



# The Role of Assessment and IE/IR Professionals in Building Equity-Minded Decision Cultures

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Assessment Institute • October 2022

## Welcome & Introductions



Image source: Etsy MichaelDeMedina

Name

Organization

Role

What is your favorite thing about the month of October?



## Workshop Plan

Participants in this workshop will understand:

- Ways in which you can support your organizations' DEI-related work
- How to bring an equity lens to your roles
- The commitment required to ensure diversity within your units and our profession, at large

In this space:

- We will learn together
- Questions are welcome
- All perspectives and experiences are welcome
- There is no pressure



## Definitions: Clarifying Terms

### Diversity

recognizes a range of identities & values varied perspectives

### Equity

seeks to ensure all individuals' access to opportunities & resources

### Inclusion

is systems & dispositions that engage individuals from diverse backgrounds & are welcoming

### Social justice

is cultural responsiveness, avoiding bias, & seeking to understand social structures on power and oppression





Equity is grounded in the principle of fairness. In higher education, equity refers **to ensuring that each student receives what they need to be successful through the intentional design of the college experience.**

- Achieving the Dream



## We're All Called to Engage in this Work

- Many of us are **producers** of data and information – formally or informally – in that we collect data, analyze them, synthesize results, and produce reports for decision makers
- All of us are **consumers** of data and we need the relevant amount of data literacy to consume that information and make decisions large and small (this is true in our personal lives, too)
- Are producers and consumers **coordinated** across the institution? Even within our own units? How does coordination (or lack thereof) affect equity work?



## Together We Need To:

1. **Look beyond the numbers** to explore the *why* and the *how*.
2. **Seek to expand data literacy across the institution.** Not everyone needs to be a data maven, but all stakeholders make decisions, and together we can learn to be more savvy consumers of information, which leads us to pose more informed questions, and in turn to explore the why and the how in full.
3. **Keep assumptions and deficit perspectives in check,** which is often a challenge when we explore gaps and ground conversations about achievement differences in the characteristics of students.



## Together We Need To (continued):

4. **Question what there is to learn** beyond what we're already prompted to explore. Do we have blinders? Do we keep doing what we've always done?
5. **Ensure that equity is kept at the forefront.** We can't afford to be passive. Data producers can't wait for questions to be posed by clients, and data consumers can't assume that data producers are always exploring the "so what" and the "why". All of us have a responsibility to bring ethical and equitable approach to our work.





## What Does it Mean to be Equity Minded?



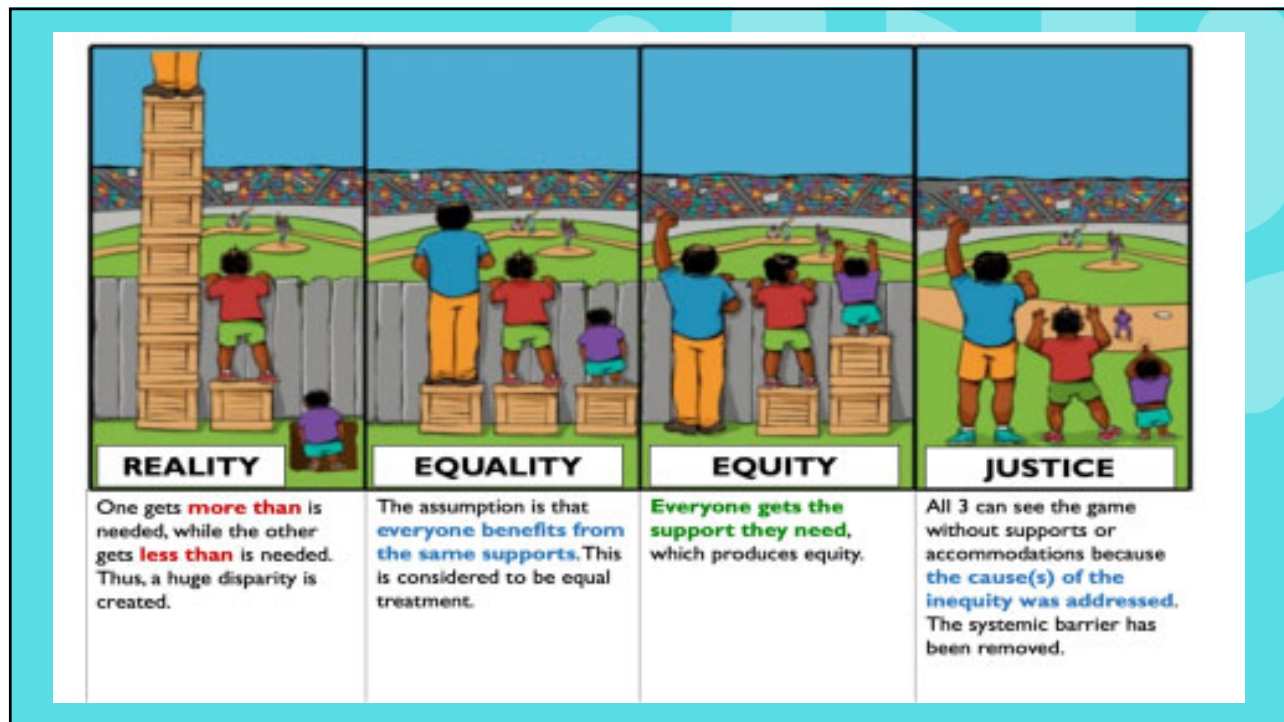
### The Intentionality of Equity in Our Work



