

Achieving Racial Equity in Postsecondary Education: Implications for Institutional Researchers

**CAIR 45th Annual Conference:
“Ethics in Institutional Research: Riding the Waves of Data”**

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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION
CAIR
for INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Land Acknowledgement

For millennia, the Kumeyaay people have been a part of this land. This land has nourished, healed, protected and embraced them for many generations in a relationship of balance and harmony. As members of the San Diego State community we acknowledge this legacy. We promote this balance and harmony. We find inspiration from this land; the land of the Kumeyaay.

Objectives

- Highlight institutional barriers that thwart systematic efforts to close racial equity gaps
- Discuss the critical role that institutional researches play in institutional change efforts
- Propose intentional strategies that can be enacted by researchers to advance racial equity.

Toward an Understanding of Equity

Equity refers to a heightened focus on groups experiencing **disproportionate impact** in order to remediate disparities in their **experiences** and **outcomes**.

Toward an Understanding of Equity

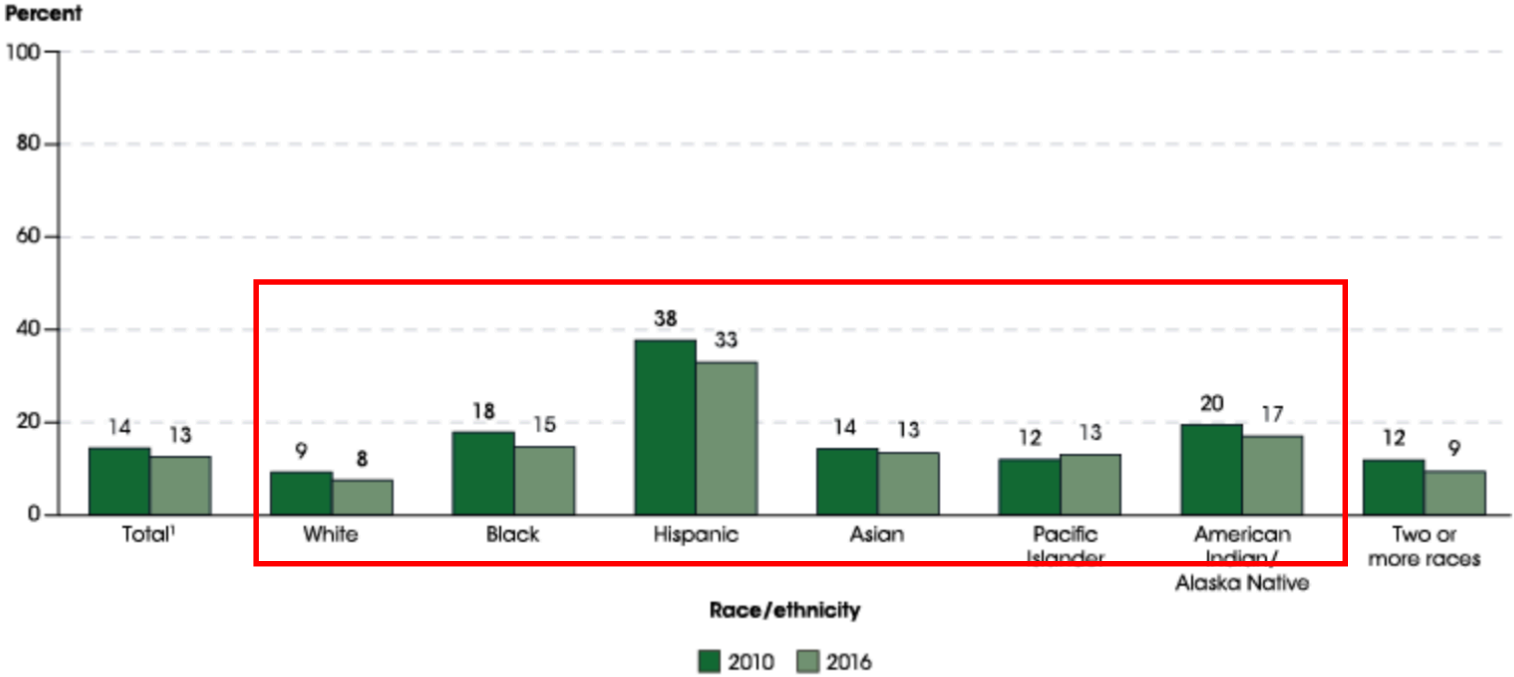
Equity refers to a heightened focus on groups experiencing **disproportionate impact** in order to remediate disparities in their **experiences** and **outcomes**.



