

A stylized illustration featuring a dark brown background with horizontal bands of color. In the upper left, a dark brown hand is reaching out. To its right, a blue hand is visible. Below the dark brown hand, a red-handled tool with a blue cord and a light blue oval head is shown. Several flowers are scattered throughout: a pink flower with a yellow center in the upper right, a light pink flower with a yellow center in the middle left, a bright pink flower with an orange center in the bottom left, and a light pink flower with an orange center in the bottom center. The overall style is graphic and modern.

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FREE REPORT

When Building a Diverse Leadership, Emphasize Culture, Not Quotas

COLLEGES increasingly serve students from underrepresented minority groups and low-income backgrounds. But the faculties and administrations those students encounter are [not nearly as diverse](#). Where should an institution trying to diversify its administration start, and how should it measure success? Should it strive for some regionally based demographic count, aiming to match this percentage of one group and that percentage of another in various offices?

Probably not, DEI experts say. For starters, a numerical approach can lead to [legal questions and quagmires](#).

More practically, for most colleges, numerical targets will be

difficult if not impossible to achieve quickly because the institutions are up against not just regional but national competition for talent. That competition won't just come from other colleges — academe, after all, is not the only sector putting a premium on diversity. In areas like finance and data science, for example, candidates from underrepresented groups are particularly scarce and sought after.

That doesn't mean a college should throw up its hands and blame pipeline issues. It does mean that a college, particularly one that doesn't have the resources to pay top salaries in the ["great resignation"](#) or ["great reshuffling"](#) labor climate, should avoid going after unrealistic, short-term demographic targets. Doing so is a recipe for failure and disillusionment. In higher education, as in the rest of the economy, the labor market has been [tilting heavily](#) toward the applicant. In March 2022, 4.5 million Americans [quit or changed jobs](#) and employers posted a record

11.5 million job openings. Colleges are having trouble, for example, hiring and keeping CFOs period, let alone CFOs of color.

In that light, progress becomes even more challenging.

Colleges should take more of a triage approach, experts say, by conducting equity audits and identifying the positions and offices that are most lacking in diversity, then working to improve those cultural-climate issues and hiring practices first. That's not a one-time sequence. Additional equity audits that reveal progress made — or not made — need to be built into the diversity plans of a college or individual unit. As with all strategic plans, it's a cycle that should keep repeating.

Why focus on the cultural climate? Because if your culture does not nurture diversity,

recruiting administrators will be harder and retaining them harder still. "It's one thing to

talk about the compositional diversity, but more important is to create a more-inclusive climate," says Hironao Okahana, assistant vice president for research for the American Council on Education. "This is definitely a leadership moment."

Even if you can somehow pull off some remarkable short-term hiring goals, if those hires are uncomfortable with the campus culture, if they feel isolated, disrespected, unappreciated, or tokenized, they'll be poached by other institutions. Colleges can get a reputation for attracting diverse top talent, but they can also get a reputation for losing it.

"Do not make someone recruitable," warns Paulette Granberry Russell, president of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. "Once they become recruitable, it takes a lot to keep them there, and sometimes even money won't be enough of an incentive for someone to stay."

"How did we get here?" That's the question that Christopher Whitt, vice chancellor for

By ALEXANDER C. KAFKA

Cover illustration by Eric Petersen for The Chronicle

diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Denver and a board member of the diversity-officers association, says colleges need to ask themselves. “What are the areas in which our systems may have produced less-than-desirable outcomes from a DEI perspective?”

He recommends working from a positive, solution-oriented stance, not a blame-casting, finger-pointing one. “We can have nice people in a flawed system,” he says. View this difficult, painstaking work — improving those systems — as a gift, he says. “This is our moment to send something to the next generation.”

“You have to fix your house first” is how Meacie Fairfax, associate director of strategic research with the education and technology firm EAB, puts it. Many colleges, she says, are making a concerted effort to do just that.

“Do not make someone recruitable. Once they become recruitable, it takes a lot to keep them there.”

In diversity work, don’t dawdle, but also take the long view, says Fairfax. Educational inequities and biases stemming from centuries of colonialist history aren’t reversed overnight. And since the George Floyd murder and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests, she says, colleges have realized “that this is a perpetual journey.”

