diverse applicant pool
- Careful financial aid planning and adequate financial aid for admitted students
- Monitoring and program evaluation to assess the impact of the program

## Necessary Investments

- To be maximally effective, recruiting materials should be targeted to the demographic they reach (phone calls, specialized mailings, etc.) based on research and experience
- Applications and admission materials should assess SES indicators effectively, potentially beyond income alone
- Targeted supports should be available for admitted students, particularly those groups of students who have been shown to have lower academic performance and/or lower graduation rates upon enrollment.

## Potential Roadblocks and Questions to Consider

- Studies have shown that SES preferences do not always result in significant racial/ethnic diversity, particularly at highly selective institutions – can SES preferences alone allow an IHE to meet its goals around all kinds of diversity, including both SES and race/ethnicity?
- What admissions considerations or applicant information does the institution choose to use to assess SES factors?
- Does incorporating SES considerations into admissions complicate need-blind or other financial aid policies?
- To what extent is the institution able to invest in research and targeted outreach materials?
- Do outreach methods reach students beyond magnets and "feeder" schools?

**Rationale.** An institution's consideration of student SES status when working to create a diverse student body may be particularly important today, given the widening income-related gap in access to higher education. Though college enrollment rates rose 20 percent in the U.S. between 1972 and 2007, the enrollment gap between low- and high-income students remained at about 23 percent.<sup>12</sup> The gaps by family income were particularly large in four-year college entrance, with 55 percent of the highest-income youths attending a four-year college at some point and only 29 percent of the lowest-income youths doing so.<sup>13</sup> These gaps may be especially pronounced at the most selective institutions, where one study found that just three percent of freshman enrollments came from the lowest SES quartile.<sup>14</sup>

**Potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity.** There is overlap between low-income students and under-represented minority students, but race/ethnicity and SES are not equivalents or proxies of one another. One study demonstrated that low-income African American and Hispanic students with average high school test scores are five times more likely not to get a degree within eight years of high school graduation than other low-income, similarly qualified students.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, under a 2011 program at UCLA Law School that counted wealth and single-parent family status alongside other traditional SES factors, African Americans were 11.3 times and Latinos 2.3 times as likely to be admitted under the socioeconomic program as other programs.<sup>16</sup>

**The national context.** Many – even most – institutions of higher education consider socio-economic status in enrollment in some way, but do not always dedicate resources to developing tools to assess socio-economic status beyond parental income or, perhaps more importantly, tools to look behind SES to determine how it affected students' academic performance and personal development. Some of the

#### Recommended Reading on Socio-Economic Status

**Matthew Gaertner, *Advancing College Access with Class-Based Affirmative Action: The Colorado Case*, in THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: NEW PATHS TO HIGHER EDUCATION DIVERSITY AFTER FISHER V. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, 175-86 (Richard D. Kahlenberg ed., 2014), available at <http://apps.tcf.org/future-of-affirmative-action#chapter-104148>.**

This study provides a detailed overview of the SES-focused (and race-conscious) admission policy at the University of Colorado at Boulder through new measures that assess applicants for "disadvantage" and "overachiever" status using indices developed from national data sets. The study also discusses results of the program and supporting conditions for student success.

**RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG & HALLEY POTTER, A BETTER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: STATE UNIVERSITIES THAT CREATED ALTERNATIVES TO RACIAL PREFERENCES (2012), available at <http://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-abaa.pdf>.**

This report reviews admission policies in the seven states that have banned race-conscious policies, including a close look at how they providing new admissions preferences for low-income and working-class students and expanded financial aid to support economically disadvantaged students.

**Alexandria Walton Radford & Jessica Howell, *Addressing Undermatch: Creating Opportunity and Social Mobility*, in THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: NEW PATHS TO HIGHER EDUCATION DIVERSITY AFTER FISHER V. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, 133—44 (Richard D. Kahlenberg ed., 2014), available at <http://apps.tcf.org/future-of-affirmative-action#chapter-104148>.**

This study finds that "undermatch" is pervasive in higher education, especially among low-income, underrepresented minorities, and first-generation college-goers. The research finds that the lack of understanding about need-based financial aid and poor guidance counseling are the primary contributing factors to undermatching, and provides some recommendations to address these issues.

most promising SES mechanisms have been developed by public institutions in states with a legal restriction (or prospective legal restriction) on the use of race-conscious practices.

**Outreach & recruitment.** Researchers have shown that the "vast majority" of low-income, high-achieving high school students do not apply to any selective college, even though they may be strong candidates for admission and, if admitted, likely to receive a generous financial aid package.<sup>17</sup> Part of the difficulty in developing effective outreach programs for low-income students is that finding these students and sending them recruiting materials can be cost- and time-intensive.<sup>18</sup> To be most effective, recruiting materials should be targeted toward specific populations of students through phone calls, specialized mailings, and other context-driven outreach efforts. Because recruitment efforts can be costly, institutions often target the high schools most likely to produce the biggest "return on investment" – e.g., efforts targeted at "feeder" high schools that are more likely to have multiple admissible candidates rather than the much broader efforts required to reach many more high potential students spread across a greater number of high schools (at least some of which may be well outside the institution's traditional recruiting zone).<sup>19</sup>

In their Expanding College Opportunities study, Caroline Hoxby and Sarah Turner designed an intervention in which high-achieving, low-income students received mailings with information about college applications, including guidance on application strategies, semi-customized net price information on five colleges, and eight "no-paperwork" application fee waivers.<sup>20</sup> The study materials were not expensive (about \$6 per student), and the study was highly successful in increasing the students' applications to selective colleges and consequently the number of students who enrolled in a college that was equal to their own academic achievement.

- ◆ **Franklin and Marshall's (F&M) College Prep** program provides high-achieving high school seniors from in rural and urban low-income communities around the U.S. with a realistic preview of the college experience that concludes with project fair where students present their findings from three weeks of research.<sup>21</sup> To recruit candidates, F&M partners with education partners including KIPP charter schools, the National College Advising Corps, Uncommon Schools, Mastery Charter Schools, and Achievement First. During the three-week immersion program, participating students take liberal arts courses taught by college professors. The program's goal is motivate talented students to attend college, and its alumni have enrolled not only at F&M but also at other leading universities.

**Admission.** The most basic approach to incorporating SES attributes into admission decisions relies on asking indicator questions about a student's parents' income, occupation, marital status, and parents' and/or siblings' education level in the application for admission. Many of these attributes are captured in the Common Application. A companion or alternative to this general approach looks deeper at the accumulated wealth of a family, including income and all other assets, rather than simply at the income of the parent – a potentially important distinction given research demonstrating a "wealth gap" between race and ethnic groups, with racial and ethnic minority families tending to have significantly less accumulated wealth than white families.<sup>22</sup> Another potentially promising model involves creating indices based on desired applicant attributes (e.g., level of disadvantage, obstacles overcome) to assess applicants' SES and how it may have impacted their educational development.

- ◆ The **University of Texas at Austin (UT)** incorporates several opportunities for students to include information about their socio-economic status. SES factors are included in its "Personal Achievement Index," a companion to UT's "Academic Index." (N.B. Only a portion of applicants

– those students not admitted through UT's percent plan – are assessed on this index.) The statewide ApplyTexas application asks for the parents' highest educational level, family income, and household size. In addition, it asks applicants:

*Do you have family obligations that keep you from participating in extracurricular activities? If you have family obligations, do you: a. have to work to supplement family income? b. provide primary care for family member(s)? c. have other family obligations that prevent participation?*

UT also invites applicants to submit optional essays or letters addressing special circumstances. UT has also established funds and scholarships for low-income students; some are reserved for graduates of specified target Texas schools and others are accompanied by tutoring and mentoring.<sup>23</sup>

- ◆ **The University of Colorado Boulder (CU)**, working with institution-based researchers, used a national data set to create operational definitions of socioeconomic disadvantage that could be quantified and calculated into admissions decisions.<sup>24</sup> Research to inform these admissions tools was initially launched due to concern about a pending state voter initiative to prevent the consideration of race and ethnicity in admissions (which ultimately did not pass).

