



A Framework to Address Racial Equity in Postsecondary State Policy and Practice

To support state efforts to close postsecondary attainment equity gaps for students of color, RFA has developed a framework that describes three drivers behind efforts to place racial equity at the center of postsecondary policymaking and practice: awareness, inclusion, and integration. The framework is adapted from Equity in the Center's *Race Equity Cycle*¹ and is informed by Research for Action's examination of the three states in the Lumina Foundation's first TIE cohort – Colorado, Tennessee, and Oregon. Figure 1 depicts the Race Equity Cycle, as adapted by RFA.

The Race Equity Cycle was originally designed as a resource for organizations focused on counteracting race inequities.² RFA adapted this tool to provide a resource for state higher education agencies focused on closing racial equity gaps in attainment. The Cycle includes three separate but inter-related drivers:

- 1. Awareness.** The awareness driver defines the problem and focuses on understanding the problem and its causes.
- 2. Inclusion.** The inclusion driver communicates the problem to a wide range of stakeholders and welcomes them into conversations about how to address the problem.
- 3. Integration.** The integration driver provides concrete solutions by incorporating a focus on racial equity in policy and practice.

As states work to utilize the Race Equity Cycle, a few observations are worth noting:

The work to increase awareness, inclusion and integration of racial equity into the postsecondary policy and practice arena is ongoing. All states experience leadership turnover, shifting political stands, and the emergence of new voices. Thus, efforts to ensure a consistent focus on racial equity must be sustained over time.

Awareness, inclusion and integration are mutually reinforcing. Racial equity is best advanced when states consider all three drivers together. In other words, states can increase awareness of the need to address racial equity gaps by including diverse groups in the process to integrate racial equity goals into postsecondary policy and practice.

Efforts to deepen awareness, inclusion and integration are imperative for sustaining a racial equity agenda. As state postsecondary racial equity efforts advance, the work can become more difficult. Deepened awareness of the importance of the issue, continued expansion of those involved in these efforts, and further integration of the racial equity agenda into concrete policies and practices will sustain the agenda over time.

Figure 1. Race Equity Cycle



¹ Equity-in-the-Center (2019). Woke to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.equityinthecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Equity-in-Center-Awake-Woke-Work-2019-final-1.pdf>

² Equity-in-the-Center (2019). Woke to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.equityinthecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Equity-in-Center-Awake-Woke-Work-2019-final-1.pdf>