

## Your Question:

You asked for information on postsecondary equity bills, specifically legislation addressing attainment goals.

## Our Response:

Although postsecondary institutions have become [increasingly diverse](#) over the last two decades, racial inequity persists in [enrollment](#), [retention](#) and [attainment](#). For example, the [attainment rate](#) for white students in the United States is 47.9%, compared to an attainment rate of 31.6% for Black students, 24.6% for Native American students and 24.5% for Hispanic students.

State policymakers have attempted to address these disparities through system-level policy initiatives and state legislative action. Due to the nature of [postsecondary governance](#), state higher education systems typically lead in this work. The following response includes state legislative examples, system-level strategic plans and policy initiatives, and relevant resources on advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in postsecondary education.

### Legislative Examples

Below we have identified pending bills that may be of interest to you regarding higher education and equity, with implications for attainment rates. We have divided them into the following categories: Recruitment, admissions and funding requirements; higher education funding tied to certain student populations; policies to increase diversification of certain professions; and task forces/committees.

#### Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Requirements

**California [SB 785](#)** – Would require a minimum of incoming classes at participating California State University campuses to have a certain percentage of students from low-income households, first-generation students or students from communities that are underrepresented in postsecondary education.

**Minnesota [HF 993/SF 975](#)** – Would create a direct admissions pilot program to automatically offer conditional admission to Minnesota high school seniors based on a number of criteria. It would also require an evaluation of the program's impact on students with less college knowledge, students from low-income households and students from populations underserved in higher education. The program would need to include high schools with a significant number of students of color, students from low-income households or both.

**New Jersey [A 310](#)** – Would direct the secretary of higher education to create a performance-based funding plan for four-year public institutions of higher education; this plan must include a measure of "reducing achievement gaps for low-income students, minority students, and transfer students."

**New Jersey [S 2793](#)** – Would require public institutions of higher education to develop a faculty and student diversity plan. This plan would establish goals for increasing the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and students for each academic program at the institution. It would also create related annual reporting requirements.

## Higher Education Funding Tied to Certain Student Populations

**California [SB 737](#)** – Would authorize the Student Aid Commission to apportion funds to increase the accessibility of postsecondary educational opportunities to a newly-expanded list of student groups, including the following: students who are at risk of becoming homeless, students who are immigrants or from mixed immigration status households, students who are current or former foster youth, students who identify as LGBTQI+, students who have a disability and students who are part of a historically underserved communities.

**New Mexico [HB 87](#)** – Would appropriate funds to the University of New Mexico’s board of regents to comply with court rulings in a lawsuit in order to improve educational outcomes for “certain public school and higher education students and families.” It would also include the following appropriations, among many others: funds to build “a higher education pipeline for Hispanic students,” funds to “assist African American students’ transition to higher education,” and funds for “American Indian student services, including student recruitment and retention.”

**Texas [HB 2030](#)** – Would establish a competitive grant program for regional postsecondary education collaboratives to improve postsecondary educational outcomes for students from low-income households in Texas. Grantees would have to, among other things, provide full tuition scholarships for two academic years at a public junior college; build partnerships, outreach and supports; and measure the collaborative’s success by achievement of increasing postsecondary enrollment, completion and career entry for assisted students.

## Policies to Increase Diversification of Certain Professions

**Maryland [SB 526](#)** – Would establish a Legal Education Success Collaborative between the University of Baltimore School of Law, the University of Maryland School of Law and the Maryland Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The purpose of this collaborative would be to increase diversity in the legal field.

**Oregon [HB 2949](#)** – Would establish a program to expand the mental health care workforce in communities of individuals who are Black, indigenous and people of color. This program would provide mental health care provider pipeline development, scholarships for undergraduate students, stipends for graduate students, mental health care workforce retention initiatives and a student loan forgiveness program for certain mental health care providers.

## Task Forces/Committees:

**Massachusetts [HD 1748/SD 421](#)** – Would create a requirement to review and make recommendations for a “comprehensive redesign and reform of the financial aid system” with a goal of increasing student access to higher education, improving the affordability of higher education, and reducing opportunity and achievement gaps among students, particularly for students of color and disadvantaged communities.

