

UNC Charlotte Academic Affairs 2020-2022 Equity Audit: Phase I Report

Introduction

During the Fall 2020 semester, in response to the pandemic and civil unrest of 2020, Provost Joan Lorden charged the Faculty Council with an equity audit of our 80+ academic policies and procedures as well as an examination of unwritten rules and practices that exist. In response to Provost Lorden’s charge, the Faculty Council charged two subcommittees to undertake this work: the Faculty Equity Audit Working Group and the Student Equity Audit Working Group. Both groups were led by a subcommittee of the Faculty Council; the Faculty Equity Audit Working Group was led by the Faculty Employment Status Committee (FESC) and the Student Equity Audit Working Group was led by the Faculty Academic Policy and Standards Committee (FAPSC). Each group included 5-6 members of the faculty and two academic staff/administrators to support their work and serve as liaisons to stakeholders across campus including academic advisors, Office of the Registrar, and Student Affairs.

This work resulted in revisions to seven undergraduate policies and four graduate policies and provided a protocol to consider equity when drafting, implementing, and assessing policy in the future. This work also resulted in a review of data on the use of our pandemic-necessitated expansion of pass/no credit options, the creation of a pandemic impact statement on behalf of faculty and staff, collaboration with the Student Success Working Group (SSWG) to work on procedural and non-policy related items, and the creation of a promotion/tenure/reappointment best practices guide to be used across all departments and units.

In order to conduct this audit, a framework for reviewing policies was needed. During the pandemic, EAB created a 360-Degree Student Equity Audit model that provided a framework to examine policies and procedures from a broad equity lens, taking into account diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as the impacts of the pandemic specifically. The Faculty Council used EAB’s model to guide their work and analysis. The model provided a shared language to clearly communicate what equitable policies look like, both internally and to stakeholders. In October 2022, EAB published a [case study](#) on our use of their model; in November 2022 they highlighted us in their [daily briefing](#); and in December 2022 they posted an [interview](#) with Dr. Leslie Zenk, Assistant Provost, and Dr. Lisa Walker, Interim Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College, about how their framework was used in our policy audit.



CASE STUDY

How One Institution Created a Blueprint for Improving Student Equity Across Campus

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Research University

University Highlights

- 32%** Of first-time, full-time undergraduates are Pell Grant recipients
- 85%** Retention rate for first-time, bachelor's students

About: The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte) is a research university with a total enrollment of 30,200 and a six-year graduation rate of 56%. UNC Charlotte's mission statement pledges to have a local and global impact and create an inclusive academic environment.

Challenge: UNC Charlotte leaders decided to audit their institutional policies with equity in mind in response to the pandemic and civil unrest of 2020. They **lacked a framework for reviewing policies** through an "equity lens" and were **unsure how to communicate their goals** to relevant stakeholders. Additionally, UNC Charlotte's **unwritten policies**, such as declaring a major and course sequences, **posed barriers for student success**.

Solution: UNC Charlotte used **EAB's 360-Degree Student Equity Audit** framework to identify inequitable institution-level policies and how to communicate updates to stakeholders. One-on-one meetings with EAB subject matter experts helped them find solutions to the biggest concerns unearthed by the audit.

Impact: UNC Charlotte **identified inequitable institutional policies and codified unwritten rules** into formal procedures with student-friendly language. They also adopted the EAB 360-Degree Student Equity Audit to **review department-level practices annually**.

Outcomes: An Equitable Future at UNC Charlotte

Key Results from UNC Charlotte's Equity Audit

1 in 10 Policies identified as inequitable

100% Of inequitable institution-level policies have been or are in the process of being reviewed or revised

“ One of the best outcomes from EAB's equity audit is that our departments are having conversations and intentionally thinking about student equity as they make policy updates. This will build a healthy routine of self-reflection and lead to a more equitable environment. ”

Dr. Leslie Zenk, Assistant Provost
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE

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Student Equity Audit Working Group

To complete their work, the Student Equity Audit Working Group was divided into two working groups, undergraduate and graduate. These groups were charged with the examination of policies that could have differential impacts on students including attention to (but not limited to) race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, culture, national origin, religion, age, (dis)ability status, and first generation college student status. The impact of the pandemic made this assessment a pressing concern.

The Student Equity Audit Working Group worked through the [EAB Student Equity Audit Guide](#), reflecting on our policies and practices through each of the eight categories or lenses described below. Then they went through each of our 80+ academic policies and looked at them through this equity framework.