Equity requires us to address systemic issues, including racism, bias, sexism, and more through policy, culture, and practice at all levels.

Image source: The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia







What words come to mind as you reflect on the continuum exercise?



## Deep-Rooted Challenges

Systems and structures often utilize:

- A deficit approach (e.g., the problem is with the students)
- Lagging indicators instead of leading indicators
- White, male, neuro-typical students' performance and experiences as benchmarks

We can't address challenges like these without an equity mindset.

- What **structures** or **barriers** affect the student experience?
- What **information** will help inform our understanding of the student experience during those experiences? How do students' experiences differ?
- What **contexts** inform our understanding of this topic (e.g., race, socioeconomics, first generation status, culture, etc.)?



## How Do We Do the Doing? Examples from the field.

1. Setting Institutional DEI Strategic Priorities: IR's Role
2. Bringing more than Demographics to the Table: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in IR & Assessment
3. Making Diversity, Equity & Inclusion an Integral Part of Our IR/IE Work



## As you listen to the examples shared, key questions to keep in mind include:

- What can I do within my realm of responsibility or within the realities of the culture in which I work?
- How can I (or my office) be part of relevant equity-related conversations if we aren't already?
- What assumptions are being made at the small and large scales, and every place in between?
- Who has responsibility for the data related to equity work? IR/assessment? Equity offices?
- What data and information exist, and who has access?

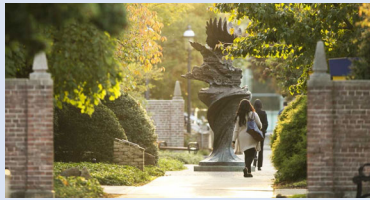




# HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY®

## Setting Institutional DEI Strategic Priorities *IR's Role*

Cyndi Langin  
Institutional Research & Assessment



## Institutional Context

- Private, Residential University with 8 colleges: Liberal Arts, Business, Communication, Education, Engineering Health Professions & Human Services, Law, Nursing & PA, and Business
- Fall 2021:
  - 10,243 Students  
(6,050 Bachelors, 2,863 Graduate, 911 Law, 419 Medical)
  - 1,195 Faculty  
(470 FT & 725 PT)
- D1 Athletics
- IR office (reports to Provost):
  - 4 FT Staff
  - 2 Graduate Assistants

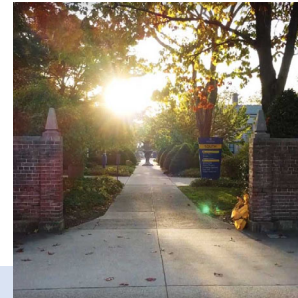


## Leadership & Changing Priorities

### Mission Statement:

*...Hofstra University is devoted to recruiting and retaining a highly qualified and diverse academic community of students, faculty, staff and administrators respectful of the contributions and dignity of each of its members.*

- **2019:** Hofstra hires its first Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer.
- **2021-2022:** New President and Provost after 2 decades under the same leadership. A new strategic planning cycle begins.