To better prepare for that journey, a number of colleges in the two years since Floyd’s death have elevated senior diversity officers from dean level to vice-presidential level

and created task forces across campus units. Those task forces are methodically outlining goals and strategies through 2030 and even 2050. The level of detail and transparency with which they are sharing those goals and holding themselves accountable, she says, is “absolutely new.”

Equity audits — collecting data on barriers to participation, access, and opportunity — gained momentum in K-12 but are increasingly part of the conversation in higher education, too. Although they began mostly in connection with student needs, they are also becoming more linked to faculty, staff, administrative, and leadership needs as colleges come to better appreciate the ties between the student experience and the employee experience.

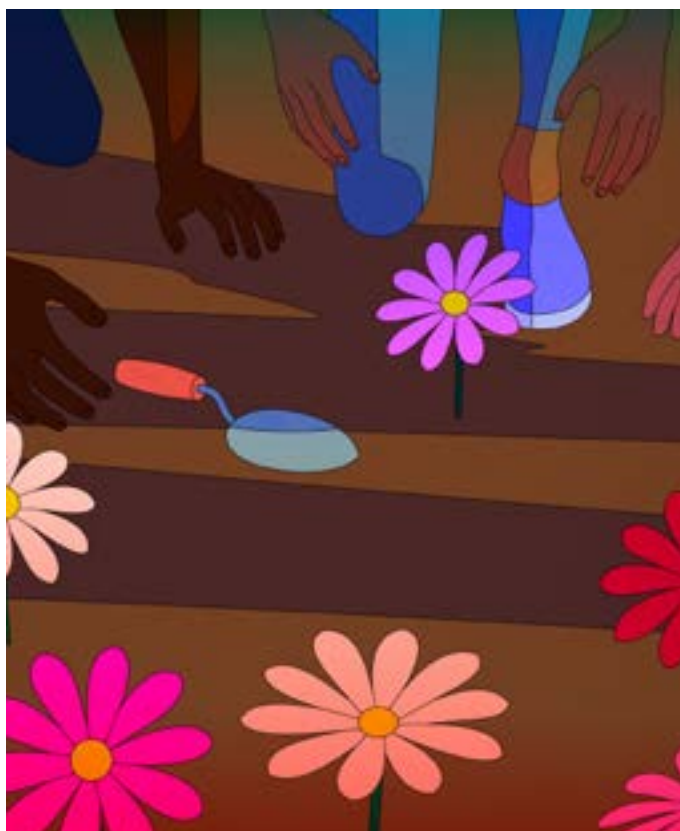
View this difficult, painstaking work as a gift: “This is our moment to send something to the next generation.”

For example, Portland Community College, in Oregon, as explained in a recent [commentary](#) from the American Association of Community Colleges, is examining leadership training and professional development, as well as employee hiring and human resources alongside student success; planning, policies, and procedures; culturally responsive pedagogy; student-support services; and student retention and enrollment. They are all vertebrae along the same institutional spine, and for the college to function well, they must be aligned and sturdy.

A college must determine not just where it is lacking in diversity but also how to prioritize closing gaps. Fairfax says that EAB recommends what it calls an “institutional strategy index” that entails 33 activities to improve vision and strategy, student experi-



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TAKEAWAYS

An inclusive and equitable campus culture is necessary to recruit and retain talented, diverse employees.

Equity audits are helpful tools for setting priorities.

Effective anti-bias education needs to be sequential, building upon previous training, and specific to a job.

Anti-bias simulations and study groups can be helpful. Shaming and blaming are not.

ence, faculty and staff experience, and other factors.

Effective Anti-Bias Training

Anti-bias training sits poorly with some people, who get increasingly bored and resentful each time they are compelled to participate. Because colleges are coming to view diversity efforts as perpetual, employees might be compelled to go through such training quite a few times.

View this difficult, painstaking work as a gift: “This is our moment to send something to the next generation.”

Are the naysayers disgruntled because they’re bigots oblivious to their societal privilege? In rare cases, maybe. But it could well be, experts say, that the objectionable instruction just isn’t very good.

For Mark Bauerlein, an emeritus professor of English at Emory University, it’s a patronizing, Maoist-tinged assumption of original racist sin that feels outlandish.

