Making Opportunity Real
A Framework for Communicating About Racial Equity
## Table of Contents

3  **Introduction**

5  **Equity Frame**

   5  Big Idea: Real Opportunity, with Real Outcomes For All

6  **Aspirational Narrative**

   6  Best Practices

   7  A Single Sentence

   7  Unique Value Proposition

   8  One-Minute Message

   9  Winning Words

 10  Proof Points

 11  Strategic Stories of Real Opportunity, Real Action, and Real Outcomes

 14  Your Story

 18  Tailored Messages

 19  Creative Content
Introduction

This message manual contains research-based language and guidance for anyone communicating about racial equity in education after high school.

The manual introduces an Equity Frame that provides guidance for communicating about equity in an aspirational way that moves beyond buzzwords and invites new audiences to the conversation. It then provides tested language and specific examples of how to apply the Equity Frame when sharing data, crafting story-driven content, and tailoring messages for different audiences.

The Equity Frame is adaptable for communications of all kinds, for all kinds of audiences, and by all kinds of messengers. By drawing on the resources in this manual, communicators can deliver a consistent and motivating message that gets beyond abstract definitions to show what equity looks like in practice, lay out the causes and consequences of inequities, and invite audiences to take action to make opportunity real.

Thank you for feedback from:
Background

Lumina Foundation is committed to pursuing racial equity in higher education. Both the Foundation and its grantees sought to learn more about how to communicate about equity in terms that resonate with key audiences while remaining true to their shared vision and values. Lumina undertook this project to learn how to more clearly and consistently communicate about racial equity, and equip its grantees on the front lines with flexible resources to do the same.

Research Process

The Equity Frame and messages in this manual are a result of in-depth research with audiences, experts, and the general public, and informed by best practices in marketing and communications. Lumina engaged an internal working group to advise the project, and a grantee working group of policy and advocacy partners to provide perspective and feedback throughout the process. The research process included:

- A review of contemporary research and best practices about race and equity communications.
- In-depth interviews with leadership, communications experts, and policy directors at Lumina grantee organizations to better understand how they communicate about equity, identify core challenges, and test draft message frames.
- In-depth interviews with educators, policymakers, and business leaders across the political spectrum to understand their values and motivations, explore hurdles to communicating about equity, and test draft message ideas.
- A grantee survey to test the resonance of draft Equity Frame concepts and narrative approaches.
- A nationally representative opinion and message-testing survey of 3,099 Americans in October 2019 (including oversamples in California, Virginia, Indiana, and Texas).
Equity Frame

Research shows these are the big ideas that motivate people to pay attention to and support racial equity efforts in education after high school.

Big Idea: Real Opportunity, with Real Outcomes For All

Opportunity is meaningful to people, but to get beyond the buzzword, we must define it and connect it with measurable outcomes.

1. **Everyone has a right to real opportunity.**
   No matter where you come from, what you look like, or how much money your family has, everyone should have what they need to learn, grow, and thrive.
   People across audiences relate to this values statement. This frame also speaks to “real opportunity” for everyone, because equity doesn’t stop at opportunity; people need to experience it in their lives in tangible, meaningful ways.

2. **Opportunity isn’t equal.**
   Opportunity depends on who you are and where you come from.
   Fifty-six percent of Americans believe that opportunity isn’t equal in the United States. Stating that opportunity isn’t equal is evocative but not controversial, and it confronts the “bootstraps” metanarrative that rests on the idea that as long as you work hard, you can succeed.

3. **Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back.**
   Policies, practices, and beliefs—rooted in history and still affecting people today—keep many Black, Native American, and Hispanic people from the education and skills they need.
   Americans across the political spectrum who are familiar with the concept of racial equity believe achieving it is an important goal. Specific, tangible examples that expose hidden barriers that unfairly affect individual lives make complicated, systems-level concepts real for people.

4. **Real actions with real outcomes make opportunity real for all.**
   We can remove barriers for students to right the wrongs and achieve just and fair outcomes for all.
   Audiences agree that support and resources benefiting Black, Native American, and Hispanic communities that have been left behind can also make our systems work more fairly for everyone. Real actions are meaningful actions.
Aspirational Narrative

Best Practices

Our minds make sense of the world through stories. The Aspirational Narrative provides a structure and language to effectively communicate the ideas in the Equity Frame. It begins with students (people) and their aspirations (goals), so that the work speaks to shared motivations and shows how an equity approach helps them confront obstacles (problems) and overcome them (solutions) to achieve their goals.