## IR's Role – How will we help move the institution forward?

- **Build relationships and trust**
- **Promote transparency, accessibility & a culture of evaluation**
- **Bring an equity lens to all work**
- **Document & share definitions**
- **Focus the discussion on *why* inequities exist**
- **Improve data quality & literacy**



## IR's Role – Early initiatives (Years 1-2)

- **Incorporating** equity work into our unit's mission & strategic plan
- **Connecting** regularly with colleagues through informal channels
- **Staying abreast** of developments
- **Defining terms** – what language are we using and what does it tell us about where the institution is on the continuum?
- **Conducting** studies of equity
- **Building** self-service tools that apply an equity lens
- **Engaging** external colleagues



## Questions & Discussion



## 15-Minute Break

### As you listen to the examples shared, key questions to keep in mind include:

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# Bringing more than demographics to the table: diversity, equity, & inclusion in IR & Assessment

BETHANY L. MILLER  
MACALESTER COLLEGE

PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL LIBERAL  
ARTS COLLEGE

ENROLLMENT: ~2250

OFFICE:  
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH &  
ASSESSMENT

3 FULL-TIME PEOPLE  
2 STUDENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATES



## Grounding points

- ▶ These conversations are hard
- ▶ These conversations can be uncomfortable
- ▶ Learn to sit in the discomfort
- ▶ Language matters (both verbal and physical)
- ▶ Impact matters

As we look to the future, this moment provides an excellent opportunity to reflect upon our practices, to determine which were effective and which require revision, and to ask ourselves if these practices serve quality learning and further our equity goals or if they serve to erode those aspirations.

~AAC&U 2021 Virtual conference on General Education, Pedagogy, and Assessment website

## Reflection & authenticity

- ▶ Reflection: Looking out and looking within
- ▶ Authenticity: Bringing our true selves and experiences to the conversations and the work
- ▶ Activity: Take a few moments to think about your approach to your work. Think about how you think about diversity/ equity/ inclusion in relation to your work.

## Shared Understanding

## Equity-mindedness

Equity as a two dimensional concept: One axis represents institutional accountability... and the second axis represents a critical understanding of the omnipresence of whiteness at the institutional and practice levels

~From Equity Talk to Equity Walk, 5-6

## Equity-mindedness

...the authentic exercise of equity and equity-mindedness requires explicit attention to structural inequality and institutionalized racism and demands system-changing responses.

~From Equity Talk to Equity Walk, 5-6



## What does this mean?

- ▶ Collaboration is key!!
- ▶ Addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion is not work that can be done alone or in a vacuum.
- ▶ What is the difference between cooperation & collaboration?

## Leadership

- ▶ What does leading with an equity minded approach look like?
- ▶ What does the leadership look like from your position?
- ▶ Context
- ▶ Voice
- ▶ Disaggregation
- ▶ Collaboration (again)

## What is D E I?

- ▶ Demographics in the traditional ways that they are used speak only to the D in D E I?
- ▶ How do we get to E & I?
- ▶ What data do we have?
- ▶ What data do we need to collect/ share?

## Approaches to the work

- ▶ Head
- ▶ Heart
- ▶ Hands
- ▶ Why is balance important? What are the risks if we approach using only one of these?

## What does DEI work look like (practically)?

- ▶ Collaborative
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Learning
- ▶ Action

## Takeaways

- ▶ Context is important
- ▶ Collaboration is essential
  - ▶ Addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion is not work that can be done alone or in a vacuum.
- ▶ Impact over intent
- ▶ Language matters
- ▶ Equity work takes time and intentionality
- ▶ At its core equity and inclusion is about students, faculty, and staff (the entire community)

## Questions & Discussion



### As you listen to the examples shared, key questions to keep in mind include:

- What can I do within my realm of responsibility or within the realities of the culture in which I work?
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Office of Institutional Research and Decision Support (IRDS)

# Making Diversity, Equity and Inclusion an Integral Part of Our IR/IE Work

Michele J. Hansen, Ph.D. , Assistant Vice Chancellor

IUPUI

## Overview

1. IUPUI DEI Context
2. IRDS DEI Strategic Plan: Frameworks, Components, Processes
3. Challenges
4. Questions



# IUPUI DEI Context

## Institutional Context

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

(IUPUI)