“If someone came in and told me to confess my inherent biases, first I want you to confess yours and say what qualifies you to talk to me about mine.” He compares the situation to Orwell’s antagonist and protagonist in *1984*. “Before I let you probe into my head like O’Brien working on Winston Smith, I think we should put you on the hot seat. Is that a deal?” That kind of training strips away one’s dignity, he says, but college employees don’t object more strenuously because “people will put up with so much just to get a decent job.”



U. OF DENVER

Christopher Whitt, vice chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the U. of Denver.

Yet, while diversity advocates might insist on the importance of anti-bias training, they agree with Bauerlein that if that work feels like a dystopian novel or the Spanish Inquisition, and if multiple trainings are redundant harangues, something is very wrong. If employees' primary takeaways are that all white people are evil and male white people are particularly satanic, you've probably hired the wrong anti-bias consultant.

Adrianna Kezar, director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California, says that while the details can become complicated, the underlying goal for anti-bias training is simple: Create a culture in which students, faculty and staff members, and administrators from

diverse backgrounds can thrive. The key to good training is to make it specific to a job, build each element on what's gone before, and emphasize knowledge and introspection, not shame and blame.

In practical terms, that means collegewide trainings (or as some would rather call them, education or engagement) probably aren't the way to go, she says, at least not past the most basic level. Instead, tailor the training to the setting — undergraduate liberal arts, medical school, law school, registrar's office, admissions team. Tailor the work further to the trainee's role: professor, department head, coach, food-service officer interacting with outside vendors.

The first level of training for new employees

DIVERSITY TERMINOLOGY

Here are some terms to know that are used by academics and others involved in diversity work.

Apida: Refers to Asian/Pacific Islander/Desi American. Desi is sometimes used to describe members of the South Asian diaspora, among them people with origins on the Indian subcontinent.

Bipoc: An umbrella term that includes those who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

DEI: Refers to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

MSI: Used to describe minority-serving institutions, which enroll a significant percentage of minority students. Such institutions could include tribal colleges, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs). A college is considered an HSI if at least 25 percent of its full-time undergraduates are Hispanic.

might include some general principles about inherent bias, stereotyping, harassment, and office etiquette. But subsequent levels should get quickly into particulars, like how to determine what credentials are really necessary for a position being filled, how to word job ads, where to place job ads to attract more diverse candidates, and how (and where and when) to conduct interviews.

Subsequent training for managers might include best practices in conducting yearly evaluations, tenure and post-tenure reviews, or how to handle harassment complaints or bias incidents. At top administrative levels, training might entail labor-market analysis, the legal landscape and risk-management

principles, and expert-guest analysis of sociological and political trends that will affect your college several years out.

The best training might not look like training at all, Kezar says, but rather study and peer-support groups within and across institutions, with colleagues or counterparts elsewhere. Critique a book, discuss hiring or promotion dilemmas, scrutinize an awkward situation and how it might have been better handled.

Fairfax, of EAB, advocates increasingly sophisticated software simulations of hiring, tenure and promotion, and other interviews that administrators can participate in on their own time and in private. The programs point out possibly inappropriate assumptions or potentially offensive wording. Hey, so maybe you mess up — but in private with only a simulated applicant affected — and now you know better for when you're in that delicate hiring situation for real.

Whatever form anti-bias training takes, says Granberry Russell of the diversity-of-ficers' association, one crucial point that anyone involved in hiring should come away with is the need to question "this ambiguous thing called 'fit.'" If you can't picture the job candidate melding with your department or division, is that good or bad? Maybe there is a homogeneity, a staleness, an insularity, or, yes, even a downright prejudice of whatever kind that needs to be recognized and disrupted, and maybe this candidate is the perfect person to help you and your colleagues begin that process.