- Racially Minoritized Students
- Former Foster Youth
- Students with Basic Needs Insecurities
- Students with Disabilities
- Justice-Impacted Students

U.S. High School Completion by Race/Ethnicity

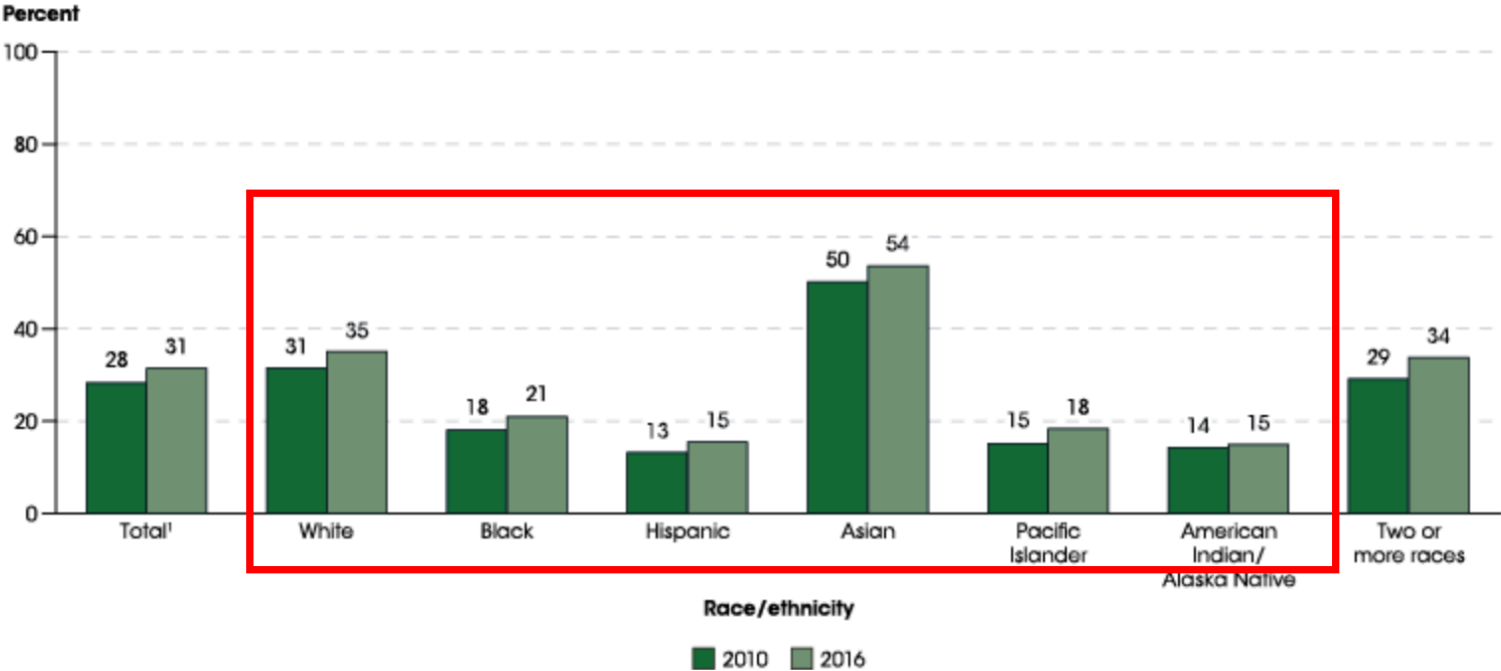
Figure 27.1. Percentage of adults age 25 and older who had not completed high school, by race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2016



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

U.S. Bachelor's Degree Attainment by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 27.3. Percentage of adults age 25 and older who had completed a bachelor's or higher degree, by race/ethnicity: 2010 and 2016



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

CCC Statewide Completion – 2011 Cohort

RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP	6-YEAR RATE
OVERALL	48%
African American/Black	36.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	35.1%
Asian American	65.2%
Filipino	56.5%
Hispanic/Latinx	41.6%
Pacific Islander	37.7%
White Non-Hispanic	53.9%

SOURCE: CCCC MIS Data Mart

UC 6-Year Graduation Rates—2011 Freshmen Cohort

RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP	6-YEAR RATE
OVERALL	83%
African American/Black	74%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	77%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	87%
Hispanic/Latinx	76%
White Non-Hispanic	85%