CU first identified two types of applicants for a new special focus in admissions: (1) those with significant socio-economic disadvantages; and (2) those "overachievers" who made significant educational progress despite disadvantages. (These two groups had significant –but not complete – overlap.) For the first group, CU described disadvantage as a reduction in the likelihood an applicant would attend a four year college due to socioeconomic circumstance. For the second, CU defined overachievement as the extent to which an applicant's academic credentials (high school GPA and standardized test scores) exceed averages for applicants with similar backgrounds. Applicants are scored along both the disadvantage and overachievement indices; those with high scores on one or both indices receive a significant boost in admissions.

Notably, students with high scores on the overachievement index tend to perform better than their peers, even though these students may have been less likely to be admitted under previous admissions policies. Admitted students deemed academically disadvantaged (via holistic review) are referred to structured academic, social, and professional support systems on campus, which offer a variety of services including mentoring, tutoring, and career and networking support. These services are designed to boost the likelihood of college and career success for participating students.

CU conducted studies in 2009 and 2010 on the class-based admission policy, which resulted in a significant and positive impact on both socioeconomic and racial diversity of admitted students; an impact that surpassed the schools' race-based admission policy. In 2011, as a result of the studies, CU adopted the overachievement and disadvantage indexes as primary admission considerations, with secondary admission considerations for race. It is worth noting that, since adopting the overachievement and disadvantage indices in 2011, CU now has the most diverse group of students in its history: 26 percent of students represent racial/ethnic minority groups (an increase of 20 percent in just five years, and four percentage points higher than the U.S. average for minority enrollment).

Because the disadvantage and overachievement indices were developed using national data, other institutions may be able to use CU's groundwork to develop similar admissions policies of their own. (The lead researcher on this project estimates that, though the study at CU took three years to design and execute, other institutions may be able to complete a pilot and move to full implementation in one year.<sup>25</sup>)

***Financial aid and scholarships.*** Institutions should take care to align any SES-related admissions considerations with financial aid policies to ensure that students admitted are able to enroll. A strategy to consider individual applicants' socio-economic status may not be appropriate for need-blind institutions because such consideration would almost certainly reveal the applicants' likely level of need. An alternative approach for need-blind institutions may be to consider socio-economic factors associated with an applicant's neighborhood or high school. Institutions should also note that the success of a financial aid program can be problematic if the costs associated with a program become so great that the institution is forced to scale back its efforts.

## 2. Geographic Diversity

### What is it?

- Students' geographic diversity can bring unique personal perspectives and experiences to campus and can be an important element of an institution's overall degree of student diversity. At the same time, however, achieving geographic diversity can be resource- and time-intensive.

### Who uses it?

- Institutions aiming to create greater student background (residential, family) diversity among students, particularly as it may correspond to geography
- Public institutions (particularly those in large states) seeking to admit students from across the state
- Public institutions that are legally barred from using race/ethnicity in admissions (through, e.g., state laws in AZ, CA, FL, MI, NE, NH, OK, WA)

### Conditions for Likely Success

- Geographic data collection and analysis tools
- Clearly identified target geographic areas (including, as appropriate, areas that have traditionally been underrepresented at the IHE or areas of special concern, e.g., high needs schools)
- Applications that assess geographic diversity indicators (both for individual students and for target geographic areas) -- and admissions staff and resources to analyze these indicators
- Effective identification of high performing students from diverse geographic areas and communication to encourage prospective applicants to apply
- Training for admissions staff in the appropriate, effective application of any geographic preferences
- Monitoring and program evaluation to assess the impact of the program

### Necessary Investments

- Data-collection and-tagging tools that enable enrollment managers to know where prospective students live and attend high school.
- Training for staff on including a neighborhood/zip code metric into outreach/ recruitment opportunities and, where appropriate, admissions decisions

### Potential Roadblocks and Questions to Consider

- Does the IHE need to acquire third party data to identify students (particularly those in less-known areas)? What information about prospective and current students does the institution need to understand better?
- When opting to include geographic considerations in admissions, what metrics will the institutions use in its neighborhood/zip code composite score? How will these metrics be developed?
- Where the composite score is used in admissions decisions, does an applicant need to demonstrate residency in the neighborhood for a certain number of years?

**Rationale.** Geographic diversity can be an important element of an institution's overall degree of diversity. Those most areas in the United States are served by an institution of higher education, trend show that underrepresented groups tend to cluster around certain institutions located near their homes and lack access to other programs and institutions (particularly those that may be more competitive or more nationally recognized). Using aggregate factors such as target zip codes for various enrollment practices may be an especially important strategy for the institution to reach populations of students in areas where it has not had a traditionally strong presence.

**Potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity.** Many of these "non-traditional" geographic targets may also be home to students from underrepresented racial or minority groups. Moreover, most racial and ethnic groups tend to cluster in certain geographic areas, and students from these groups tend to attend institutions within those areas as well. This appears to be particularly true for Latino students, 63 percent of whom attend community colleges.<sup>26</sup>

**Context.** Research has shown that high potential students from underserved areas are consistently missed by existing postsecondary recruitment efforts, likely due in part to the challenge of reaching individual high performers within areas or high schools that are traditionally underserved or overlooked by postsecondary recruitment efforts. Data- and technology-driven tools, however, are likely to allow institutions to reach more students in a cost effective, meaningful way.

#### Recommended Reading on Geographic Diversity

**THE COLLEGE BOARD, SEGMENT ANALYSIS SERVICE: AN EDUCATIONALLY RELEVANT GEODEMOGRAPHIC TAGGING SERVICE (2011),** available at <http://media.collegeboard.com/mSSS/media/pdf/segment-analysis-service-overview.pdf>.

This report discusses the relevant characteristics and behaviors of college-bound students through the geodemographic tagging service called Segment Analysis Service. Geodemographic clustering allows enrollment managers to identify the different types of students that are drawn to each institution and to develop an appropriate set of differentiated strategies, messages, and activities for these students based on what is known about them through their cluster affiliations.

**Caroline Hoxby & Christopher Avery, *The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students*, BROOKINGS PAPERS ON ECON. ACTIVITY, Spring 2013,** available at [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/BPEA/Spring%202013/2013a\\_hoxby.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/BPEA/Spring%202013/2013a_hoxby.pdf).

This article shows that the majority of low-income, high-achieving students do not apply to selective colleges. Widely used policies – such as college admissions recruiting, campus visits, and college mentoring programs – are likely to be ineffective with these types of students, partly because they tend not to be concentrated or clustered in the same area and so may miss the attention of institutions' recruitment and outreach programs.

**Danielle Allen, *Talent is Everywhere: Using ZIP Codes and Merit to Enhance Diversity*, in THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: NEW PATHS TO HIGHER EDUCATION DIVERSITY AFTER FISHER V. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, 145—59 (2014),** available at <http://apps.tcf.org/future-of-affirmative-action#chapter-104148>.

This study proposes using geographic diversity and zip codes as a way of promoting racial, ethnic, and economic diversity. The author suggests that universities select students at least in part based on academic accomplishments within their zip codes or census tracts. She asserts that this method of admission would likely yield economic, racial, ethnic, and ideological diversity on all of those fronts.

**Outreach & recruitment.** Rather than considering demographic information about individual prospective students, an institution might target outreach and recruitment efforts to neighborhoods or zip codes (including their home communities) that exhibit certain characteristics, based on aggregate demographics including population density and average family income. Public institutions that draw heavily from an in-state population as well as private schools that tend to conduct enrollment activities within a specific region may be able to compile this type of information in-house. Alternatively, schools could use data tools created by third parties to assist with this exercise.

- ◆ The **College Board's Segment Analysis Service** is a geo-demographic tagging tool that identifies several different "clusters" of prospective students based on demographic and individual student data. (Clusters are adjusted every year to account for demographic shifts.) And geographic data on students' neighborhoods and high schools has been recently enhanced, with more than 60 data points used to rank students based upon their likelihood to accept admission and succeed at a particular institution.

For institutions that use the service, the College Board provides two tag numbers based on the student's street address, zip code, and high school code: one that describes the student's high school, and another that describes his or her neighborhood. The data set that serves as a foundation for the Segment Analysis Service is made up of students who take standardized tests designed and administered by the College Board (e.g., the PSAT, the SAT, AP tests). Using these data points, institutions can assess the student's likelihood of college attendance based upon graduation rates, education levels, income levels, and other relevant factors relating to the student's high school and neighborhood. (When an institution initially purchases the service, the College Board analyses three years of the institution's recruitment data to assess how different clusters of students behaved through the admissions process at the school, from application to admission to enrollment.)