In addition to the policy review, the group collaborated with the Student Success Working Group to look at not just policies but also practices and procedures that may exist in the Office of Academic Affairs and services we provide. In February 2021, the Student Equity Audit Working Group solicited nine volunteers across Academic, Student, and Business Affairs from SSWG to help address procedure-related address implications from the EAB Audit:

Undergraduate Working Group

Membership:

Crystal Eddins, Africana Studies (FAPSC Representative)

Mira Frisch, Music (FAPSC Representative)

Oscar Lansen, History (FAPSC Representative)

Susan McCarter, Social Work (Faculty Council Committee Representative)

Matt Parrow, Biological Sciences (CLAS Committee Representative)

Lisa Walker, Undergraduate Education, ex-officio

Leslie Zenk, Academic Affairs, ex-officio

The undergraduate working group began their work in October 2020. After their review of all undergraduate policies, the group proposed substantive changes to seven academic policies, all of which have since been approved by the Faculty Council. They also made minor language updates and changes throughout policies to remove gendered pronouns and to make the policy language more student-friendly.

The group also reviewed the data from the use of Pass/No Credit grading options that were temporarily expanded in 2020. They compared rates of usage of pass/no credit (P/N) or H/P/N¹ and withdrawal for extenuating circumstances (WE) based on gender, class, Pell status, ethnicity, status (first time in college/transfer/returning), and grade point average (GPA) band. There were no consistent findings that indicated an equity issue with respect to this policy or its expansion due to the pandemic. The findings surrounding usage of H/P/N and WE in Spring and Fall 2020 were as follows:

- More men than women used these options in both terms
- Second year students used these options the most, but the rate of usage was not significantly different
- No difference in usage based on Pell status
- No ethnicity difference in usage in spring, but a slight difference in fall (African American usage was slightly higher)
- No pattern in reference to status (FTIC/transfer/returning)
- Linear pattern in relation to GPA band; those with the lowest GPAs use these options most

Additionally, the group created a [Unit Equity Audit](#) document containing a process to help colleges, departments, and units conduct self-reviews of the policies, practices, and curricula in their areas. The equity audit document is broken into two parts: 1) the equity audit and 2) the [climate survey](#) (which is delivered electronically via Qualtrics). The purpose of the equity audit exercise is to gather data, consider how the data informs the progress of the department or unit, and to discuss the unit's recruitment of students, curriculum, and instruction. The purpose of the climate study is to provide units with a tool to gather feedback from faculty and staff that can serve as an opportunity to have these conversations. The Unit Equity Audit was distributed to

¹ During the academic year 2020-2021, students were allowed to have the grade of H recorded on transcripts for prerequisite courses in which they earned a C or better.

Department Chairs and School Directors in November of 2022 and results are expected on December 16, 2023.

Graduate Working Group

Membership:

Brian Arreola, Music (Faculty Representative)

Valentina Cecchi, Electrical and Computer Engineering (Graduate Program Director)

Kelcie Grenier, Organizational Science (PhD Student)

Joan Lachance, Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education (Graduate Council Representative)

Oscar Larsen, History (FAPSC Representative)

Susan McCarter, Social Work (Faculty Council Committee Representative)

Matt Parrow, Biological Sciences (CLAS Committee Representative)

Manuel Perez Quinones, Software and Information Systems (Graduate Faculty Representative)

Katherine Hall-Hertel, Graduate School, ex-officio

Sandra Krause, Graduate School, ex-officio

Leslie Zenk, Academic Affairs, ex-officio

The graduate working group began their work in Fall 2021. After their review of all graduate policies, they identified the Transfer Credit Policy, the Continuous Registration Policy, the Leave of Absence Policy, and the Satisfactory Progress/Unsatisfactory Progress (SP/UP) Grade Mode Policy to review using the EAB Equity Audit framework. The differing application of policy across colleges required discussion with multiple units to ensure that the policy was clear and applied equitably. There were no recommendations for substantive changes to the four policies; however, some text revisions were needed to more clearly articulate the policy intent.