How 2 Institutions Commit to Diversity Work

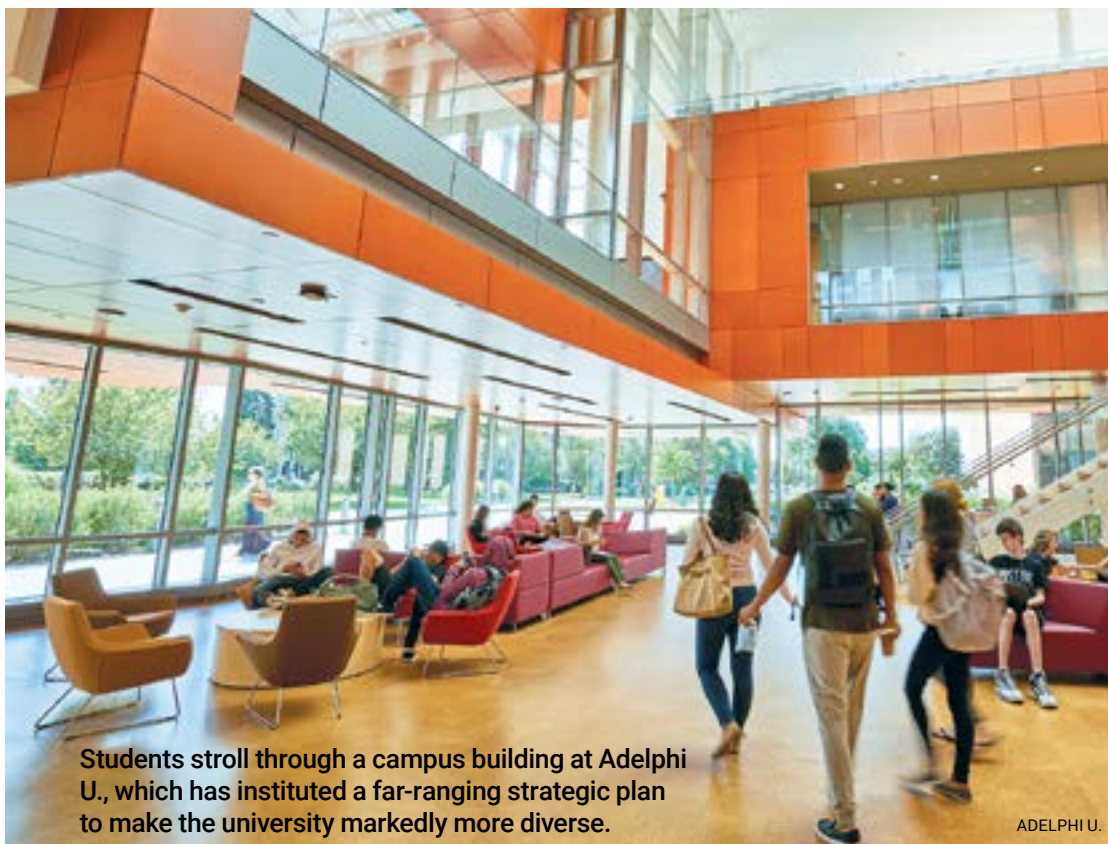
What do multipronged efforts to achieve administrative diversity and close gaps in equity actually look like? Adelphi University, in New York, and Wheaton College, in Massachusetts, provide two examples of institutions where those efforts are being put into practice.

ADELPHI U. : Linking Diversity to Student Success

In 2015, Christine M. Riordan became the first female president of Adelphi University. With a Ph.D. in organizational psychology and an M.B.A., she is an expert on leadership development, team building, and diversity and inclusion. It was no accident, then, that she brought to Adelphi rigorous attention to issues of diversity and equity.

Staying committed to diversity work is

crucial to keeping good leaders and effectively serving students, says Kristen Capezza, Adelphi's vice president for enrollment management and communications. From student ambassadors to the president and the board, she says, students and prospective students should see a campus that looks like them and can help students of various populations deal with their trials and tribulations.



The Challenge:

To diversify the administration, faculty, and staff to more effectively serve students and help them succeed

The Strategy:

Restructure and hire around diversity goals, educate employees, and emphasize accountability

The Results:

From the boardroom to the classroom, a markedly more diverse campus

Institutional evolution is cyclical, she says, in that a diverse campus culture attracts and helps retain talented leaders, who in turn help to enrich that culture. Particularly in the current challenging labor market, if diverse leaders aren't supported in their work, "you're going to end up losing your talent," she says, because good managers in general, and especially good managers from underrepresented groups, "might have offers coming at them left and right that are very attractive."