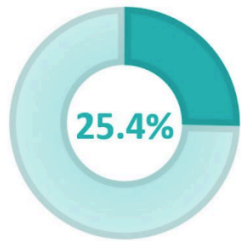
SOURCE: UC 2018 Accountability Report

CSU 6-Year Graduation Rates—2011 Freshmen Cohort

RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP	6-YEAR RATE
OVERALL	59.4%
Pell	53.6%
Non Pell	64.8%
URM	52.4%
Non URM	64.9%
1st Gen	52.9%

SOURCE: CSU Student Success Dashboard

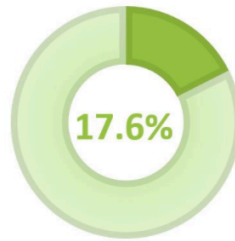
U.S. Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2018



Native American



Black



Hispanic



White



Asian

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Equity-Mindedness

- **SYSTEMIC AWARENESS:** recognizing the ways in which systemic inequities disadvantage minoritized people in a range of social institutions and contexts (education, employment, healthcare, the criminal justice system, etc.)
- **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY:** (re)framing outcome disparities as an indication of institutional underperformance rather than students' underperformance;
- **RACIAL AFFIRMATION:** intentionally affirming students' racial/ethnic identities and seeing them as assets (rather than deficits) that can be leveraged to facilitate their success.
- **CRITICAL REFLECTION:** critically reflecting upon one's role and responsibilities (as a faculty member, student affairs staff, administrator, counselor, institutional researchers etc.) and the ways in which one enables inequity to persist.
- **AUTHENTIC CARE:** having a vested interest in students' lives; being genuinely concerned about their well-being; and being personally invested in their success.

E. M. Bensimon

Equity-Mindedness and Race Consciousness

An educator cannot proclaim to be truly equity-minded without being conscious of the realities of race, the mundane racialized experiences of students of color, and the ways in which institutional racism shapes educational access, opportunity, and success in both historical and contemporary U.S. contexts.

Harris III & Wood

A photograph of a group of people in a meeting or conference room, overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. The people are seen from the back and side, with one person in the foreground having their hand raised as if speaking or gesturing. The background shows blurred lights and architectural elements of the room.

What are some barriers to racial equity?

What Derails Racial Equity?

- A culture of compliance
- A culture of complacency
- Deficit perspectives
- A lack of data transparency
- Instability
- Misappropriation and a lack of intentionality
- Poor conceptualization of equity
- Marginalization
- Siloing
- A lack of institutional buy-in
- Exceptionalism
- Toxic resistance
- Toxic support

What Derails Racial Equity?

COMPLIANCE: “Listen. Let’s just do what we have to do to secure our funding and get the state/district of our a***s.”

COMPLACENCY: “Why do we have to do this? Nothing’s going to change. The problem is so much bigger than me/us.”

DEFICIT PERSPECTIVES: “Now they want everyone to go right into college level math/English. That’s crazy. Some of these students have no chance of succeeding.”

DATA TRANSPARENCY: “We have all this data, but what does it mean? What should I make of it?”

INSTABILITY: “We had an amazing VP who was an equity champion, but she left to be president at another college.”

MISAPPROPRIATION AND INTENTIONALITY: “Can we use equity monies to buy this copier? It’s not exactly aligned with equity, but everyone will eventually benefit from it.”

What Derails Racial Equity?

POOR CONCEPTUALIZATION: “Let’s be honest, equity really means lowering standards and rigor.”

MARGINALIZATION: “All of our equity work takes place in EOP/Umoja/Puente.”

SILOING: “Oh no, the equity plan is due soon! Let’s have the dean and [one other person] write it.”

INSTITUTIONAL BUY-IN: “We have an equity plan, but no one really takes it seriously. We did what we had to do to get the money.”

EXCEPTIONALISM: “We aren’t like the other colleges in the State. We have the highest transfer rates to the UC so we don’t need to worry about equity.”

TOXIC RESISTANCE AND SUPPORT

A woman wearing a dark hijab and a dark jacket is shown in profile, looking towards the left. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

How can institutional researchers lead institutional efforts to achieve racial equity?

A photograph of a person walking down a long, brightly lit hallway. The hallway has a polished floor that reflects the overhead lights. The person is in the center of the frame, walking away from the camera. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark red color. The text "Be Race-Conscious" is centered in white, bold font.

Be Race-Conscious

Racism and Racial Inequity

**Racial
Inequities**

Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. New York: One World.