Policy Changes

The following policy changes were passed as a result of work by the Student Equity Audit Working Group:

1. [Classroom Attendance Policy Changes \[Approved 9.30.21\]](#):
 - Changing policy title to Course Attendance and Participation
 - Recognition that emphasis should be on participation in the course rather than attendance as a proxy for participation
 - Recognition that participation can take many forms depending on course format (i.e. discussion, forums, group work, assignments, etc.)
 - Making language more student friendly overall
 - Clarification of instructor responsibilities regarding best practices including:
 - Prioritization of active participation and engagement over attendance as a measure of student involvement
 - Establishing rules of engagement in the syllabus
2. [Baccalaureate Degree Progression Policy Changes \[Approved 3.25.21\]](#):
 - Rewritten in more student-friendly language

3. [Declaring Undergraduate Majors and Minors Policy Changes \[Approved 3.25.21\]:](#)
 - Reinforce that minors and second majors are optional and should not be required.
 - The policy on the Definition of Undergraduate Majors, Minors, Concentrations and Certificates as well as this current policy already specify that minors and second majors are “optional”; however, we propose to make this more explicit and clear for students and departments.
4. [Catalog Policy Changes \[Approved 3.31.22\]:](#)
 - Allowing students to elect to apply new graduation requirements and graduate that same term
 - Making explicit the implicit catalog policies for general education, changing majors, etc.
5. [Course Numbering and Status Policy Changes \[Approved 1.27.22\]:](#)
 - To allow a course to fulfill multiple degree requirements (“double count”)
6. [Registration Policy Changes \[Approved 10.28.21\]:](#)
 - To simplify deadlines and create two course adjustment periods: Add/Drop date and Withdrawal date (can make P/N decisions by this date)
7. [Immunization Policy Reinstatements Revisions \[Approved 10.28.21\]:](#)
 - To make explicit practices that are currently implicit including the notification process and the exemption for those enrolled in distance education programs
8. [Graduate Transfer Credit Policy Changes \[Approved 3.31.22\]:](#)
 - Distinguishes between transfer credit guidelines for coursework completed at UNC Charlotte and coursework completed at other institutions
 - Eliminates unnecessary obstacles and requirements to resolve transfer credit issues while protecting approval authority and maintaining academic quality and integrity
9. [Graduate Continuous Registration Policy Changes \[Approved 4.28.22\]:](#)
 - Clarifies that students in graduate degree programs are not required to enroll in any summer term unless they are using University resources, or they are completing degree requirements in that term
 - Clarifies that students working in research laboratories must be granted access in compliance with departmental policy
10. [Graduate Leave of Absence Policy Changes \[Approved 4.28.22\]:](#)
 - Clarifies how students can request a leave of absence to interrupt their studies for up to two consecutive semesters
 - Clarifies potential impacts of taking a leave of absence

11. [SP/UP Grade Mode Policy Changes \[Approved 12.01.22\]](#):

- Clarifies expectations and assessment
- Clarifies how SP/UP grades factor into GPA and degree progression
- Clarifies faculty responsibility when assigning UP grades

Faculty Equity Audit Working Group

Members:

Yvette Huet, ADVANCE Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office, Chair

Beth Auten, Library (FESC Representative)

Craig Depken, Economics (FESC Representative)

Othelia Lee, Social Work (FESC Representative)

Chance Lewis, Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education (Faculty Council Committee Representative)

Clare Merlin-Knoblich, Counseling (FESC Representative)

John Stogner, Criminal Justice and Criminology (CLAS Committee Representative)

Leslie Zenk, Academic Affairs, ex-officio

The Faculty Equity Audit Working Group was charged with considering the impact of the pandemic on faculty work and examining policies and procedures that may have differential impacts on faculty based on discipline, gender, and race/ethnicity. Their work resulted in the creation of a Pandemic Impact Statement for Annual Review that described the ways in which their teaching, research, and/or service had been impacted by the pandemic. It also resulted in the creation of a College and Departmental Best Practices document, which includes recommendations for reappointment, promotion, and tenure.

The [Pandemic Impact Statement](#) is a suggested template for departments and units to use as a supplementary section for faculty to complete as part of the annual activity report to document the effects of the pandemic on productivity and performance. Use of the template is optional and the extent to which faculty choose to provide details when responding to the fields on the template is up to them. During annual reviews, unit heads are encouraged to acknowledge the pandemic impacts identified by individual faculty as well as provide a standardized acknowledgement of the ways in which their discipline has been impacted in teaching, research, and service.