Though the service was initially used primarily by small and medium sized private colleges, some public institutions – including flagships – have begun to use it as well. Institutions can use the data provided by the Segment Analysis Service in a variety of ways: to identify characteristics of students who apply; to understand more about target students who do not apply; to identify students who could be eligible for financial scholarships; to inform potential scholarship awards; and to assess admitted students' pre-enrollment characteristics alongside their current college performance. With this information, institutions can take a deeper look at the elements of diversity they seek among applicants and admitted students without having to create a database and student identification method on their own.

- ◆ Since 1989, the **University of Southern California's** Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI) has provided a rigorous, seven-year pre-college enrichment program designed for low-income students from neighborhoods around USC.<sup>27</sup> The primary goal of the program is to attract neighborhood students to USC and to prepare them for admission – though NAI is committed to helping students enroll in and graduate from any appropriate college. Those students who complete the program and meet admission standards automatically receive a full (and loan-free) four and a half year financial package. In 2013, NAI expanded beyond its home base of South Los Angeles to include more than 100 sixth graders in East Los Angeles (where USC's Health Sciences Campus calls home).<sup>28</sup> As of 2013, 99 percent of NAI students have graduated from the program and 83 percent (a total of 745 South Los Angeles natives) have enrolled in college. Almost every one of these students is a first generation student and qualifies for Pell Grants.

The program has three core components. The USC Pre-College Enrichment Academy, which provides for enhanced classes at USC on weekday mornings, a Saturday Academy, after-school tutoring, remedial and enrichment sessions, skills-focused workshops, standardized test preparation, and cultural and recreational opportunities. The Family Development Institute offers seminars for parents of participating students on a variety of community-selected topics related to helping students succeed in the program and prepare for college. And the Retention Program provides support for students after they enroll in college, whether at USC or elsewhere. Students enrolled at USC receive particularly strong supports, with NAI staff working with other student support offices at USC.

- ◆ The **University of Washington** has developed a program that sends UW students to visit high schools as ambassadors.<sup>29</sup> These ambassadors, in collaboration with the University's Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity Recruitment & Outreach, engage in projects on campus and in underserved communities that provide motivational workshops as well as resources and information about admissions, financial aid, and available university resources. The University also sends targeted letters to encourage qualified, underrepresented students to apply.

**Admission.** A college or university might choose to provide special consideration to any applicant, regardless of race and ethnicity, from certain target neighborhoods. For example, institutions might create composite scores for zip codes based on information such as average income, average adult education level, population density, and/or level of racial isolation and/or racial diversity as a way to create greater student diversity on campus. By using aggregate data on neighborhoods or zip codes to inform enrollment management functions, institutions can aim to attract and enroll students with a diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

Institutions also might create a targeted recruitment and special admissions focus for students from geographic areas that may be important for the institution to serve based on its mission but underrepresented within the institution's student body. For example, a public land grant institution may pay special attention and/or provide special consideration from students from high needs areas within the state.

Notably, a college or university may include aggregate racial composition/diversity when applying factors or preferences to neighborhoods or zip codes as part of a composite index – a practice that does not implicate any *individual* benefit for any student based on his or her race or ethnicity, meaning that this practice is likely to qualify as race-neutral. Indeed, though no court to date has directly approved such use in a postsecondary context, a California appellate court upheld a K-12 school assignment policy that considered a composite neighborhood score with a measure of racial diversity as one element for assigning students to schools. Because each student within a given neighborhood received the same diversity score, regardless of his or her individual race, the court found that the policy did not violate California's state ban on race-conscious policies and practices.<sup>30</sup>

- ◆ The **University of Texas at Austin**, as part of its broader “Be a Longhorn” Campaign, has established ten regional admissions offices throughout the state. These offices allow recruiters to attend high schools and college fairs in the region and promote application to Texas's selective universities.<sup>31</sup> These regional service centers also hold their own informational events, offer financial aid counseling, provide assistance with admissions applications, connect prospective students with local alumni, and allow prospective students to submit applications at the regional office.

### 3. First Generation Students

#### What is it?

- First generation students – those who will be the first in their families to go to college – are a special population of students who can provide diversity on many different levels, but likely require special supports.

#### Who uses it?

- Institutions aiming to diversify students based upon experience and circumstance
- Institutions with additional resources and retention programs for first generation college students
- Colleges that are willing to partner with community based organizations (CBOs) and/or federal programs like TRIO and Upward Bound
- Institutions that devote admission staff to providing more than average assistance with applications

#### Conditions for Likely Success

- Partnerships with first generation student-oriented organizations to enhance recruitment of first generation applicants and supports for admitted students
- Clear admissions process that appear accessible to all students
- Clear communications about admission and enrollment policies for first generation students
- Training for admissions staff in the standards of admission for first generation students
- Partnerships with faculty
- Monitoring and program evaluation to assess the impact of program and policies focused on first generation students

#### Necessary Investments

- Reaching out to CBOs that assist first-generation students with the application process
- First generation student-oriented opportunities for academic and social supports
- Tracking of first generation students experiences on campus to inform policy development

#### Potential Roadblocks and Questions to Consider

- Does the institution need to acquire third party data to identify students (particularly those in less-known areas)?
- Does the institution have in place mechanisms to increase financial support for first generation students?
- Is the institution prepared to support first generation students to completion?

**Rationale.** Focusing on first generation students in enrollment policies may be especially important given demographic trends – and workforce needs – today. Approximately 24 percent of the undergraduate population (4.5 million students) are first generation, usually low income students.<sup>32</sup>

**Potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity.** As a group, first generation students are disproportionately overrepresented among the most disadvantaged groups of students; compared to students whose parents went to college, first generation students are more likely to be female, older, African-American or Latino, have dependent children, and come from low income families.<sup>33</sup> And it is likely that this population will grow, given demographic changes. The 2014-15 school year is expected to be the first in which more minority than white students will be enrolled in K-12 public schools, largely due to significant growth in the numbers of Hispanic and Asian school-age children (since 1997, both populations nearly doubled, to 12.9 million and 2.6 million, respectively).<sup>34</sup>

**Context.** Many institutions consider first generation status in admission, but not all institutions are prepared to provide the supports that many first generation students need to succeed in college. First generation students are less likely to be academically prepared upon enrollment and less likely to be persistent over time.<sup>35</sup> These students are nearly four times as likely to leave their institutions after the first year; after six years, only 11 percent had earned bachelor's degrees (compared with 55 percent of more advantaged peers). Further complicating the picture is that first generation students tend to have much better outcomes at four-year institutions, but only about a quarter enroll in four-year institutions.

#### Recommended Reading on First Generation Students

**JENNIFER ENGLE, ADOLFO BERMEO & COLLEEN O'BRIEN, PELL INST. FOR THE STUDY OF OPPT'Y IN HIGHER EDUC., STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE: WHAT WORKS FOR FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS (2006), available at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED501693.pdf>.**

This report explains the high-profile efforts in Texas to develop robust pre-college programs for first-generation students, as well as how students respond to the messages and programs being targeted toward them. First-generation students identified three crucial steps along the pipeline to college where support was most helpful in making a successful transition from high school: raising aspirations for college, navigating the college admissions process, and easing the initial transition to college.

**KERRY J. STRAND, THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES, MAKING SURE THEY MAKE IT! CIC/WALMART COLLEGE SUCCESS AWARDS REPORT (2013), available at <http://www.cic.edu/Programs-and-Services/Programs/Walmart-College-Success/Documents/CIC-Walmart-Final-Report.pdf>.**

To address the lower enrollment of first-generation students and the many issues preventing them from seeking postsecondary degrees, the Walmart Foundation awarded the Council of Independent Colleges two grants to support institutions' efforts to enhance the success of first-generation college students. All of the funded initiatives were informed by an understanding of the distinctive challenges faced by first-generation students, such as connection to, preparation for, and money for postsecondary education.