Racism and Racial Inequity

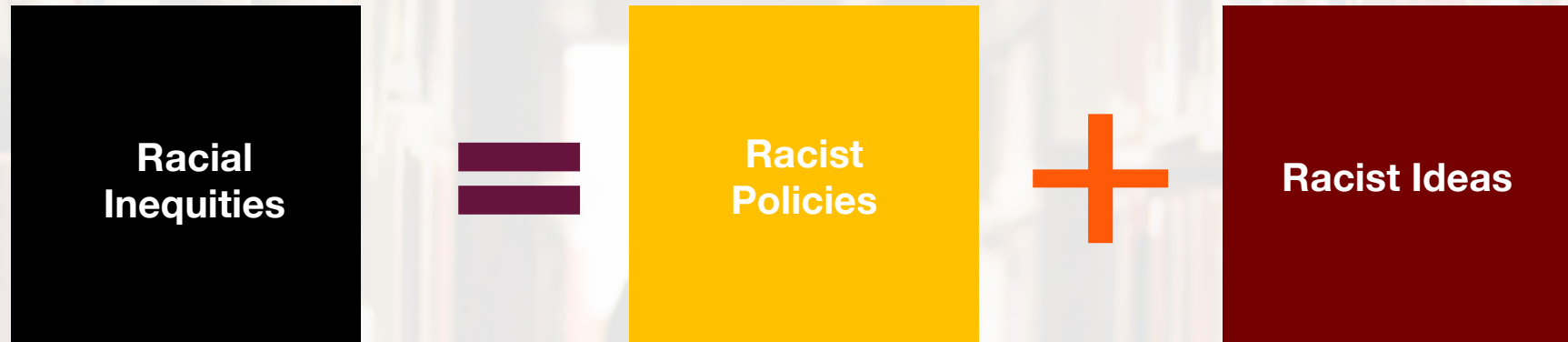
**Racial
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**Racist
Policies**

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Racism and Racial Inequity



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Racism and Racial Inequity

Racial Inequities

The Attainment Gap

The Wealth Gap

The Justice Gap

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Racism and Racial Inequity

**Racial
Inequities**



**Racist
Policies**

The Attainment Gap

The Wealth Gap

The Justice Gap

School Segregation

Red Lining

Mass Incarceration

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Racism and Racial Inequity

**Racial
Inequities**



**Racist
Policies**



Racist Ideas

The Attainment Gap

The Wealth Gap

The Justice Gap

School Segregation

Red Lining

Mass Incarceration

“BIPOC are intellectually inferior to whites.”

“BIPOC are financially irresponsible.”

“BIPOC are prone to violence and crime.”

Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. New York: One World.

Anti-Blackness

Anti-Blackness is having an intense disdain for Black people, Black history, Black intellect, and sociopolitical progress for Blacks. Anti-Blackness in the U.S. is rooted in the legally-sanctioned occupancy of Black lives and bodies beginning with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and sustained by the intentional, hegemonic, and ongoing systematic oppression of Blacks.

- Anti-Blackness is both a mindset and a practice. Yet, one need not have an anti-Black mindset to practice it.
- Anti-Blackness is sustained by social stereotypes and dehumanizing practices that make it socially acceptable to hate Blacks.
- Consuming Black culture (e.g. food, media, music, art, sport, etc.) is not an inoculation for anti-Blackness. For centuries, people and institutions have benefited from the appropriation of Black culture, the leveraging of Black talent, and the pilfering of Black genius while simultaneously hating Black people.
- Anti-Blackness is not just situated in the U.S. It is a global phenomenon.

A photograph of a graduation ceremony, overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The image shows a large crowd of graduates in caps and gowns. The text "Lift Minoritized Voices" is centered in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Lift Minoritized Voices

LIFT MINORITIZED VOICES

- **Proactively seek students' voices and experiences in and out of the classroom**
 - Questions to explore:
 - “What is it like to be a student of color here?”
 - “What are some challenges you have experienced during your time at this college?”
 - “Please describe your relationship with professors at this college.”
 - “How can the college/school/university do a better job of supporting students who share your background?”
- **Intentionally explore the intersection of racial/ethnic identity with other salient identities: LGBT students, parents, adult learners, student-athletes, disabilities, justice-impacted, veterans, foster youth, homeless, transfer students**
- **Believe what they say!**
- **Make the findings public**

A photograph of a classroom scene, overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. In the foreground, a young man is seen from the side, looking towards the left with his right hand raised. Behind him, other students are visible, some also with their hands raised, suggesting an interactive learning environment. The background shows a typical classroom setting with a whiteboard and ceiling lights.