That's the why, and here's the how: In 2016 Adelphi, in New York, created an Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the position of vice president for diversity and inclusion. It instituted new hiring practices — among them diversity training and optional tests "to help gain self-awareness into subtle assumptions that affect judgment" — and began actively recruiting scholars of color. From 2013 to 2016, the number of new scholars of color rose from 27 to 45 percent. Between 2015 and 2021, the share of minority faculty members rose from 23 to 29 percent, university officials say.

A personalized enrollment strategy to welcome more students of color connected applicants to enrollment advisers and faculty members throughout the admissions process. That has contributed, since 2015, to a 76-percent increase in the number of new Black students and a 43-percent increase in the number of Hispanic students. Minority students now account for 43 percent of the university's student body. The Campus Pride Index awarded Adelphi a Premiere Campus ranking for its LGBTQ-plus-friendly counseling, health, safety, recruitment, and retention.

More than 640 faculty and staff members have participated in diversity-certificate programs through 76 workshops. Forty-three percent of President Riordan's team are minority leaders, including the first Black woman and the first Black man to hold leadership positions, and 57 percent of the team are women.

The Board of Trustees has changed, too, electing eight people of color (one-third of trustees) and seven women (40 percent of trustees). It also elected its first Black man as board chair.

Adelphi's strategic plan, called Momentum, includes administrative infrastructure to support these multipronged efforts: An Academic Diversity Implementation Team evaluates ways to incorporate social-justice and race education into curricula. An Office of Community Concerns and Resolution responds immediately to any reports of discrimination and abuse. Students can weigh in on diversity issues through an Equitable Adelphi Action Team. Systemic racism is examined through healing circles as part of the university's designation as a [Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Campus Center](#). (Dozens of those centers — organized by the American Association of Colleges and Universities and supported by the Kellogg Foundation — are being created "to help communities embrace racial healing and eliminate conscious and unconscious beliefs in a hierarchy of human value.")

Momentum 2, the next phase of the plan, will carry this work through 2027.

Language matters. Asked if Adelphi was getting pushback on these efforts, Capezza says, "The biggest area of pushback we've seen is when we begin to discuss 'mandated DEI training.'" That, she says, is one reason she prefers the term "education" to the word "training."

"You cannot train someone to be antiracist and inclusive," she says. "Training seems to imply you teach them how to do something, but they don't necessarily internalize the transformation of thought. You must educate to truly help one unlearn and correct for past learned and implicit biases. The shift in language and sharing of goals has helped move our campus past the pushback stage."

Jacqueline Jones LaMon, Adelphi's vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion,

fears that even “education” connotes deficiencies for which employees need to go back to school. She uses the word “engagement.”

The emphasis of that engagement, LaMon says, is on the specific applications and

implications for a job or situation. What does diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging look like “from the purview of your particular unit? ... Everyone has to own their part in the DEI structure.”

WHEATON COLLEGE: Weaving Diversity Throughout the Campus

Wheaton College was founded in 1834 as a female seminary to help rectify the exclusion of women from higher education. The Massachusetts liberal-arts college has been coed since 1988.

In 2017, to intensify its social-justice efforts and better serve students, Wheaton adopted a [strategic plan](#) for diversity and inclusion. The main administrative instrument to achieve the plan’s goals is called Diversity, Equity, and Access Leadership, or DEAL, which was created in 2018.

[DEAL](#) weaves diversity-related priorities throughout the college and offers programs to help students, employees, and alumni alike understand the importance of an inclusive mind-set. DEAL is collaborative in itself, with three co-chairs — a staff member, a faculty member, and the associate vice president for institutional equity and belonging. They lead committees focusing on educational programming, community engagement, and assessment, among other topics.

Among Wheaton’s DEI achievements since 2016, it has:

- secured a \$1-million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to support inclusive excellence in STEM education.
- administered a campus-climate survey with subsequent discussion of results.
- surveyed staff compensation to make pay more equitable.
- offered implicit-bias training sessions for faculty search committees.
- updated the college’s bias-incident reporting and response protocols.

- launched the college’s “Compass Curriculum,” which reflects “Wheaton’s core principles of intellectual curiosity, global citizenship, experiential learning, social justice, diversity and inclusion, and collaborative community.”