**INST. FOR HIGHER EDUC. POLICY, SUPPORTING FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH CLASSROOM-BASED PRACTICES (2012), available at [http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/s-z/Issue\\_Brief\\_Walmart\\_MSI\\_Supporting\\_FGS\\_September\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/s-z/Issue_Brief_Walmart_MSI_Supporting_FGS_September_2012.pdf).**

This report details both the benefits and challenges of improving the educational attainment of first-generation students. It asserts that, from an institutional perspective, investments in first-generation student success require a paradigmatic and cultural shift around institutional responsibility and capacity.

**Recruitment and Outreach.** Engaging with first generation students during middle and high school may be essential to ensuring their later success in college. Specific guidance may focus on enrolling in a rigorous course schedule (including AP or honor courses), planning an appropriate standardized testing schedule, and learning the fundamentals of college costs and financing options. Organizations like AVID, Talent Search, and the Urban League have all produced resources to assist with the recruitment of first generation students. As a complement to student-facing efforts, staff and faculty should receive training on the unique challenges, experiences, and value that first generation students bring with them to campus.

- ◆ With the twin goals of improving student outcomes and creating a nationally-replicable model, the Future Scholars Program at **Rutgers University** offers a free, comprehensive college preparatory program for middle and high school students in public schools in Newark, Camden, New Brunswick, and Piscataway, New Jersey.<sup>36</sup> Over the course of five years (seventh through twelfth grades), participating students receive support and enrichment through a sequenced, active series of workshops and events focused on fostering academic, social, and personal development. The fifth year focuses explicitly on college preparation, including application assistance and coaching. Students who complete the program and are admitted to Rutgers through the regular admission process receive a four-year tuition scholarship upon enrollment. As of May 2014, the program has a 95 percent high school retention rate, a 97 percent high school graduation rate, and 96 percent of alumni are attending post-secondary institutions (99 students at Rutgers).

**Admission.** As a first step, institutions should ensure that application procedures and requirements are clearly communicated to students who may be unfamiliar with the admission process (and lack the benefit of family members' experience). Many colleges already include special guidance directed toward first generation applicants.

Institutions may also give first generation students special consideration in the admission process. When choosing this option, institutions should ensure that application materials will solicit appropriate information to identify first generation applicants and that application reviewers are aware of the institution's emphasis on recruiting and admitting academically qualified first generation students.

- ◆ **Virginia Tech** has an admission website for first-generation applicants. The site provides timelines on the college application process; specific steps students should take in their junior year to develop competitive application processes are featured. Virginia Tech's site glossary of terms ensure parents and students understand the language of admission processes.

**Financial aid & scholarships.** Many first generation students are likely to have significant financial need, and linking admission priorities with sufficient financial aid is likely to result in higher enrollment rates for admitted students.

- ◆ First generation students make up twelve percent of the class of 2018 at **Georgetown University**, while maintaining its highly competitive, need blind admission program (its current acceptance rate is 16.6 percent). Georgetown links its strong admission results for first generation students to two scholarship programs: the 1789 Scholarship Imperative, which provides \$25,000 scholarships to 1,789 students with financial need, and the Georgetown Scholarship Program, which is targeted at first-generation college students.<sup>37</sup>

**Retention.** First generation students may need special supports, particularly during the first year of enrollment, to help with the transition to college. Identifying faculty and peer mentors, offering academic support and tutoring opportunities, and creating inclusive programming may all contribute to first generation students' long term success at the institution and beyond. Depending on the unique student population served by the institution, special programming for specific groups of first generation students (e.g., students from similar neighborhoods or cultural backgrounds) may have additional impact. The Walmart Minority Student Success Initiative awarded 30 minority-serving institutions \$100,000 capacity building grants to serve first-generation students (examples highlighted below). As a complement to these grants, the Initiative produced a brief highlighting several best practices for institutions to use in the future, *Supporting First-Generation College Students Through Classroom-Based Practices*.<sup>38</sup> The report identifies four key institutional practices that can increase first-generation retention and academic performance: (1) using faculty to bridge department divides and to generate opportunities for professional development; (2) promoting curricular and pedagogical reforms; (3) creating a culture of ongoing inquiry, innovation, and creativity; and (4) establishing partnerships with allies to provide benefits for long-term and sustained project success.<sup>39</sup>

- ◆ Using federal funding from the TRIO Program, the **University of South Carolina (USC)** provides special programming for admitted first generation students at high schools in Richland County (USC's home county). Prior to enrollment, students can attend a six-week summer residential program and college-placement services. Students are provided with housing at the USC campus and are provided a more intensive academic and cultural enrichment program, including sessions focused on improving writing skills. Tutoring services are also provided to students who earn less than a B grade average.<sup>40</sup>
- ◆ At **Bloomfield College**, a review of data informed the university struggles first-generation and other students had meeting mathematic graduation requirements. This information was shared with the math department and the math faculty developed developmental mathematic curriculum designed to increase student performance. The year after piloting the program, fall-to-spring retention rate increased 6 percent to a 77 percent rate and over 80 percent of students passed the first of two developmental math courses. The success of the program led to adoption of the new curriculum in 2011.<sup>41</sup>
- ◆ **Northwest Indian College (NIC)** developed a culturally relevant curriculum grounding all program goals in an indigenous perspective that is inclusive of traditions and cultural elements from more than 100 tribes. For example, NIC revamped its Family Education Model (FEM) to incorporate more sensitive and responsive evaluations to emulate students' core values by redesigning courses to include more group work, increasing professors' time spent developing rapport with students, and encouraging students to share anecdotal examples that applied to lessons during class instruction.<sup>42</sup>
- ◆ The Learning in Communities for Success project at **Clafin University** enrolls first generation students in a section of three linked courses (English, math, and freshman orientation) offered in small "learning communities." Through faculty-led activities both in and out of the classroom, students learn to step out of comfort zones, overcome negative self-conceptions, and set goals for their college career. Preliminary results showed that in the learning community clustered courses, 100 percent of students completed freshman orientation, 90 percent completed the English and math courses successfully, and 17 percent maintained a GPA between 3.0 and 4.0.<sup>43</sup>

## 4. Percent Plans

### What is it?

- A percent plan is a state program, often legislatively mandated, that provides for admission for in-state students to the state's public institutions through an automatic process based on high school class rank.

### Who uses it?

- Public institutions (particularly those in large states) directed by the state legislature to admit at least a portion of students through the statutorily mandated percent plan.

### Conditions for Likely Success

- State demographics and context that will allow for the admission of a diverse pool of students
- Complementary processes to create alternate avenues for admission, particularly for students with skills, characteristics, or experiences likely to contribute to the institution's fulfillment of its diversity goals
- Monitoring and program evaluation to assess the impact of the program

### Necessary Investments

- Clear communication to students, parents, and high schools about eligibility criteria
- Regular evaluation of the program for alignment and compatibility with institutional mission and goals as well as capacity and resources

### Potential Roadblocks and Questions to Consider

- Do participating institutions have adequate space and resources to support admission for qualifying students?
- What demographic or geographical factors contribute to the percent plan's impact beyond the admission mechanism itself?
- How do other neutral strategies, particularly at competitive institutions, complement the percent plan?
- What students does the percent plan tend to leave out? Are there alternative pathways for these students to gain admission?

**Rationale.** Percent plans are typically established by state legislatures as an effort to maintain diversity at public institutions after a legal barrier to race-conscious enrollment practices has been erected by a court decision or voter initiative. These strategies are intended to allow a diverse group of students from across the state to have an opportunity to enroll in the state's public institutions based on their high school performance (specifically, their class rank) without considering race or ethnicity or relying on measures with some history of disadvantaging certain groups (e.g., standardized test scores).

**Potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity.** Because these programs reach students from all high schools across the state, they often result in a racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, and geographically diverse class of students – depending on the demographics and unique context of the state. On the other hand, though percent plans have yielded some positive results for large state flagship institutions,<sup>44</sup> they are less likely to work well in a setting that is less segregated and more economically heterogeneous.<sup>45</sup> These programs still tend to favor students of higher socioeconomic status.<sup>46</sup> And they are likely to be unsuited to a private or graduate school context because, as the U.S. Supreme Court said in *Grutter v. Bollinger* that percentage plans also "may preclude the university from conducting the individualized assessments necessary to assemble a student body that is not just racially diverse, but diverse along all the qualities valued by the university."<sup>47</sup>

**The national context.** Percent plans are in place for at least some public institutions in California, Florida, and Texas. All three state programs were put into place following a court decision or voter initiative that forbid the consideration of race or ethnicity in enrollment practices, necessitating an exclusively race-neutral approach.