Critically Examine Student Conduct Data

CRITICALLY EXAMINE STUDENT CONDUCT DATA

- **Are minoritized students overrepresented amongst those referred to student conduct for campus policy violations?**
- **Who are the sources of referrals for minoritized students (faculty, residence hall coordinators, campus police)?**
- **Are sanctions equitably applied?**
- **Do students have access to an advocate?**



**Disaggregate Student Success Data to Reveal
Hidden Patterns of Inequity**

DISAGGREGATE STUDENT SUCCESS DATA TO REVEAL HIDDEN PATTERNS OF RACIAL INEQUITY

- **Access**

- Proportion of minoritized students who applied, enrolled, and were admitted to the university
- Proportion of minoritized graduates of local high schools enrolled
- Proportion of minoritized student who were admitted to their desired major/program of study

- **Campus Effort**

- Minoritized student-to-faculty ratio
- Minoritized student representation on student government
- Proportion of minoritized students utilizing campus support services
- Proportion of minoritized students involved in high impact programs

- **Retention**

- Fall to Spring persistence rate for minoritized 1st year students
- Fall to Fall persistence rate for minoritized 1st year students

- **Excellence**

- Proportion of minoritized students who graduate with honors Proportion of minoritized students on the Dean's list (compared to overall representation)
- 4-year graduation rate of minoritized students
- Proportion of minoritized students awarded merit-based scholarships
- Proportion of minoritized students awarded competitive fellowships (e.g., Fulbright, Rhodes, Truman)

See: Bensimon, E. M., & Malcom, L. (2012). *Confronting equity issues on campus: Implementing the Equity Scorecard in theory and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

A photograph of a person walking down a long, brightly lit hallway. The hallway has a polished floor that reflects the overhead lights. The person is in the center of the frame, walking away from the camera. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered over the image.

Facilitate Equity-Minded Sensemaking and Dialogue of Campus Data

Initial Questions to Guide Equity-Mindedness

- What **patterns of inequity** immediately “jump out”?
- What **student groups** appear to experience the most significant disparities?
- Are there **areas** in which disparities appear to cluster?
- What do the data tell us about how the **institution** is serving minoritized students?
- What are some **tentative conclusions** (or hunches) that might explain the disparities?
- What **additional data** do we need to examine to better understand these disparities?
- Are there some **“non-traditional” data sources** we should consider examining?
- **What else** do we need to know?

Critical Dialogue of Disaggregated Data

- **Critical probing** - questioning or calling attention to hidden patterns of inequity;
- **Racial reframing** - a critical response to counter interpretations that evade or fail to notice racial inequalities in educational outcomes; and
- **Institutional accountability reframing** - entails a critical response to data that reinforce the role of institutions (in general) and institutional agents (in particular) in redressing race-based inequities and disparities in student outcomes.”

(Bensimon & Harris, 2012, p. 226)



Critical Dialogue of Disaggregated Data

Critical Probing:

“Does anyone notice that Latinx students comprise more than 25% of our students but less than 15% of our faculty are Latinx?”



Critical Dialogue of Disaggregated Data

Racial Reframing:

“Earlier you noted that our low-income students appear to experience the most significant disparities. However, if you look at the data closer, you’ll notice that our low-income White students actually outperform our students of color regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.”

Critical Dialogue of Disaggregated Data

Institutional Accountability Reframing:

“Sure, it is true that our students who attend class part-time, have dependents, and work full-time perform a lower rates than their peers who do not have these responsibilities. However, it is still our responsibility to identify and eliminate institutional barriers that negatively impact their success, despite having responsibilities that direct attention away from school.”



Set Equity Goals that Eliminate Racial Equity Gaps

Setting Equity Goals

NO!!

- **Strategy #1: “Rising Tide”** – when equity efforts improve success rates for all groups but fail to close equity gaps.
- **Strategy #2: “Zero Sum”** – when equity efforts improve success rates for the lowest performing group while simultaneously decreasing the success rates for higher performing groups.

Source: Santa Monica College Vision for Success Plan - <https://tinyurl.com/yxks6xye>

Setting Equity Goals

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YES!!

- **Strategy #3: “Strategic Rise”** – when equity efforts reduce or eliminate equity gaps for the lowest performing groups while success rates for the highest performing groups remain constant.
- **Strategy #4: “Win-Win”** – when equity efforts reduce or eliminate equity gaps for the lowest performing groups while simultaneously increasing the success rates for all groups.

Source: Santa Monica College Vision for Success Plan - <https://tinyurl.com/yxks6xye>

A photograph of a group of people in a meeting or conference room. The image is heavily filtered with a yellow color. In the foreground, a man is seen from the side, gesturing with his right hand raised. Other people are visible in the background, some looking towards the camera and others looking away. The setting appears to be a modern office or meeting space with recessed ceiling lights.

Leverage Systemwide Policies and Initiatives

THANK YOU!!

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