The following are best practices, rooted in research, for communicating the ideas in the Equity Frame.

- **Frame people by their assets.**
  Describing people by their aspirations and contributions encourages empathy and respect, and can reduce the sense of “otherness” that occurs when describing people only by their demographics.

- **Invoke students’ goals in terms of both opportunity and outcomes.**
  People tend to agree that opportunity is an important aim—but students’ goals don’t stop at college access.

- **Get beyond buzzwords.**
  Paint a picture of terms like “equity” by showing what students’ goals look like in their lives and how those change their experience.

- **Make systems real.**
  Unveil the policies, practices, and beliefs that hold back students of color. Share the challenges students face in the context of systems that are beyond their control.

- **Speak to both causes and consequences.**
  Clearly describe who or what is causing the problem and the consequences for individuals and society.

- **Get specific about solutions.**
  Point to real action and its direct effects on students.

- **Highlight the shared benefits of equity.**
  Show how equity can increase opportunity for all and help overcome zero-sum thinking.
A Single Sentence

This message offers a succinct statement about racial equity and why it matters.

We are committed to creating real opportunity with real outcomes for all students.

Unique Value Proposition

This is the value delivered to people and society by achieving equity in education after high school. Incorporate this into your messages to connect equity in education with audiences’ goals for themselves and society.

When we open doors to a quality education after high school for all, we ensure that everyone can participate in education that equips them to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labor market, engage more fully in their communities, and live meaningful and productive lives.
One-Minute Message

This message introduces audiences to the Equity Frame using familiar language that makes the abstract concept of equity come alive.

1. Everyone has a right to real opportunity. Everyone has a right to real opportunity. No matter where you come from, what you look like, or how much money your family has, everyone should have what they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

2. Opportunity isn’t equal. But opportunity isn’t equal: It depends on who you are and where you come from.

3. Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back. Policies, practices, and beliefs—rooted in history and still affecting people today—keep many Black, Native American, and Hispanic people from the education and skills they need. These systems unfairly hold back students who are seeking a better education and a better life.

4. Real actions with real outcomes can make opportunity real for all. We can make opportunity real by taking real action to remove barriers for these students and make education work better for everyone. When we ensure real outcomes for every student, we can right the wrongs and achieve just and fair outcomes for all.

Inviting your audience into conversations about racial equity while also emphasizing the importance of opportunity—a commonly understood aspiration—for all.

Introducing the problem of unequal opportunity challenges a dominant frame many hold that anyone can be successful in the United States if they try hard enough. It allows you to shift the discussion from individual responsibility to systemic barriers.

Pointing to specific barriers in policies, practices, and beliefs helps audiences see the root causes of unequal opportunity and its real consequences on people.

This message reflects racial identifiers the Lumina Foundation has decided upon, based on research and discussion.

In order to create real opportunity for students, there must be real actions with real outcomes. Specific examples of removing barriers could include ensuring educational resources are responsive to students’ unique backgrounds, and holding colleges and universities accountable for doing so.
Winning Words

Winning Words are key words and phrases for use across channels to create consistent messaging with maximum motivating power and word-of-mouth potential. They resonate with audiences of different kinds, create emotional reactions, are credible and easily understood, and evoke images in the mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real opportunity:</th>
<th>Having what you need to make opportunity real in your life in tangible ways.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real actions:</td>
<td>Specific changes that have meaningful effects on students’ experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real outcomes:</td>
<td>Measurable differences in people’s ability to live meaningful and productive lives.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Policies, practices, and beliefs:</th>
<th>The ways that systemic exclusion, oppression, and racism show up in student’s lives.</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Black, Native American, and Hispanic people:</th>
<th>The people who are most disproportionately affected by barriers in our education systems.</th>
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People naturally think of racial equity in terms of access to opportunities, but are less likely to think about it in terms of equitable actions or equitable outcomes. “Real opportunity” uses the familiar and believable concept of opportunity while inviting audiences to rethink what it requires.

Exclusion, oppression, and racism show up in students’ lives in real ways. But using these abstract terms alone can hamper audiences’ understanding of the serious, day-to-day consequences of these systems. They can also increase skepticism for others. In communications, use data points and stories to illuminate specific examples of policies, practices, and beliefs students face that keep them from a better education.