#### Recommended Reading on Percent Plans

**Marta Tienda, *Lessons from College Admissions from the Texas Top 10 Percent Law, in EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE PAST AND FUTURE PROPOSITION 209* (Eric Grodsky & Michal Kurlaender eds., 2010), available at, [http://theop.princeton.edu/reports/forthcoming/Tienda\\_EquityDiversity.pdf](http://theop.princeton.edu/reports/forthcoming/Tienda_EquityDiversity.pdf).**

This article summarizes the key lessons from the Texas percent plan for college admissions, with a focus on potential lessons for public institutions generally.

**U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, *BEYOND PERCENT PLANS: THE CHALLENGE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (2002)*, available at:**

<http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/beyondpercentplns.pdf>.

This staff report provides an evaluation of percent plans in Florida, California, and Texas, and examines the pattern of racial and ethnic diversity among first-time undergraduate and graduate, law, and medical students.

**Outreach & recruitment.** Institutions with percent plans may couple admissions eligibility with efforts such as sending letters encouraging potentially eligible high school juniors to apply and providing training to high school guidance counselors on program eligibility requirements.

**Admission.** The primary function of percent plans is to facilitate admission of eligible candidates. Percent plans vary, however, in the admission pathway that opens for eligible students. Texas allows for automatic admission at the campus of the student's choice, while Florida and California only allow for admission to a participating state institution (not necessarily the student's preferred campus). All institutions that participate in a percent plan, however, provide for some holistic review process for at least some candidates.

- ◆ In 1997, the **Texas** legislature adopted the "Top Ten Percent Plan" after the Fifth Circuit decision in *Hopwood v. Texas* forbid the consideration of race and ethnicity in admissions (until the Supreme Court's 2003 decision in *Grutter*). Under the Plan, automatic admission to state-funded Texas institutions is provided to any Texas high school student with a GPA in the top ten percent of their graduating class.<sup>48</sup> Due to high demand for admission to the University of Texas at Austin (UT), the law was amended in 2009 to allow UT to cap admissions through the Top Ten Percent Plan to 75 percent of its freshman class. (Since that change, UT has admitted approximately the top eight percent of Texas high school students.<sup>49</sup>)

The impact of the Top Ten Percent Plan on diversity at UT and other Texas institutions has drawn significant attention, due in part to the Abigail Fisher litigation. Studies of the program and its impact on diversity have found that the increase in campus diversity may be better attributed to the state's demographics rather than the Plan itself (as of 2009, white students make up less than half of high school graduates in Texas), indicating that state demographics play a central role in the feasibility of percent plans.<sup>50</sup>

- ◆ **Florida's** percent plan, "The Talented Twenty," guarantees admission at one of eleven state public institutions to students who rank in the top twenty percent of their high school classes. To be eligible for the program, students must attend a Florida public high school, graduate with a standard diploma, complete eighteen core course requirements, and submit scores from the SAT or ACT to a university in the State University System.<sup>51</sup> Qualifying students are not guaranteed admission at the Florida public institution of their choice. Once any participating Florida institution accepts a qualifying student, the guarantee for admission has been considered met, even if the student does not wish to attend that particular university. But, if a qualifying student receives three or more denials of admission, other Florida institutions must provide complimentary reviews of his or her transcript at the request of the student's high school counselor.

Studies have called the Talented Twenty program into question, finding that white and Asian students are "disproportionately eligible;" that the program had a very small impact in increasing eligibility for admission for underrepresented students (approximately 180 students statewide in each of the program's first two years); and that the increases in diversity at the state's most competitive public institutions (the University of Florida and Florida State University) was likely due to increased outreach and recruitment rather than to the Top Twenty program.<sup>52</sup>

- ◆ The **University of California** (UC) system adopted two percent plans – one statewide and another locally-based – following the enactment of Proposition 209 (a voter initiative in California that forbids the consideration of race and ethnicity in admissions). These plans aligned with a long-standing goal articulated in California's Master Plan for Higher Education

(1960) that calls for UC to admit all qualified freshman applicants in the top 12.5 percent of California public high school graduates.

Under the statewide path, the top nine percent of all California high school graduates are eligible for admission at one of the nine UC campuses. Eligibility for the statewide path is determined through a UC-calculated index based on high school GPA and performance on the ACT or SAT.<sup>53</sup> Students are not guaranteed a spot at the campus of their choice, but are guaranteed admission to one of nine campuses in the UC system, provided that space is available.<sup>54</sup>

Under the local path – "Eligibility in the Local Context" (ELC) – eligible students do not receive automatic admission, but ELC status does make an application more competitive in the admission process.<sup>55</sup> To qualify, a student must have attended an eligible California high school, satisfactorily completed a specific pattern of 11 UC-approved courses before the start of senior year, and have a UC-calculated GPA that meets or exceeds the top nine percent GPA historical benchmark established by UC for their high school. (In 2012, UC raised eligibility from the top four percent to the top nine percent.)<sup>56</sup>

ELC has had limited success in increasing diversity in the UC system to due significant competition for limited space.<sup>57</sup> A large number of California applicants qualify under the top nine percent ELC standard – roughly one third of the 93,000 applicants to the UC system in fall 2012 – and UC campuses cannot accommodate all of them, particularly the most competitive campuses.<sup>58</sup> UC – Berkeley received 19,000 applications from ELC-eligible students, more than twice the number of California residents admitted. Approximately 85 percent of UCLA's admitted students were ELC, but more than 14,000 applicants were ELC and denied admission.

***Financial aid & scholarships.*** Institutions with percent plans may link eligibility for admission with increased competitiveness for state financial aid opportunities, such as merit aid. Institutions should also plan for providing sufficient financial aid for admitted students, even if the percent plan provides only for automatic admission (but not guaranteed financial assistance).

- ◆ Under **Florida's** percent plan, the Talented Twenty, students are given priority for the Florida State Assistance Grant, a need-based grant program.

## INSTITUTIONAL PLAYS

Institutional Plays refer to the neutral strategies an institution of higher education may pursue that require broader change within an institution. These plays can contribute to the achievement of an institution's diversity goals, and also create structures that may improve access and completion. The Playbook includes specific discussion on:

1. Collaborative Agreements
2. Cohort Programs (with a focus on the Posse Foundation)
3. Application Inquires (including a discussion of the "conduct of inclusion")

Discussion for each play begins with a brief overview of what the play entails, which institutions use it, conditions for likely success, necessary investments, and questions to consider. Discussion then moves to the rationale behind the play, its potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity, and the relevant national context. We also include recommended reading on each play.

# 1. Collaborative Agreements

## What is it?

- A collaborative agreement is a voluntary, flexible, and institution-driven agreement that creates new academic pathways for students through progressive postsecondary education levels.
- Some states have "articulation agreements," a formal, often state-mandated form of collaborative agreement among public institutions through which credits earned at one institution will be accepted by another toward its degree program.

## Who uses it?

- Four-year institutions aiming to attract pools of transfer students
- Two-year institutions aiming to create stronger pathways to a four-year degree for their students
- Smaller four-year institutions seeking to expand curricular programming options for students

## Conditions for Likely Success

- Clear agreement between participating institution(s) about the purpose, structure, and responsible parties for the collaborative agreement structure
- Support and contributions from relevant faculty members and department staff
- Systems for efficient transfer of credits

## Necessary Investments

- Full crosswalk of courses at "sending" institutions with those at "receiving" institutions
- Systems that can accept credits earned at other institutions for purposes of awarding degrees

## Potential Roadblocks and Questions to Consider

- How are transfer pathways communicated to students?
- Does the "sending" institution adequately prepare students for transfer?
- Does the "receiving" institution have the capacity to provide support for students during and immediately after transfer?

**Rationale.** Higher education is an ecosystem, with students increasingly moving among institutions to complete degrees. Collaborative agreements provide a way for institutions to work together to remove barriers to student transfer, encourage completion and attainment of credentials, and provide for greater alignment and collaboration among institutional academic programs. And potential institutional collaborations are not limited to community college to four-year transfer pathways. Institutions have developed successful models between four-year institutions and between undergraduate and graduate programs. Importantly, collaborative agreements can be structured in a way that does not encourage competition between institutions for students, but instead are developed with student academic goals and participating institution's unique strengths and resources as the motivating factors.