- formulated — in direct response to the outcry after George Floyd’s murder — “[10 Action Steps Toward Racial Justice](#)” to avoid producing or reproducing systemic inequality and exclusion.

- issued public guidelines to support gender inclusion.

Since 2016, Wheaton has created scholarships focused on first-generation, low-income, and refugee students; a first-generation-themed house for junior and senior students; and a task force to improve the campus experience for first-generation and low-income students.

The college provides updates on its progress. For instance, like many institutions, it is examining its history with regard to “any potential complicity with Indigenous land grabbing, slavery, or racism.” One result was a course called “Wrestling With History: Wheaton College and Black Lives Matter,” offered in the spring of 2021 in partnership with the theater and alumni-relations departments and the archives of Wheaton’s Wallace Library.

One of the 10 Action Steps Toward Racial Justice was establishment of a senior-level position focused on inclusion and equity. Shaya Gregory Poku, associate vice president for institutional equity and belonging, joined a cabinet whose members are now 50

Shaya Gregory Poku, associate vice president for institutional equity and belonging at Wheaton College, in Massachusetts, attends a teaching event focused on innovative approaches to inclusive learning.



KEITH NORDSTROM

The Challenge:

To weave diversity, equity, inclusion, and a general climate of belonging throughout college programs to boost student recruitment and success

The Strategy:

Adopt a strategic plan, create a leadership unit accountable for overseeing its progress, and be transparent in redressing historical biases

The Results:

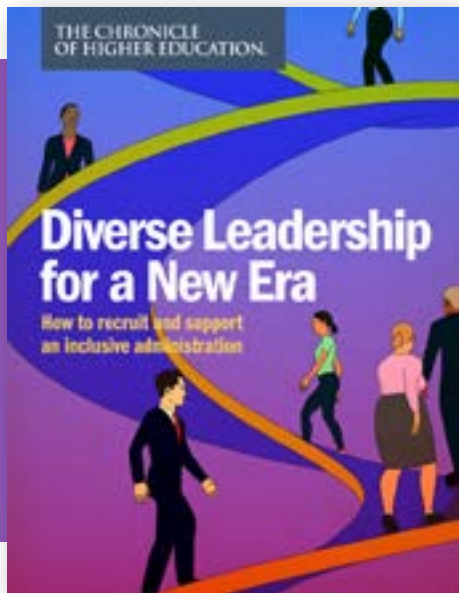
A more diverse leadership and staff, curricular changes, and new resources for underserved students

percent female-identifying and 40 percent minority. Since 2017, Wheaton has also hired an LGBTQ-plus engagement coordinator, an interfaith-engagement coordinator, and a director for its Center for Social Justice and Community Impact.

The percentage of Bipoc faculty members — those who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color — increased from 18 percent in 2016 to 21 percent in 2020. The share of minority staff members also increased, from 8.3

percent in 2016 to 10.6 percent in 2020. Poku says there has been no employee pushback of note, although “people have questions on what it means to do this work well and how to do it while still honoring academic freedom and a plurality of political and personal beliefs.”

In a recent interview with Wheaton’s magazine, she says: “This will be a long journey, and I have to help the campus keep that in mind.” ■



“Ideally a university is served by administrators who do indeed represent a wide variety of perspectives but who also maintain generosity and openness to one another’s views.”

PURCHASE THE FULL REPORT

Diverse Leadership for a New Era

There is a widespread belief that diversity in leadership furthers colleges’ missions, particularly as they serve increasing numbers of low-income and underrepresented minority students.

Diverse Leadership for a New Era examines whether colleges are meeting goals they set following the 2020 racial justice movements; best practices regarding mentorship; personnel pipeline issues; inherent-bias training; and what lessons might be learned from colleges that have large numbers of minority administrators. This report also looks at the role of trustees in diversity efforts, along with equity audits, benchmarking, and other tools colleges are using.

PURCHASE THIS REPORT TO LEARN:

- ✓ How colleges are using training programs, mentorships, and job shadowing to recruit the next generation of college administrators
- ✓ How to make sure your college’s training and recruitment policies are inclusive, bias-free, and supportive
- ✓ Why many institutions are looking internally to “grow their own” administrative ranks, and how they’re doing it
- ✓ Why creating strong retention policies are just as important as recruitment policies

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