Lumina Foundation prefers the terms Black, Native American, and Hispanic when talking about these populations, but uses African American when appropriate, and Latino and American Indian when the group or person opts for that term.
Proof Points

Data and proof points are critical to making the case for solving the systemic problems that students—and the country—face. However, when proof points are used without the context of a broader narrative, they can perpetuate negative stereotypes or make the problem seem too daunting to solve.

The following proof points are examples of how to use data to support the Equity Frame.

1. **Everyone has a right to real opportunity.**
   Share data that paint a picture of what’s possible when people have real opportunity—that is, the careers, pay, or lives that degrees or other credentials make possible.

   » **In 2020, two-thirds of all jobs will require a credential beyond the high school diploma.**
   [Source: Lumina Foundation]

2. **Opportunity isn’t equal.**
   Remind audiences of the broader vision for American education when sharing data that show outcome gaps among students of different races and ethnicities. Comparing educational outcomes of other races against white students, rather than the broader average or a universal goal, can perpetuate white outcomes as “default.”

   » **Only 43.2% of adults in America hold a credential beyond high school. That decreases to 32% of African American adults, and 25% of Native American and Hispanic adults.**
   [Source: Stronger Nation]

3. **Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back.**
   Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back. Rather than pointing out “achievement gaps” among different student demographics, use data to point out disparities in the systems themselves. Show differences between the amount and quality of the services that students of color receive and how unfairly distributed resources disproportionately hold them back.

   » **Public two- and four-year colleges in the United States, spend $1,000 less per year on Black and Hispanic students than on their white counterparts.**
   [Source: Center for American Progress]

4. **Real actions with real outcomes make opportunity real for all.**
   Share specific examples of actions and show what’s possible for people when schools, states, or systems take real action. When possible, compare outcomes between places where systems are changing and where they are not—and show outcomes for all students.

   » **Regional workforce-development agency KentuckianaWorks is helping people like Kassie Evans earn certifications that lead to better jobs. With an OSHA safety standards certification, Evans got a promotion that boosted her pay from $15.83 to $19.25 per hour, lifting her above subsistence wage.**
   [Source: Lumina Foundation]
Strategic Stories of Real Opportunity, Real Action, and Real Outcomes

Strategic storytelling highlights specific people in distinct settings and situations, which are purposefully designed to communicate the ideas in the Equity Frame.

**Example 1: Student Journey**
Below is a story about a student that shows the Equity Frame in action.
*Modified from Teacher in Training Drawn to Urban School Setting, Focus magazine, Spring 2016*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQUITY FRAME</th>
<th>STORY</th>
<th>ANNOTATIONS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Everyone has a right to real opportunity.</td>
<td>Living in a tough neighborhood in Youngstown, Ohio, Cametrus “CJ” Clardy’s mother was very similar to many other moms—she wanted her children to have access to unlimited opportunities. Understanding the importance of education, she not only inspired her son to get good grades, but she also welcomed any solution that helped him overcome the poverty of Youngstown and become the first in his family to attend college.</td>
<td><strong>Put people in the picture:</strong> Start with a protagonist and the aspirational goal for real opportunity they share.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Opportunity isn’t equal.</td>
<td>However, the opportunities available in Youngstown’s education system didn’t match the big dreams CJ’s mom had for her son. As of 2020, the school district ranked within the bottom 50% of all 842 school districts in Ohio and had a high school graduation rate of 74%.</td>
<td><strong>Identify the problem:</strong> Make visible the systemic barriers to achieving those goals. Use a surprising statistic to open people’s eyes to the problem. Be careful not to overwhelm the story with statistics that make audiences feel the problem is too big to solve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back.</td>
<td>Luckily, CJ was given a unique opportunity in the sixth grade that ended up changing his life trajectory completely. He was recruited to participate in Ohio State University’s (OSU) Young Scholars Program (YSP), which is administered by the university’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion. YSP is able to fill student preparedness gaps and help students get ready for college.</td>
<td><strong>Show solutions that emerge:</strong> Introduce real actions—specific solutions that directly respond to the problem. Point to the allies that join the story and make the change possible.</td>
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### Example 2: Grantee Journey - Denver Education Attainment Network

Below is a story about a grantee organization that touches upon all the ideas in the Equity Frame. 