### Recommended Reading on Collaborative Agreements

**ARTHUR L. COLEMAN ET AL., THE SMART GRID FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE STUDENTS THEY SERVE: DEVELOPING AND USING COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENTS TO BRING MORE STUDENTS INTO STEM (2012),** <http://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/SmartGrid.pdf>.

This report addresses the development of collaborations between institutions of higher education to expand the pipeline for all students into progressively higher levels of STEM education. Within the context of each institution's goals for an educational collaboration in STEM fields, institutions can pursue legally sustainable objectives to increase the participation in STEM higher education of students of all races, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds. This paper expounds on the key elements of voluntary, institution-based collaborative agreements that can facilitate the expansion of student pathways in STEM programs.

**CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS AND PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS: TOOLS TO HELP 21ST CENTURY STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION GOALS AND KEEP AMERICA COMPETITIVE (2011),** [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/06/pdf/college\\_credits.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/06/pdf/college_credits.pdf).

This issue brief highlights two of the policies currently being implemented to help students complete their degrees - articulation agreements and prior learning assessments. This report purports that these policies are leading the way toward a new type of consumer-driven education system, which will focus on student outcomes, as opposed to institutional exclusivity.

**Keivan G. Stassun, Arnold Burger, & Sheila E. Lange, The Fisk-Vanderbilt Masters-to-PhD Bridge Program: A Model for Broadening Participation of Underrepresented Groups in the Physical Sciences through Effective Partnerships with Minority-Serving Institutions, 58 J. GEOSPATIAL EDUC. 135 (2010).**

This article describes the Fisk-Vanderbilt Masters-to-PhD Bridge program as a successful model for effective partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in broadening the participation of underrepresented groups in the physical sciences. The program links targeted recruitment with active retention strategies through an active approach to mentoring students.

**WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUC. (WICHE) & HEZEL ASSOCIATES, PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATEWIDE ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER SYSTEMS (2010),** <http://www.wiche.edu/info/publications/PromisingPracticesGuide.pdf>.

This report provides an overview of trends and key components of state articulation agreements, finding substantial variation in governance structure, policy development, implementation, and specific initiatives or practices.

**Potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity.** Institutions seeking greater racial and ethnic diversity may use student transfer as a mechanism to attract students that they may not reach through the freshman admission process, but are still academically qualified for the institution's programs. Community colleges and minority-serving institutions, for example, are home to significant populations of minority and first generation students.

**The national context.** About a third of postsecondary students transfer at least once.<sup>59</sup> And, though most community college students intend to transfer to a four-year school and earn a baccalaureate degree, only about half succeed within six years.<sup>60</sup> And those that do succeed often have trouble bringing their credits with them; one study found that only about 58 percent of transfer students from community colleges to four-year institutions are able to transfer more than 90 percent of their credits, while 15 percent lose more than 90 percent of their credits.<sup>61</sup> The same study found that community college transfer students have bachelor of arts graduation rates equal to similar students who began instead at four-year colleges. In fact, transfer students would likely have a higher graduation rate – from 46 to 54 percent – if not for the loss of academic credits during transfer.<sup>62</sup> Lost academic credits, inadequate academic planning and supports, minimal financial aid, and unclear transfer policies are all barriers that can be addressed when institutions work more deliberately together through collaborative agreements.

- **The Georgia Institute of Technology's (Georgia Tech) College of Engineering** has fostered relationships with other institutions to offer more Georgia students the opportunity to pursue STEM degrees through the Regents' Engineering Transfer Program (RETP). RETP was initially established in 1969 as a way to create opportunities for students statewide to study engineering (at the time, Georgia Tech was the only institution in Georgia that offered engineering degrees). RETP establishes clear pathways for guaranteed acceptance into Georgia Tech's College of Engineering for students at 19 other Georgia institutions, including community colleges, historically black colleges and universities, and other state four-year institutions. RETP's history and long list of participating institutions has created a robust program for students; each year, Georgia Tech awards one third of its engineering degrees to graduates who transferred into programs.
- **Miami Dade College (MDC)** enrolls six times as many Latino students as the entire Ivy League.<sup>63</sup> Now the largest institution of higher education in the United States with 174,000 students across eight campuses, MDC opened in the 1960s as a community college that served local populations of African-Americans and Cuban immigrants.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the state-mandated transfer and articulation policies relevant to its practices, MDC has created student transition agreements with more than 60 public and private universities.<sup>65</sup> It maintains a comprehensive website which organizes articulation policies by school, state, and major and tags each receiving school's entry with potential scholarship opportunities.<sup>66</sup> Also, in 2001, MDC created the Honors College, which admits high-achieving high school students for two years of intensive study at MDC followed by expected transfer to four-year institutions.<sup>67</sup> The Honors College graduates have transferred to 74 different four-year institutions, many of them highly selective.<sup>68</sup>
- **The Fisk-Vanderbilt Master's-to-the-PhD Bridge Program** is a partnership between two institutions in Nashville, Tennessee: Fisk University, a private HBCU, and Vanderbilt University, a private research institution. The Bridge Program gives full funding support to students with STEM undergraduate degrees who are interested in pursuing PhD programs in physics,

astronomy, materials science, biology, or biomedical sciences but need more coursework, research experience, or training before applying.

Participating departments identify promising students from colleges and universities nationwide who might be overlooked without mentorship and support. Overwhelmingly, participating students are not Fisk or Vanderbilt undergraduates, but students at minority-serving institutions across the country through an array of recruitment mechanisms including outreach to faculty members, sponsorship of summer undergraduate interns, and participation in STEM conferences and research competitions that include undergraduates.

Students accepted into the program spend two years completing a master's degree at Fisk with full access to instructional and research opportunities at Fisk and Vanderbilt to prepare for entry into PhD programs. Students who successfully complete the program get fast-track acceptance into a corresponding Vanderbilt PhD program. In the seven years of the collaborative program's existence, 50 graduate students have been supported (88 percent underrepresented minorities and 55 percent women). All program graduates have received offers from a Vanderbilt PhD program and most accepted, although a few accepted other offers at other schools. One graduate of the program won an NSF graduate grant and is on track to become the first female, African-American graduate of the Yale Physics PhD program.

Both Fisk and Vanderbilt have reaped valuable benefits. In the seven years of the program's existence, Fisk has seen a 300 percent increase in intramural research grant awards. Vanderbilt has received \$30 million in external funding, including six prestigious NSF Career Grants. Moreover, both institutions have gained national recognition for establishing and maintaining an effective solution to the complex challenge of getting more students from underrepresented populations onto the STEM research track.

## 2. Cohort Programs

### What is it?

- A cohort program orients recruitment, admission, financial aid and scholarships, and retention programs around small groups of students.

### Who uses it?

- Public and private institutions , many in partnership with national organizations such as the Posse Foundation

### Conditions for Likely Success

- (In some cases) agreement with sponsoring national organization
- Commitment from all involved institutional actors to support the cohort(s) of student
- Monitoring and program evaluation to assess the impact of the program

### Necessary Investments

- Admission guarantees for selected students
- Long-term commitment to financial aid benefits for participating students
- Campus-wide awareness and support

### Potential Roadblocks and Questions to Consider

- How can selection mechanisms ensure that students are academically prepared and have the potential to contribute to the institution's diversity goals?
- How will policies and practices traditionally focused on individual students need to be amended to allow for cohort-based benefits and opportunities?
- How can the institution study the impact of the cohort program and share lessons and promising practices for other institutional programs?

**Rationale.** These programs provide a special community for participating students that can help with social, emotional, and academic development throughout college. Models, most notably the Posse Foundation, include recruitment and admission within the program design to allow for a seamless, cohesive enrollment management strategy. In addition to providing important supports and structures for participating students, these programs can be attractive to administrators because they allow for predictable enrollment and other campus planning from year to year.

**Potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity.** Programs may be designed to recruit traditionally underserved students – including those who may be overlooked in the general admission process. Moreover, these programs tend to provide a strong sense of community and belonging for participating students, which may be especially important for students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups on campus.