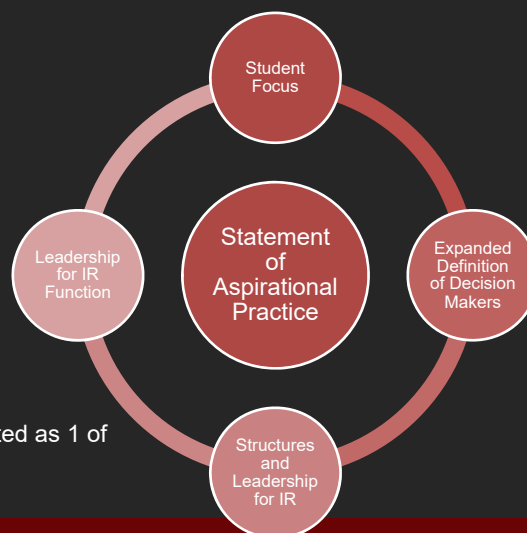
- Recognized for Service Learning, Learning Communities & the First Year Experience, Top 50 Most Innovative (U.S. News)
- Large Urban Public Research University
- Student population of about 28,000 students
- First-Time cohort just over 3,100 and New External Transfers just over 1,200 each year
- Over 250 degree programs from both Indiana & Purdue Universities, guided by the Profiles of Learning for Undergraduate Success (Communicator, Problem Solver, Innovator, and Community Contributor)
- Approximately 42% undergraduates are Federal Pell Recipients and 28% are First Generation College Students
- About 50% of First-Year students commute to campus

## Institutional Research and Decision Support Context

- IRDS new office in August 2015.
- Reorganized all data-generating, decision support offices under one structure to leverage expertise and integrate data across units.
- Had opportunity to organize new office guided by Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research.



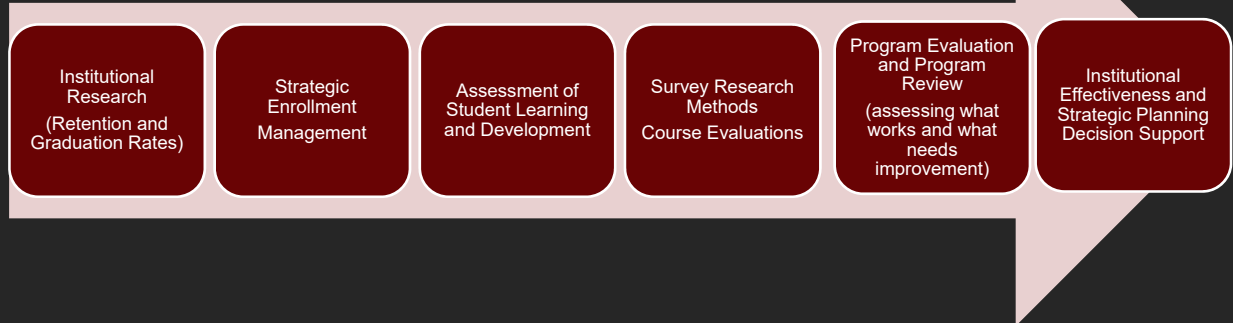
## Statement of Aspirational Practice For Institutional Research – Association of Institutional Research (AIR)



IUPUI Selected as 1 of  
10 Founding  
Institutions



## Activities and Reports to Support Decision Making



- “Perhaps it is the combination of Mr. Floyd’s murder and the health disparities laid bare by COVID-19 that inspires so many profound statements and commitments to work for a change that is long overdue.”

- A Message for Our Time, Karen L. Dace, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor, DEI, IUPUI





## DEI IUPUI Context: Several Initiatives to Live Out Our Campus Commitment to DEI

1. Statements/messages across the IUPUI community indicating our commitment to ensuring a safe and civil environment.
2. All Schools and Units engaged in efforts to develop DEI Strategic Plans.
3. Action Committee to examine IUPUI's actions and policies to identify where systemic racism is translated into higher education's daily practices, expectations, predictions, decision-making, and regulations that target Black individuals and other People of Color.
4. Racial Healing Project (The creation of circles of support that can nourish and support the emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of people of color around campus).
5. Campus Reading *How To Be An Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.
6. Recognition of Faculty Activities Related to Diversity Equity and Inclusion in Promotion and Tenure Review.



## DEI IR/Assessment Strategic Plan

## DEI Strategic Plan Guiding Questions

1. How does the mission statement reflect our commitment to diversity?
2. How do we apply an equity lens to our work?
3. How do we assist campus in living out “a strong commitment to diversity” and support campus DEI efforts?
4. How do we implement internal office practices to support the recruitment and retention of a diverse team?
5. In what ways can we ensure assessment and IR/IE professionals are aware of current trends in DEI practices?