*Modified from ‘Opportunity for all’ should be a reality – not just a bumper sticker.*

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<td>1. Everyone has a right to real opportunity.</td>
<td>Colorado has an economy among the strongest in the nation and has one of the highest educational levels. Therese and Jennifer, two passionate Denverites, saw a gap: Despite Denver’s great economy, opportunities for economic and social mobility were not guaranteed for everyone who needs them.</td>
<td>Put people in the picture: Start with a protagonist and the aspirational goal for real opportunity they share.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Opportunity isn’t equal.</td>
<td>The district’s educational system is leaving behind some of the largest minority demographic groups—Black and Hispanic students. In Colorado, only 39% of Black residents and 29% of Hispanic residents have completed a high-quality certificate, associate degree, bachelor’s degree or more.</td>
<td>Identify the problem: Make visible the systemic barriers to achieving those goals.</td>
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<td>3. Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Use a surprising statistic to open people’s eyes to the problem. Be careful not to overwhelm the story with statistics that make audiences feel the problem is too big to solve.</td>
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4. Real actions with real outcomes can make opportunity real for all.

Understanding the unique barriers to education that Black, Hispanic, and Native American students face on the pathway to completing higher education, such as being low-income or first-generation college students, Jennifer and Therese created Denver Education Attainment Network (DEAN)—a partnership of education and business leaders, public officials, and other stakeholders that works to build and maintain pathways for students to earn credentials beyond high school. They saw the opportunity to make the system work better for everyone—and help Black, Hispanic, and Native American students attain the credentials they need.

Through their dual-enrollment programs, in which high school students can take courses for college credit, or their work on stackable certificates that can be applied toward associate and bachelor’s degree programs, DEAN is revamping systems and removing barriers for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students to achieve a higher education. Those real actions are providing everything from training for counselors to help students of color navigate the college application process to easing transition points for students and their families.

By doing so, they are making it easier for everyone to reach their full potential and have access to what they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

Show solutions that emerge: Introduce real actions—specific solutions that directly respond to the problem. Point to the allies that join the story and make the change possible.

Celebrate the breakthrough: Show how lives are changed in real, measurable ways.

Illustrate the impact: Show how the protagonist’s journey lifts up others in their community, making opportunity real for them.
Your Story

Crafting your own personal narrative will help others understand the importance of racial equity and inspire them to support your work. Sharing your own “equity story,” will make it easier for you to guide audiences into conversations about racial equity.

You can use the Equity Frame to tell your own story of how you became aware of the need to create real opportunity or how you have done so through your work.

Example 1: Individual Eyes Opened
Below is a modified personal narrative from Lumina’s Strategy Director Scott Jenkins. We built on his powerful narrative (shown in color) to show how to use the Equity Frame when telling your own story in order to help people understand the importance of creating real opportunity for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

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<td>1. Everyone has a right to real opportunity.</td>
<td>Recent reflection on my professional record has made me realize that I might have helped deny many Black and brown men and women an education. I believe that education is essential to access real opportunities in life—such as getting a job, providing for a family, or living a healthy life.</td>
<td>Put people in the picture: Start with how you understood opportunity. What are the values that ground the work you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Opportunity isn’t equal.</td>
<td>But looking back, I can now see how my actions may have denied some people access to what they needed to learn, grow, and thrive.</td>
<td>Identify the problem: Show how your eyes were opened to the problem. When did you first realize that it was important to put an equity lens to your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back.</td>
<td>In my previous positions working in educational policy, I pushed for policies that I believed were right at the time. I worked to pass a set of laws that required the mandatory expulsion of any student bringing a weapon to school or fighting at school, and I argued for standardized tests to be administered with inflexible cut scores. However, I later learned that such policies disproportionately affect Black and brown students—making it harder for them to have an equal chance at achieving a higher education.</td>
<td></td>
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4. Real actions with real outcomes can make opportunity real for all.

When I learned that Black children are more likely to get in greater trouble for lighter infractions than whites—and a higher percentage of Black students who get in trouble in school are expelled—I realized that my education reform package focusing on school safety had unequal and unjust consequences. And when I learned that students of color are more likely to test into remedial education, which dooms most to a future of defaulted loans and no college degree, I realized that the standardized testing system that I supported could make it more challenging for students to advance into higher education and gain access to real opportunity.

Although this wasn’t intentional when I worked to pass this legislation, I now understand how policies such as these magnify disparities in educational achievement and hamper people of color. Today, I recognize that we must build policies, programs, and organizations with racial equity as the binding mortar.

We must take real action to remove barriers for students and make education work better for everyone—from ensuring educational resources are responsive to students’ unique backgrounds to holding colleges and universities accountable for achieving real outcomes for every student. Only in this way can we truly aim toward outcomes that are just, fair, and serve all Americans, regardless of skin color or ethnicity.

