

In Pursuit of Excellence

University Equity Audit

Executive Summary

Published September 2020



RUTGERS



Being inclusive and acting with integrity sound nice...but to deliver on these principles requires constant attention and a determined commitment to improve. Frankly, a great university should expect nothing less of its leaders...Wherever those high standards aren't being realized I am committed to doing better, always better.”

| PRESIDENT JONATHAN HOLLOWAY

Executive Summary

CONTEXT

In his opening day message to the Rutgers University Community, President Jonathan Holloway shared his belief that delivering on the principles of equity and inclusivity requires constant attention and a determined commitment to improve. He commissioned a University Equity Audit that serves as our institutional first step in pursuing excellence by increasing Rutgers' on-the-ground commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion across the university, starting with its leadership. This three-pronged project included: a central administration self-study, a university leadership perceptions survey, and an equity scorecard.

OPERATIONAL DEI RATING

Central Administration Self-Study Key Findings

Leaders of the central administration rated their organizational quality in incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices. The rating scale was from 1 to 4, with a higher score reflecting better organizational quality (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent). The results shown below, organized from high to low, represent the average across central administrative units and suggest that the University is performing between fair and good on most indicators. However, there is work to be done to enhance even areas of relative strength, such as valuing of different experiences and perspectives (2.8), since it is not matched by individuals possessing cross-cultural skills (2.19), which are essential to communicating and thriving in a diverse workplace.

- **2.80 RATING** for “different experiences and perspectives of all individuals are welcomed, valued, and respected.”
- **2.64 RATING** for “candidate pools are increased by removing narrow and arbitrary indicators of eligibility.”
- **2.53 RATING** for “ongoing efforts are made to increase diversity, ensure equity, and identify and remove all barriers to inclusion.”
- **2.19 RATING** for “individuals have the cross-cultural skills necessary to engage with others in ways that open dialogue and understanding.”
- **2.18 RATING** for “a commitment to DEI is built into all policies and plans.”

Leaders of the central administration were asked to reflect on the gap between current challenges and their aspirations for inclusive excellence in three priority areas: hiring and promotion, administrative culture, and recognition and rewards. Utilizing statements made by President Holloway describing the administrative culture he wants to cultivate at Rutgers and targeted prompts shown below, leadership teams within the respective central administrative units crafted responses that show the breadth and depth of what requires attention at Rutgers to move us toward an ideal organizational state to achieve inclusive excellence.

“There is no singular embodiment of excellence...it can be found everywhere.”

HIRING AND PROMOTION: *Leadership teams were asked to reflect on their hiring and promotion practices as well as business processes, supplier diversity, and how they drew on the diversity of talent found in New Jersey.*

Several responses focused on the technical aspects of recruiting and retention, such as where job openings are posted and how job descriptions are written, as well as offering exit interviews to better understand and identify issues related to departure. Others focused on more cultural/structural elements of recruitment, such as purposeful development of internal talent for promotion, training of hiring personnel, and routine audit/assessment of hiring practices and outcomes. A key recommendation was to diversify vendors and consultants, targeting more minority-owned firms for consideration as Rutgers vendors.

“There is a minimal expectation to be heard authentically and a reasonable expectation to be taken seriously.”

ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE: *Leadership teams were asked to reflect on their administrative structure, culture, complaint management, and decision-making processes.*

Leaders recognized that diverse teams, and interpersonal relationships between staff members, thrive when issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion are proactively addressed through continued professional development and speedy resolution of conflict via clearly identified and promoted pathways, such as a designated ombudsperson, and effective formal or anonymous complaint systems. Key recommendations included expansion of diversity, equity, and inclusion training and greater employee engagement to promote understanding of organizational goals as well as vehicles for garnering employee feedback and facilitating input on decision-making.

“Everyone in this beloved community has an important role to play and deserves to be recognized and respected for a job well done. This especially includes the so-called invisible work at the university: assistants of all types, dining hall workers, bus drivers, maintenance crews, etc.”

RECOGNITION AND REWARDS: *Leadership teams were asked to reflect on their mechanisms for recognition and rewards of staff at all levels.*

Several responses offered concrete recommendations for developing formalized and robust rewards and recognition systems that are unit-specific, but also university-wide. Most important, leaders recognized that increasing respect, beyond recognition and rewards, requires a cultural shift toward inclusive and compassionate leadership and management, building a culture where everyone is seen, valued, and respected. Achieving this goal requires a shift in leadership away from pure management and supervision toward mentoring, fostering professional growth, and empowering all employees.

DEFINING ASPIRATIONS

Central Administration Self-Study Key Findings

Leaders of the central administration were asked to identify aspirational peers and practices, focusing on what they are doing in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion organizationally that could be adopted. We briefly highlight the three key areas identified and two recommendations given by the central administrative leadership teams from each.

DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLANNING:

- Develop a clear vision, guided by strong goals and core values, to signal an investment in a paradigm shift leading to long-term culture change.
- Develop a plan to meaningfully expand DEI community engagement and raise public awareness of purposeful partnership/engagement as a university priority.

BUILD CAPACITY TO LEAD AND SUPPORT INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE:

- Formalize educational opportunities for the faculty and staff, including but not limited to offering a DEI certificate, to promote deeper understanding and engagement related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Encourage voluntary unit-based teams of DEI ambassadors or champions to meet regularly and envision ways to lead institutional change at the local level.