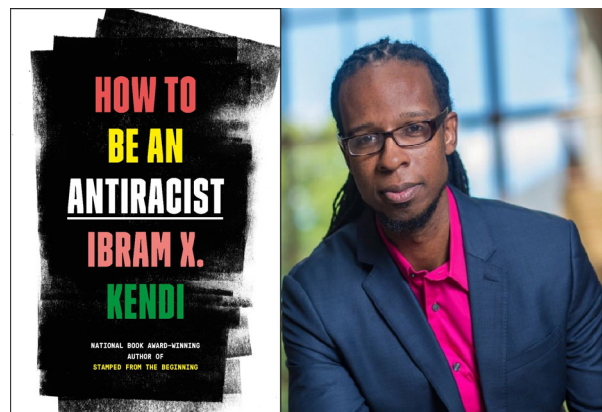


## Framework for Our DEI Plan

“Americans have long been trained to see the deficiencies of people rather than policy. It’s a pretty easy mistake to make: People are in our faces. Policies are distant. We are particularly poor at seeing the policies lurking behind the struggles of people.”

“What if we realized the best way to ensure an effective educational system is not by standardizing our curricula and tests but by standardizing the opportunities available to all students?”

— Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be An Antiracist*



## Key Strategies for IR Practice

1. We in IR/IE/Assessment offices key play a key role in building equity-minded decision cultures.
2. Create shared understandings and meanings. The Language we use matters.
3. Critical to understand institutional contexts and foster understanding of what structures, policies, implicit biases, stereotype threats and factors are contributing to inequities.
4. Important to be aware that many frameworks do not fully consider the experiences of marginalized groups or approach their experiences from a deficit perspective. We need to make sure to take time to thoughtfully select a framework to help answer proposed research questions.
5. We need to pay attention to small populations. All voices are important.
6. Rethink comparisons and reference groups. White students' experiences are often held as the norm to which other groups are compared (Mayhew & Simonoff, 2015), carrying the assumption that White students' experience is "normal" and implying this should be achieved by other student groups.



## Commit to Learning: There are No Quick Fixes or Magical Lists that Fit All Campus Contexts

1. Read
2. Participate in professional development activities
3. Take steps to understand campus context
4. Understand decision makers' frameworks, biases, and needs
5. Engage in self-reflection and assessment



# Applying an Equity Lens to Our Work

## Examples of How We Apply an Equity Lens to Our Work: Current Reality

1. We disaggregate data to help decision makers understand inequities in access and outcomes by student groups (e.g., first generation, gender, historically marginalized, under-resourced, low-income, nontraditional, transfer).
2. We disaggregate data to help decision makers understand inequities in access and outcomes by faculty and staff groups (e.g., gender, historically marginalized, age, rank).
3. We have designed our interactive reports so decision makers can examine intersectionality.
4. We conduct various analyses and investigations that examine inequities in student access and outcomes (e.g., retention, academic performance, student engagement, learning outcomes). These analyses allow decision makers to understand and ideally address inequities.
5. We conduct qualitative investigations to understand students' lived experiences and ensure marginalized voices are heard.

## Strategic Goals In Applying Equity Lens

- Develop a guide to the meaning of terms such as diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, and more to create shared understanding and meaning.
- Intentionally acknowledge the importance of interrogating and disaggregating data and considering intersectionality.
- Make sure everyone in IRDS embraces the importance of socially just IR/IE/Assessment practices.
- Plan to disaggregate beyond federally required levels in order to better understand or account for groups that may be traditionally marginalized.
- Ensure we apply Universal Design Principles to our website and all reports to so that they can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people.



## Meaning of Socially Just Practice

- Incorporating a socially just approach means considering how issues of power, privilege, and identity impact the experiences and perceptions of students and educators.
- Socially Just IR/assessment practice acknowledges power differentials in each step of the IR/assessment process (in addition to considering *bias* and *culture*)
  - Example: An assessment of student retention that seeks to understand the impact of campus climate on students' continuation at an institution.
- Contribute to the **improvement of society** (or an institution) and **positive outcomes for individuals** or to **eliminate injustices**.
- Promote “full and equal participation of all groups in a society [or an institution] that is mutually shaped to meet their needs.” (Bell, 2007, as cited in Dorime-Williams, 2018, p. 43)



## Challenges

1. Ensuring that all assessment/IR professionals are involved in DEI strategic planning and implementation.
2. Making DEI an integral aspect of ALL our work.
3. Engaging faculty more fully in adopting **equitable assessment practices**.
4. Removing barriers to success (for an increasingly diverse student population).
5. Making appropriate accommodations (in different institutional contexts).
6. Recognizing systemic biases in data interpretation and analyses.



## Questions & Discussion





**Dialogue – We need  
new/different name here  
– and something more  
activity oriented**

## Closing Thoughts & Questions



Image source: [eventmangerblog.com](http://eventmangerblog.com)

What one idea from today will take to your work to explore, discuss, or get started on.

We welcome your ideas in the chat.

(Small steps are good steps!)





# Thank You

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