Show solutions that emerge: Introduce how you began to change the way you see your work.

What were your first actions toward making opportunity real?

Celebrate the breakthrough: Show how you are doing work differently in real, measurable ways.

What were the outcomes?

What do you do differently?

Illustrate the impact: Show how your journey invites others to make opportunity real.

Why should others incorporate equity into their work?
### Example 2: Program Equity Focus

You can also use the Equity Frame to help you communicate about the importance of racial equity in your own strategies. Below is an example of Lumina’s Commitment to Equity, highlighting elements of the Equity Frame.

*Modified from The Equity Journey: NewSchools Venture Fund and Lumina Foundation Pursue Diversity on the Road to Equity*

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<th>EQUITY FRAME</th>
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</table>
| **1. Everyone has a right to real opportunity.** | From the beginning, expanding access to postsecondary education was central to the purpose of the Lumina Foundation, but it was not until 2007 that our focus shifted to encompass completion. The following year, we put forth a target: By the year 2025, we want 60% of Americans to hold a college degree, certificate or other high-quality postsecondary credential. | **Put people in the picture:** Start with how you understand opportunity.  
**What are the values that ground the work you do?** |
| **2. Opportunity isn’t equal.**  
**3. Our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back.** | However, we soon realized that although everyone has a right to real opportunity, opportunity isn’t distributed equally. Despite increases in the percentage of adults earning a two- or four-year degree (for young adults, the figure was 40.1%—up 2.5 percentage points from 2008), major disparities in attainment by race and ethnicity persisted. Attainment rates for young adults who were Asian (65.6%) or white (44.9%) were far higher than those for peers who were Black (24.7%), Hispanic (17.9%), or Native American (16.9%). Knowing that increasing higher education attainment is critical to ensuring everyone has what they need to grow, learn, and thrive, we decided to shift our focus to make sure that systems of education work fairly for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. | **Identify the problem:** Show how your eyes were opened to the problem.  
**When did you first realize that it was important to put an equity lens to your work?** |
### EQUITY FRAME

4. Real actions with real outcomes can make opportunity real for all.

### STORY

Over the next few years, we took real action and redoubled our efforts to close the attainment gaps for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. We focused on addressing the systemic barriers that unfairly hold these students back from real opportunity—barriers such as low-quality K-12 education, teacher racial bias, limited finances, lack of college readiness, and other challenges.

We encouraged states to look more closely at how particular groups of students were performing—for example, Black students—and then consider what kinds of services and supports they needed to improve outcomes. And we supported new models of student financial support, new business and finance models for higher education, and new systems of postsecondary credits and credentials that uniquely serve Black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

In doing so, Lumina and our grantees hope to narrow the attainment gaps for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students by removing barriers for students to right the wrongs in our education system and achieve just and fair outcomes for all.

### ANNOTATIONS

**Show solutions that emerge**: Introduce how you began to change the way you see your work.

What were your first actions toward making opportunity real?

**Celebrate the breakthrough**: Show how you are doing work differently in real, measurable ways.

What were the outcomes?
What do you do differently?

**Illustrate the impact**: Show how your journey invites others to make opportunity real.

Why should others incorporate equity into their work?
Tailored Messages

Messengers may take on different voices to advance equitable solutions with different audiences. Depending on the primary audience, you can tailor the Equity Frame to create audience-specific messages while maintaining the frame, your authentic brand, and your voice.

Activist
The activist approach is for audiences that are more familiar with the idea of racial equity, who do not feel heightened discomfort with loaded words such as “racism,” “oppression,” and “exclusion,” and who already recognize the importance of ensuring racial equity in higher education.

From our research, we identified that the activist lens is most motivating with liberal, younger audiences. People in these specific demographics are more likely to be familiar with racial equity, to understand and agree that the problem is racism and oppression, and to prioritize racial equity in higher education.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Despite the promise of American opportunity, opportunity isn’t equal for everyone. Today’s systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back.

Because of systemic racism and exclusion in our educational system—from instructors’ racial biases to financial barriers—Black, Native American, and Hispanic students are earning education credentials at persistently lower rates than their white counterparts.

In order to ensure these students have a real opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive, we need to remove barriers for them and make education work better for everyone. By changing the system to right existing wrongs, we will achieve just and fair outcomes for all.

Advocate
The advocate approach is for audiences who may be less familiar with the idea of racial equity, who are more likely to feel uncomfortable with words such as “racism,” “oppression,” and “exclusion,” and who need more convincing that racial equity in higher education is important.