The [College and Departmental Best Practice Recommendations for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure](#) are intended to serve as guidance to inspire, inform, and catalyze revisions to reappointment, promotion and tenure at the department and college level. The need for this comes from national debate that indicates that faculty evaluation methods often do not adequately represent or weigh areas of responsibility such as formal and informal service and community engagement activities. New methodologies, new fields, and new directions in existing disciplines require a review of the assessment systems that are used to evaluate faculty productivity. Assessment of scholarship and scholarly communication need to evolve to

accurately and adequately capture faculty work. The changes in faculty work brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have also brought focus to our evaluation processes.

The document, endorsed by the Faculty Council on March 31, 2022, contains four recommendations:

1. Require bias training at the time individuals are elected to the Department/Unit Review Committee/College Review Committee and/or at least every three years for all those individuals involved in the review process.
2. Build standardized RPT guidelines and processes within the colleges and across the university for faculty review files until such time there is an institution-wide software solution.
3. Formalize a requirement that departments/schools and colleges seek university-level review of revisions to RPT guidelines to ensure guidelines are aligned with institutional policy and best practices.
4. Update RPT guidelines for contemporary best practices with consideration to flexibility, role expectations, and impact of scholarship.

Recommendations for Ongoing Equity Policy Review

As a result of this equity audit, three recommendations are suggested for ongoing policy work: 1) a regular unit equity audit should be conducted every 5-7 years; 2) an equity review should be included during the implementation process for new academic policies; 3) reappointment, promotion and tenure guidelines should be reviewed by each college and the Office of Academic Affairs every 5-7 years to ensure ongoing equity consideration.

Appendices

Appendix A: EAB Case Study

Appendix B: EAB Daily Briefing

Appendix C: EAB Interview

Appendix D: EAB Student Equity Audit Guide

Appendix E: Unit Equity Audit Document


Appendix F: Pandemic Impact Statement

Appendix G: College and Departmental Best Practice Recommendations for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure

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Solution: UNC Charlotte used [EAB’s 360-Degree Student Equity Audit](#) framework to identify inequitable institution-level policies and how to communicate updates to stakeholders. One-on-one meetings with EAB subject matter experts helped them find solutions to the biggest concerns unearthed by the audit.

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Dr. Leslie Zenk, Assistant Provost
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE



Overcoming Barriers to Student Success

Prior to EAB's Audit

Lack of framework for reviewing institutional policies through an equity lens

After EAB's Audit

UNC Charlotte is equipped with a **formal process for analyzing institution-level policies** with both equity and pandemic context in mind

Difficulty developing goals for policy review due to lack of shared definition of "equity review"

UNC Charlotte has **shared language to clearly communicate** what equitable policies look like to all stakeholders, making buy-in easier

Department-level policies can be inconsistent and contain unwritten rules that confuse students and widen the equity gap

EAB's 360-Degree Student Equity Audit was **adapted to audit policies at the department level**. Department audits will now be conducted annually

EAB's Research-Backed Equity Tools

360-Degree Student Equity Audit Findings Across Higher Ed

19%

Gap in basic needs insecurity between Black and White students

55%

Of low-income students more likely to delay graduation

Improve Student Equity

Audit your institution's existing strategies to **promote student equity and implement new initiatives** with confidence using **EAB's 360-Degree Student Equity Audit**

Take Action on Campus

Assess the state of DEIJ on your campus and prioritize the work that matters most with the **Institutional Strategy Index** for DEIJ

Talk with an Expert

Request more information about how you can work with EAB to **close institutional equity gaps** and increase student success

How UNC Charlotte improved student equity across campus

Discover how the University of North Carolina at Charlotte created a blueprint to identify biased institutional policies and turned unwritten rules into formal procedures with student-friendly language.

[EXAMINE THE BLUEPRINT »](#)

3 ways to build your right-fit graduate and online enrollment prospect pool

Leave no stone unturned when it comes to finding your students. Use these three steps to enhance your recruitment strategy, from diversifying your sources of learners to identifying the right time to contact each prospect.

[FIND YOUR RIGHT-FIT STUDENTS »](#)

Want to improve your enrollment marketing campaign? You need a better content library

Enrollment and marketing leaders often need help with differentiation and distinctiveness regarding their content imagery. Ensure your institution has a robust content library for your enrollment campaigns by keeping these seven principles in mind.