**Oregon [HB 2907](#)** – Would appropriate funds for the Office of Community College and Workforce Development to address “inequities in educational attainment among systematically marginalized communities and to support innovations and best practices”.

**South Carolina [H 3240](#)** – Would create a committee to study educational activities and learning outcomes for different racial and ethnic student groups in South Carolina and to identify means for successfully improving those learning outcomes. This committee would be required to include postsecondary education in its study, including an analysis of college participation, undergraduate enrollment, six-year college graduation rates and financial aid.

## Higher Education System Examples

The following state examples represent a sampling of state and system plans specific to diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as state higher education master plans that feature equity prominently.

### California

The California Community College System has [partnered with](#) the [Race and Equity Center](#) at USC and the [Center for Urban Education](#) (the two organizations recently [merged](#)) to address racial gaps and effectively implement equity strategies. The Center for Urban Education utilizes various tools to assist systems, including an [equity scorecard](#), [STEM toolkit](#), vital signs [data](#) and institution [self-assessments](#). They have also identified and help systems implement [five key equity practices](#).

The Center for Urban Education has partnered with other higher education systems in the past, including:

- [Colorado](#)
- [Pennsylvania](#)
- [Wisconsin](#)

### Colorado

The [Colorado Rises strategic plan](#) from the Colorado Department of Higher Education identifies [erasing equity gaps](#) as one of their four goals. The plan sets a 66% attainment goal for Hispanic, Native American and African American students by 2025. It also aspires to increase certificate and credential completion, especially in high-demand fields, by students of color and students from low-income households. Colorado Rises specifically cites strategies implemented under the previous master plan, [Colorado Competes](#), such as first-year intensive coaching, peer advising and community-focused engagement of students.

### Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (MDHE) began developing an [equity agenda](#) for the state's higher education system in 2018. The vision statement for the work called out the importance of reevaluating state policies in order to "significantly raise the enrollment, attainment, and long-term success outcomes among under-represented student populations." The state has developed specific indicators for measuring state equity goals addressing access and affordability, student success and completion, workforce alignment and fiscal stewardship. MDHE outlined [five pillars](#) (slide 4) with relevant policy examples to inform initiatives that advance the equity agenda:

- Affordability
  - Financial aid redesign
- Campus Climate
  - Climate surveys
- Student Supports
  - Wraparound services and culturally responsive supports
- Policy Innovations
  - Internal policy audits
- Evidence
  - Data collection expansion and data-driven decision making

The department of higher education rolled out the [Performance Measurement Reporting System](#) in 2019 to provide information on the success of these efforts and institution and system progress toward meeting the goals laid out in the agenda.

Finally, this ECS [blog post](#) authored by Carlos E. Santiago, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education, highlights three “must-do’s” for the Massachusetts equity agenda.

### Minnesota

Minnesota developed a higher education [equity plan](#) with a goal of eliminating equity gaps in state institutions by 2030. They provide six key tenets, as well as strategies to drive these goals forward:

- Enhanced Access
- Student Academic Success
- Student Engagement and Support
- Data-Guided Decision-Making
- Financial Resource and Support
- Workforce Diversity and Strategic Talent Management

The [Office of Equity and Inclusion](#) released a [strategic plan](#) for 2020-23 to work toward these goals. The office identified the following priorities:

- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Expertise and Strategy
- Equity in Academic Outcomes
- Civil Rights Compliance
- Campus Climate

### New York

The State University of New York (SUNY) system’s [office for diversity, equity and inclusion](#) houses the diversity [task force](#), which was charged with developing systemwide policies to support diverse students and faculty and increase campus diversity. The SUNY diversity, equity and inclusion [policy](#) provides specific action items to increase diversity and improve the campus climate for diverse students and faculty, including the appointment of a campus diversity officer and the development of a campus strategic diversity, equity and inclusion plan. The diversity task force is charged with reviewing and approving plans to ensure alignment with the requirements outlined in policy. The plans can be found [here](#).

### North Carolina

The University of North Carolina System Board of Governors convened a [task force](#) to examine the legacy of racism in UNC institutions. The task force conducted a systemwide survey and solicited stakeholder feedback to develop [final recommendations](#).