BUILD AND RETAIN AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE:

- Introduce affinity groups to help build a pipeline of diverse talent and to better draw on existing talent at the university.
- Examine and update unit-based policies, procedures, and guidelines that may function to undermine DEI initiatives for growing the number and success of scholars from underrepresented groups.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP PERCEPTION SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

The university leadership perceptions survey was an opportunity for the central administration to learn what perspectives they share, how they are perceived by others, and what needs to be done to maximize Rutgers' opportunity to attain excellence. The response rate of 84%, 133 participants in a universe of 159, provides confidence that the findings offer a holistic sense of where university leadership stands on values, principles, and sensibilities about inclusion to inform the work needed to move the institution forward. Below we highlight some key takeaways from the results.

1. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION DOES NOT SHAPE ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE AT RUTGERS.

32%

perceive ongoing efforts are made to increase diversity, ensure equity, and identify and remove all barriers to inclusion "to a great extent."

13%

perceive a commitment to DEI is built into all policies and plans "to a great extent."

7%

perceive individuals have the cross-cultural skills necessary to engage with others in ways that open dialogue and understanding "to a great extent."

2. LEADERS PERCEIVE A GREATER COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AMONG THEIR PEERS THAN OF RUTGERS AS AN INSTITUTION.

50%

perceive the people at Rutgers with whom they work most directly as "very committed" to inclusion.

26%

perceive Rutgers as an institution as "very committed" to inclusion.

3. THERE HAS BEEN A HISTORIC LACK OF ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLANNING.

9%

said diversity, equity, and inclusion goals were clearly specified "to a great extent."

8%

said strategic investments were made to advance DEI goals "to a great extent."

7%

said metrics were used to gauge progress on university DEI goals "to a great extent."

4. THE VAST MAJORITY OF LEADERS RECOGNIZE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT NOW.

99%

view inadequate attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion as risky for the university.

88%

“strongly agreed” or “agreed” that diversity and equity are institutional priorities.

86%

of leaders report that diversity, equity, and inclusion is “very important” to Rutgers’ mission and future success.

5. THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION HAS WORK TO DO TO DEMONSTRATE THEY CAN LEAD INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

41%

perceived the central administration’s capacity to lead institutional efforts to advance DEI as “very high” or “high.”

13%

perceive central administrative activities (policy, funding, and endorsement) as supporting DEI “most of the time.”

7%

perceive central resources that support DEI as leveraged well across Chancellor-led units “to a great extent.”

6. LEADERS AFFIRM THE VALUE OF UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS AND FACULTY MORE THAN STAFF.

79%

“strongly agree” or “agree” that leaders affirm the value of underrepresented students.

65%

“strongly agree” or “agree” that leaders affirm the value of underrepresented faculty members.

50%

“strongly agree” or “agree” that leaders affirm the value of underrepresented staff members.

7. INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES AND FUNDING NEED TO BE REVISITED TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PRIORITIES.

76%

“strongly disagree” or “disagree” that pre-COVID, there was adequate funding and budgetary resources to advance DEI priorities.

65%

“strongly disagree” or “disagree” that the hiring process includes an effective system for the recruitment of applicants from underrepresented populations.

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF THE EQUITY SCORECARD

The equity scorecard tied quantitative metrics to equity priorities for increasing the representation of historically underrepresented groups at Rutgers, enabling us to identify areas where progress is most needed to advance our equity priorities. The most immediate preceding year, fiscal 2020, will serve as the baseline from which we will measure our future progress. We also included a 3-year average of fiscal years 2017, 2018, and 2019 to signal change over time and clearly capture increases (▲), no change (●), and declines (▼). We show the absolute number and percent in the baseline year (FY20) compared to percentage change in the previous three years (FY17-19). In some instances, take undergraduate students at New Brunswick for example, there were increases in the absolute racial/ethnic (Black, Latinx, and/or Native American, not foreign-born) and socioeconomic (Pell-eligible) diversity of students but because of an increase in the total student population their percentages decreased. Since our interest is in equitable access, we want to see both the absolute number and the percentage of students from underrepresented groups grow as the total student population increases.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The findings from the University Equity Audit will shape the development of a university-wide diversity strategic planning process to be launched this academic year that brings in the voices, ideas, and energy of the diverse stakeholders in our beloved campus and extended community. We will take what we learned from the university equity audit to develop tools and methods that will allow us to look at the Chancellor-led units to see what they need to do to increase their opportunities for attaining inclusive excellence. Both steps are integral to developing a shared vision and strategy that acts on the recommendations outlined here, informed at all times by a clear understanding that diversity, equity, and inclusion lead us to excellence.

DEFINING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

DIVERSITY refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, age, religion, language, disability status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic region, and more.

EQUITY refers to actively working to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented full participation across differences in culture and circumstance, specifically redressing the exclusion of historically underrepresented groups in higher education. Attention to equity involves ensuring access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff in every stage of education and career development.

INCLUSION refers to the act of creating environments in which individuals and groups feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued by eliminating practices and behaviors that marginalize. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that all people can fully participate in the University's opportunities.