From our research, we identified that an advocate lens is most motivating with audiences who are moderate-to-conservative and/or middle-aged. For these audiences, it is important to ease them into the conversation about racial equity. It’s more effective to frame messages for them in ways that show how inequity is an attack on opportunity—and to start with tangible examples of racism, exclusion, and oppression in action. With these audiences, it also is important to show how racial equity in higher education benefits society as a whole.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE
No matter where you come from, what you look like, or how much money your family has, everyone should have what they need to learn, grow, and thrive. However, our systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back from gaining access to opportunities for higher education and personal growth.

Barriers such as income or college readiness create unequal challenges for Black, Native American, and Hispanic students. By providing support and resources that are responsive to unique backgrounds and life experiences, we can change systems to make education work better for everyone.

When we open doors for more people to participate in an education that equips students to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labor market, engage more fully in their communities, and live meaningful and productive lives, we create a more just and fair world for all.
Creative Content

Speeches
When giving speeches, you want to draft remarks that inspire various audiences to fully engage—and the first thing you say will influence how people process your message. Because of this, it’s most effective to activate different frames depending on your audience.

Below are examples of quotes from a speech that activates either the activist or the advocate lens. Both examples incorporate the Equity Frame but differ in the ways they lead audiences into the conversation.

**ACTIVIST LENS**

“American opportunity has been a promise that hasn’t been delivered to all. It depends on who you are and what you look like.

Far too often, Black, Hispanic, and Native American students are left behind. Intentionally designed policies and deliberate actions rooted in history have created unjust barriers that disproportionately lessen the educational attainment of students of color. From racial bias in classrooms to the distribution of low-quality education, our education system unfairly serves Black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

However, we have the opportunity to change the system by removing barriers for these students. By working together to dismantle longstanding structures that have led to unequal opportunities for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, we can create just and fair outcomes for all.”

**ADVOCATE LENS**

“The promise of equal opportunity means that no matter where you come from, what you look like, or how much money your family has, everyone should have what they need to learn, grow, and thrive. We know that higher education is an integral part of gaining access to real opportunity—the opportunity to earn a good-paying job, support your family, and live a healthy life. However, data has shown that today’s systems of education and training after high school unfairly hold some people back from these opportunities.

Unequal barriers in wealth, lack of college readiness, and other challenges outside students’ control lead to unfair educational outcomes for Black, Native American, and Hispanic students. By providing support and resources that are responsive to unique backgrounds and life experiences, we can change systems to make education work better for everyone.

When we open doors for more people to participate in an education that equips students to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labor market and live meaningful and productive lives, we create a more just and fair world for all.”
You can bring an equity lens to various current events to show your followers, and other potential audiences, the importance of racial equity in higher education.

How can we #makeopportunityreal for all students? Clearly, the New York school system isn’t working for everyone. A new study shows how policies and practices are funneling Black and Hispanic students away from quality learning options after high school. https://bit.ly/2TJYqFF

“For a lot of students, college is the only place where they have access to food on a consistent basis.” #COVID19 highlights the unequal barriers that many students, especially students of color, face in #highered. https://bit.ly/2vUG2kq
“Our goal is to see our students graduate from the institution well-prepared for graduate school, for entrepreneurship, for study abroad, and for jobs ... but they can’t do that if they don’t have their basic needs met.”

Tiffany Beth Mfume, Morgan State University’s assistant vice president for student success and retention, believes that everyone has a right to the real opportunity that a college degree provides. She also knows the path to a degree or credential after high school doesn’t look the same for everyone. Many of Morgan State’s students require more than traditional forms of assistance to get across the finish line. Recognizing the unequal financial and social barriers that affect its diverse student body, the historically black university developed a holistic, “wraparound” approach that meets the unique needs of their students to ensure real outcomes for their students—more than just making sure they get in the door.
Real opportunity means that no matter what you look like, you have what you need to learn, grow, and thrive. But policies and practices—such as racial bias in classrooms or a lack of access to financial support—keep many Black, Native American, and Hispanic students from thriving in or graduating from college.

That’s where Diversity Officers come in. They help to ensure that real opportunity expands beyond increasing the enrollment of these students by ensuring that students of color are able to thrive even after they step onto campus.

Our blog series highlights the individual stories of six Diversity Officers and their role in making sure that students of color are able to successfully navigate and complete college.