**The national context.** Common in professional and graduate programs, cohort programs are starting to emerge in undergraduate settings as well, most visibly by the Posse Foundation.<sup>69</sup>

#### Recommended Reading on Cohort Programs

**THE POSSE FOUNDATION, THE POSSE PROGRAM: 2011 ANNUAL REPORT**, available at:

<http://www.possefoundation.org/m/posse-annual-report-11.pdf>.

Each edition of the Posse Foundation's annual report focuses on a unique component of the program; 2011's version describes core components of the Posse program. It also provides highlights on each participating Posse city's performance (along with highlights from partnering institutions).

**Michelle Maher, *The Evolving Meaning and Influence of Cohort Membership*, 30 INNOVATIVE HIGHER EDUC. 195 (2005)**, [http://www.ed.sc.edu/edlp/Publications/21\\_EvolvingCohort.pdf](http://www.ed.sc.edu/edlp/Publications/21_EvolvingCohort.pdf).

This study examined experiences of a students enrolled in a cohort-based graduate program and includes a literature review of research and other resources on cohort model development in higher education.

- ◆ Since 1989, the **Posse Foundation** has provided high potential public high school students with four-year, full-tuition leadership scholarships with more than 50 leading public and private institutions (and several graduate programs that offer fellowships and financial assistance to Posse alumni).<sup>70</sup> Each participating institution is paired with a specific recruitment city or cities (e.g., Davidson College partners with Posse Miami; Syracuse University partners with Posse Atlanta, Posse Los Angeles, and Posse Miami; the University of Virginia partners with Posse Houston; and Vanderbilt University partners with Posse New York). Posse also supports specialized programs focused on civic engagement, STEM, and veterans.

Posse includes five core program components:

1. **Recruitment:** In the fall of each year, Posse conducts the Dynamic Assessment Process (DAP) for groups of applicants within the same Posse recruitment city. DAP is a unique evaluation method designed to identify young leaders who might be missed by

traditional admissions criteria but who have skills and experiences that demonstrate the potential to succeed at competitive college. Using non-traditional forums to evaluate potential, DAP offers students an opportunity to demonstrate their intrinsic leadership abilities, their skill at working in a team setting, and their motivation and desire to succeed. In a three-part process, including large group and individual interviews, Posse staff and university partner administrators select a group of 10 students as Posse Scholars for each college or university – the "posse."

- 2. *Pre-Collegiate Training:*** After selection, Posse Scholars meet weekly with staff trainers and their Posse peers for a series of workshops team building and group support; Cross-cultural communication; leadership and becoming an active agent of change on campus; and academic excellence. This process also helps build relationships among students in the posse.
- 3. *Campus Program:*** Every week, a dedicated mentor meets with each posse as a team. The mentor also meets with each Posse Scholar individually every two weeks during the first two years of college. Posse staff members visit each participating institution four times a year for meetings with Posse Scholars, campus liaisons, and mentors. And In addition, every Posse campus hosts an annual weekend-long "PossePlus Retreat" for the broader campus community (students, faculty, and administrators) to focus on a campus issue identified by Posse Scholars as important.
- 4. *Career Program:*** Posse partners with more than 150 career partner companies to offer internships, career services, and a Posse alumni network.
- 5. *Posse Access:*** Posse provides an online database designed to give Posse partner institutions exclusive access to unselected student nominees to consider for regular admission. By identifying candidates through the Posse Access database, partner schools benefit from Posse's holistic approach to evaluating student potential and see a much greater pool of highly qualified students.

### 3. Application Inquiries

#### What is it?

- Application inquiries refer to those pieces of data and information requested by an institution of its applicants for admission. Some are required, while others are optional. Ensuring that applications provide students an opportunity to make their best case for how they could contribute to the achievement of the institution's diversity goals, including a reflection on their demonstrated "conduct of inclusion" (i.e., behaviors and experiences of seeking out and interacting with a diverse group of people).

#### Who uses it?

- Public and private institutions
- Institutional admission programs
- Institutional diversity-focused scholarship programs

#### Conditions for Likely Success

- Clear mission-aligned diversity goals associated with the admission or selection process
- Well-developed applicant essay and/or interview questions that directly tie to the institution's mission and accompanying diversity goals
- Well-trained application readers / reviewers
- Monitoring and program evaluation to assess the impact of the program

#### Necessary Investments

- Application materials intended to elicit the desired information from applicants, potentially to include application guidance and/or new application questions
- Training for application readers / reviewers to ensure that application inputs are assessed appropriately

#### Potential Roadblocks and Questions to Consider

- Does the institution's participation in the Common Application or other widely used application instrument limit the degree of flexibility in adding new application items?
- Will new questions add a burden to applicants that may cause them to reconsider applying?
- Can information about applicants be pulled from other sources rather than adding to the basic admission application, e.g., essays for institutional diversity or leadership scholarship program application packages?
- How can the institution study the impact of any new or different application inquiries and share lessons and promising practices for other institutions and/or programs?

**Rationale.** Assessing an applicant's potential contributions to the achievement of its diversity goals depends on gathering the right information from the application process. Assessing subtle, highly individualized characteristics such as "conduct of inclusion" (i.e., behaviors and experiences of seeking out and interacting with a diverse group of people) depends on clear opportunities for students to share information related to those characteristics – and training for application readers and reviewers on how to look for that information and include it in their admission decisions.

The Common Application, for example, includes five general essay prompts such as, "Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story." The prompts are broad enough that students may share experiences related to their conduct of inclusion or other experiences related to diversity. Institutions that use the Common Application and have an institutional commitment to diversity goals, however, should ensure that application readers know to assess student responses for these characteristics and weigh them in their admission decisions. Moreover, institutions should consider sharing informal guidance with students about their interest in learning about applicants' experiences with diversity through the application process.

#### Recommended Reading on Application Inquiries

**Kenneth Maton, Freeman A. Hrabowski, & Metin Özdemir, *Opening an African American STEM Program to Talented Students of All Races: Evaluation of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program 1991-2005*, in CHARTING THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: LEGAL VICTORIES, CONTINUING ATTACKS, AND NEW RESEARCH 125-56 (eds. Gary Orfield, Patricia Marin, Stella M. Flores, & Liliana M. Garces) (2007), <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/college-access/affirmative-action/charting-the-future-of-college-affirmative-action-legal-victories-continuing-attacks-and-new-research/orfield-charting-the-future-affirmative-action.pdf>.**

This paper provides a detailed program description of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program and examines the impact of changing the admission process from "race-exclusive" (only African American students) to "race-inclusive" (students of all races). It concludes that the change was a "viable strategic response to an anti-affirmative action political climate" because it (1) did not cause a decline in the quality of entering students, their experience in the program, or their outcomes; and (2) retained its defined mission in part through assessing all applicants through factors that assess a student's potential contributions to the educational benefits of diversity offered through the program (with a special focus on those students who have a commitment to advancing underrepresented minorities in STEM fields).

**Susan Sturm, *Diversity is Not Enough: Catalyzing Transformative and Lawful Change* (June 16, 2014, draft) (available upon request).**

This paper examines the Meyerhoff Scholars Program as a part of broader efforts at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), to create an inclusive environment where all students feel empowered and fully participate in academic and social activities on campus. It specifically discusses how UMBC's efforts illustrate "how to build [a] both/and approach to addressing race, as part of a full participation project focused on building settings that enable everyone to succeed, conducting ongoing analysis patterns of success and failure, and then using race as a classification when necessary to enable full participation."

**Potential impact on racial and ethnic diversity.** Infusing elements into application materials that assess a student's potential contributions to diversity – including through the conduct of inclusion – can allow institutions to value concretely these contributions, without necessarily relying on students reporting their race or ethnicity. As the Meyerhoff Scholars Program (described below) demonstrates, combining these application inquiries with effective training for application readers can allow institutions to maintain or increase the representation of racial and ethnic minority students even while expanding access to the program to students of all races and ethnicities.

**The national context.** Every institution that pursues mission-based diversity goals has some application process for student admissions. Not all of these institutions, however, systematically align their applications with their diversity goals to ensure that the admission process is bolstered by the right inquiries to assess prospective students' contributions to the educational benefits of diversity being realized on campus. There are some notable exceptions, including the Meyerhoff Scholars Program described below, that may serve as useful models.