Here are the six recommendations developed by the committee:

- **Diversity and Equity Staffing to Support Inclusion and Belonging.** The system office should establish an executive position that reports directly to the president to implement the recommendations of the UNC System Racial Equity Task Force and oversee future equity and inclusion initiatives. All faculty, staff and students should have access to a diversity, equity and inclusion representative and a safe space to talk confidentially about inequities.
- **Representation and Retention at All Levels of the University.** Examine and improve recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention policies and practices to build a racially diverse and equitable university of students, faculty, staff and top leadership.
- **Data and Accountability.** Establish reporting requirements, accountability mechanisms, and processes that support a sustainable procedure for collecting race and equity data and the implementation of strategies that will help build support of a more equitable UNC System.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Education.** Establish comprehensive programming for all students, faculty and staff of the UNC system, and provide mandatory training for those individuals charged with ensuring

compliance with diversity and inclusion standards, including institutional leadership, department chairs, division leaders and others who serve in a supervisory role.

- **Programs and Activities in Support of Racial Equity and Inclusion.** Develop and support programs that improve equitable outcomes.
- **Campus Policing.** Build upon and make consistent across institutions training, procedures and data collection practices that effectively support and promote racial equity in campus policing. Strengthen partnerships with other campus departments to facilitate alternative and/or shared responses to certain crises.

The report includes the rationale for each recommendation as well as action steps for implementation.

### Oregon

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) adopted the [Oregon Equity Lens](#) in 2014 to help the state to attain their [40-40-20 goal](#). The [purpose](#) of the equity lens is to clearly articulate the shared goals of the state, support the development of intentional policies and inform systemic investments. The equity lens highlights the role of systemic barriers and explicitly recognizes historically underserved communities, with an emphasis on racial equity. Recent HECC equity initiatives can be found [here](#).

### Virginia

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia's [strategic plan](#) prominently features equity in their goals, strategies and metrics. The plan identifies [four goals and associated strategies](#) (those related to equity are included below):

- Provide affordable access for all
  - Expand outreach to PK-12 and traditionally underserved populations.
  - Align state appropriations, financial aid and tuition and fees such that students have broader access to postsecondary education opportunities regardless of their ability to pay.
- Optimize student success for work and life
  - Provide effective academic and student services infrastructures focused on persistence and completion.
- Drive change and improvement through innovation and investment.
- Advance the economic and cultural prosperity of the commonwealth and its regions.

The completion rate [metric](#) included in the plan specifically focuses on underrepresented populations, with a target of annual improvement in completion rates of students that closes the success gap between underrepresented populations (URP) and non-URP students by 2030.

The 2019 [annual report](#) from SCHEV provides an update on progress toward these goals and further recommendations for 2020.

### Washington

The Washington Student Achievement Council's (WSAC) [strategic plan](#) for 2019-21 features an equity goal and strategies for achieving it that addresses both K-12 and higher education. The plan identifies closing opportunity gaps by confronting barriers for underserved students and providing support for underrepresented students throughout their academic careers as one of four overarching goals. To further this goal, WSAC proposes a systemic approach that begins with the following:

- Increase the number of counselors.
- Expand support for College Bound Scholars.
- Increase financial aid applications with additional training and events.
- Improve dual-credit opportunities for students from low-income households.

- Expand student supports on college campuses.

## Relevant Resources

The following resources provide insight into institution- and system-level best practices for enhancing equity.

- [A Higher Education Equity Agenda in Response to COVID-19](#), The Education Trust
- [A Vision for Equity](#), Association of American Colleges and Universities
- [Establishing a State-Level Postsecondary Advising Network](#), Education Commission of the States
- [Hard Truths: Why Only Race-Conscious Policies Can Fix Racism in Higher Education](#), The Education Trust
- [Making Equity Part of Your State's Postsecondary Planning](#), Center for Urban Education
- [Overcoming Common Challenges to an Equity Agenda in State Policy](#), Center for Urban Education
- [Postsecondary Funding: Supporting Students of Color](#), Education Commission of the States
- [State Agencies and Systems of Higher Education Leading for Equity](#), SHEEO