- ◆ Since 1988, the **Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County** has provided financial assistance, mentoring, advising, and research experience to undergraduate students committed to obtaining Ph.D. degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The National Science Foundation, the College Board's National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, and the *New York Times*, among others, have recognized it as a national model for increasing diversity in STEM fields, providing multiple supports and opportunities to participating students, and consistently producing strong student outcomes. The Meyerhoff Program has nearly 300 current UMBC students and more than 900 alumni, more than 300 of whom are currently pursuing STEM graduate and professional degrees.

In its early years, the program admitted only African-American students, but – in light of concerns following *Podberesky v. Kirwin* (1994, 1995), in which the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a federal Appeals Court's decision striking down the race-exclusive admission policy of the Banneker Scholarship Program offered through the University of Maryland – a decision was made to open the Meyerhoff Scholars Program to applicants of all races but to retain the core program purpose of increasing underrepresented minority participation in STEM fields. (This decision did not come lightly, but was accepted thanks in part to "the most compelling argument . . . that the underrepresentation of minorities in science was a national issue – not solely a minority issue – and that it was necessary to prepare many more Americans of all races both to understand the issue of underrepresentation and to develop skills in order to address this national challenge."<sup>71</sup>) Making this change also required the University to allot additional funding to cover non-minority students' Meyerhoff scholarships, as funding from the federal government and private foundations was often not available for these students.

In addition to developing language to explain the new admission criteria to potential applicants, the program developed questions to assist selection committee members in assessing applicants' personal alignment with Meyerhoff program goals and conduct of inclusion to help facilitate the educational benefits of diversity within the program. These inquiries include:

- Willingness to discuss issues of race, poverty, and academic performance;
- Involvement with activities and organizations that were (likely) ethnically diverse such as multicultural clubs and athletic teams);

- Tutoring minority children; and
- Other related activities.

A study of the impact of this change in the Meyerhoff admission policy found no decline in the quality of entering students, their experience in the program, or their outcomes. The program has maintained a majority of underrepresented minorities within its student population, and has only continued to bolster its national reputation. In fact, in 2014, a new \$7.75M grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute will adapt the Meyerhoff Program model to fit the unique contexts of two new campuses: the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill and the Pennsylvania State University.<sup>72</sup>

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Some race-neutral efforts – particularly those adopted by public institutions in states that ban the use of race in admissions – have been more rigorously examined by practitioners and researchers than others. Even though the specific efforts in these institutions may not be duplicable by many institutions due to differences in mission and context, the body of research and analysis on the impact and effects of these policies is likely to yield important lessons for all institutions pursuing mission-based diversity goals. Thus, institutions may draw insight and inspiration from a wide variety of plays, even if they do not actually put every play into place.

<sup>2</sup> The terms “race” and “ethnicity,” despite their different meanings, are used interchangeably in this document, given that the strict scrutiny analysis required by federal non-discrimination law treats them the same. For brevity, the Playbook on occasion uses “race” to encompass both race and ethnicity.

<sup>3</sup> See U.S. Depts. of Educ. and Justice, *Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity in Postsecondary Education* (Dec. 2, 2011), <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/edu/documents/guidancepost.pdf>; see generally Coleman, Palmer, and Winnick, *Race-Neutral Policies in Higher Education: From Theory to Action* (2008).

<sup>4</sup> Even though race-neutral strategies do not trigger strict scrutiny, some questions remain about whether neutral strategies, when explicitly used as a proxy for race-conscious policies, could activate more rigorous judicial review. See Brian Fitzpatrick, *Strict Scrutiny of Facially Race-Neutral State Action and the Texas Ten Percent Plan*, 13 MICH. J. RACE & L. 277 (2007).

<sup>5</sup> The Fourteenth Amendment prohibits any state actor, including public institutions of higher education, from denying “any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” U.S. Const. amend XIV, § 1. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity “under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” 42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

<sup>6</sup> See *Parents Involved in Community Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007).

<sup>7</sup> For a full discussion of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 *Fisher v. University of Texas* opinion that established this requirement, see Understanding *Fisher v. the University of Texas*: Policy Implications of What the U.S. Supreme Court Did (and Didn't) Say About Diversity and the Use of Race and Ethnicity in College Admissions (College Board, July 9, 2013), <http://diversitycollaborative.collegeboard.org>.

<sup>8</sup> *Fisher*, 113 S. Ct. at 2414.

<sup>9</sup> Another notable example may be the University of Texas at Austin, whose race-neutral strategies were examined in detail by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. For a full discussion of the case on this issue, see College Board & EducationCounsel, *The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal's Second Ruling in Fisher v. University of Texas: The Decision and its Implications* (July 31, 2014), <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/diversity/2014/college-board-summary-analysis-fisher-v-university-of-texas.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dep't of Education, *Complaint Resolution for OCR Complaint #06052020 (Rice University)* (Sept. 10, 2013), <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/06052020-a.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Before 1996, Rice had considered race and ethnicity as factors in its admissions process. In 1996, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals decided *Hopwood v. University of Texas*, concluding that the consideration of race and ethnicity violated the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

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Hopwood v. University of Texas, 78 F.3d 932 (5th Cir. 1996). *Hopwood* only applied to those public institutions and private institutions that received federal aid located in the Fifth Circuit's jurisdiction (Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas). *Hopwood* was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* in 2003.

<sup>12</sup> IHEP, <file:///C:/My%20Documents/Downloads/CostPerceptions.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Ed. Sheldon Danziger and Jane Waldfogel, *Securing the future*. David Ellwood and Thomas J. Kane. "Who is getting a college education: Family background and the growing gaps in enrollment." pp 283–324 (2000).

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, *How Increasing College Access is Increasing Inequality, and What to Do about It*, REWARDING STRIVERS 178 (ed. Richard Kahlenburg, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, SEPARATE & UNEQUAL: HOW HIGHER EDUCATION REINFORCES THE INTERGENERATIONAL REPRODUCTION OF WHITE RACIAL PRIVILEGE 37-38 (2013); *see also* Thomas Kane, *Misconceptions in the Debate Over Affirmative Action in College Admissions*, CHILLING ADMISSIONS (eds. Gary Orfield and Edward Miller, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Richard Kahlenberg and Halley Potter, A Better Affirmative Action: State Universities that Created Alternatives to Racial Preferences 13 (2012), <http://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-abaa.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Hoxby and Christopher Avery, The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students (Brookings, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>20</sup> Caroline Hoxby and Sarah Turner, Expanding College Opportunities for High-Achieving, Low Income Students, Stanford Inst. for Econ. Pol. Research Discussion Paper No. 12-014 (2012), <http://siepr.stanford.edu/?q=/system/files/shared/pubs/papers/12-014paper.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Franklin and Marshall Coll., F&M College Prep Program Preps for a Big Third Year (June 28, 2013), <http://www.fandm.edu/news/article/f-m-college-prep-program-preps-for-a-big-third-year>.

<sup>22</sup> Over a 25-year period (1984-2009), the total wealth gap between white and African-American families nearly tripled, increasing from \$85,000 in 1984 to \$236,500 in 2009. Thomas Shapiro et al., Institute on Assets and Social Policy Research and Policy Brief: The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap: Explaining the Black-White Economic Divide (Feb. 2013), <http://iasp.brandeis.edu/pdfs/Author/shapiro-thomas-m/racialwealthgapbrief.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Kahlenburg, *supra* note 16, at 27-28.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Gaertner, *Advancing College Access with Class-Based Affirmative Action: The Colorado Case* in THE FUTURE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION 175-86 (ed. Richard Kahlenberg) (2014), available at: <http://tcf.org/assets/downloads/FOAA.pdf>; *see also* Matthew Gaertner & Melissa Hart, *Considering Class: College Access & Diversity*, 7 HARV. L. & POL. R. 367 (2013); Matthew Gaertner, Pearson, Issue Brief: Advancing College Access and Diversity.

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<sup>26</sup> Patrick J. Kelly, Nat'l Ctr. for Higher Educ. Management Systems, As America Becomes More Diverse: The Impact of State Higher Education Inequality 31-33 (Nov. 2005), <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512586.pdf>.

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- <sup>40</sup> UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, <http://www.sc.edu/trio/UB.html> (last visited July 10, 2014).
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- <sup>42</sup> *Id.* at 17.
- <sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 21.
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