[IMPROVE YOUR CAMPAIGNS »](#)

WHAT STUDENT SUCCESS LEADERS ARE READING RIGHT NOW:

[New approaches your school can use to address the student mental health crisis](#)

Two experts discuss how schools manage student mental health crises, including the importance of implementing the right de-escalation techniques to keep learners safe and supported.

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Blogs

How to Build a Sustainable Model for Student Equity and Increase Student Success



By Chrysanthi Violaris

December 20, 2022 · 4 min read



The pandemic and widespread civil unrest of 2020 forced institutions to acknowledge the impact new learning environments and sociocultural issues have on students. With this in mind, [the University of North Carolina at Charlotte](#) decided to evaluate its institutional policies through an equity lens using EAB’s 360-Degree Student Equity Audit. UNC Charlotte reviewed both written and unwritten policies, such as course sequences and how and when to declare a major, identifying barriers to their students’ success. Through their review, they found one in 10 institutional policies were inequitable and codified unwritten rules to provide more transparency for students. Additionally, UNC Charlotte adapted their institution-level equity audit framework to create their own annual health check of

department-level practices. This will hold departments accountable for reviewing policies through an equity lens and keeping student equity an active priority.

I spoke with Dr. Leslie Zenk, Assistant Provost, and Dr. Lisa Walker, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College, to learn more about how they audited their policies using EAB's framework. Read below for highlights from the discussion about how they created an evergreen model for equity at UNC Charlotte.

Like many institutions, UNC Charlotte was affected by the complex social and political events over the last few years. Were there any other reasons that pushed you to complete this audit?

Dr. Lisa Walker: We really wanted to audit our institutional and departmental policies through an equity lens, as the pandemic and recent sociocultural events affect our daily lives. We noticed not all of our students were able to dedicate the same energy to their education. By conducting an institutional policy audit, we wanted to acknowledge that our environments have an impact on students' learning abilities. Right around this time, EAB released its 360-Degree Student Equity Audit tool, and we realized it would be the perfect framework to guide our policy review. The toolkit made it much easier to communicate what we were trying to accomplish and allowed us to think about the various levels of equity and impact.

Beyond mitigating barriers to student success and understanding the holistic student, what were your goals for the initial student equity audit?

Dr. Leslie Zenk: We wanted to create a working group to make sure our policy audit considered various stakeholders when updating our institutional policies. Our equity audit working group examined our institutional policies and their differential impacts on students. It consists of faculty, undergraduate, and graduate student subcommittees to fully capture a university-wide lens. We audited over 80 different institutional policies and procedures before beginning to tackle our department-related topics (like the unwritten rules). We identified one in 10 institutional policies as inequitable and have since updated them following the audit.

I like how you all were able to create a personalized student equity audit for your departments. What inspired you to do this?

LZ: Despite never completing an equity audit before, we heard concerns from people about unwritten rules at the department level. Things like when to declare a major, course sequences, and hidden prerequisites weren't specified or featured in any institutional or department calendars. This made it unfair to students. We felt confident in applying what

we learned from EAB's institution-level equity audit to our departments to improve the overall student experience.

What does short-term and long-term success look like for UNC Charlotte with this initiative?

LZ: The obvious, long-term success of this audit would be a reduction in equity gaps. However, in the short term, we really want our departments to have these equity and accessibility conversations regularly.

LW: EAB's audit and processes served as the backbone for the department-level audits we created. It gave a good framework for how to discuss these issues and solutions and how to shift and update policies. Additionally, we were already able to codify some of the unwritten rules into formal policies with student-friendly language that is now included in our catalog.

Were there any surprising outcomes from the audit?

LZ: One of the biggest changes we made (that we weren't expecting) was around the classroom attendance policy. Through the audit, we clarified instructor responsibilities, what class participation looks like, and recognized that participation is different from attendance. Additionally, the policy, which we renamed as "course attendance and participation," changes based on the course delivery and format. This is one of my favorite updates to highlight as having a real and meaningful impact on students.

LW: I really like our new registration policy. We adjusted the course change periods, like add/drop and withdrawal dates. Instead of having three different dates, which caused lots of student confusion, we used the audit to simplify and align them with the natural flow of adjustment periods, creating systemic change for students.

Interested in improving your institution's policies and ensuring an equitable campus? Read more details about [how UNC Charlotte and EAB partnered](#) to improve student success or chat with someone from EAB.

Ready to find out more?



Who Should Read

President
Chief of Staff
Provost
Student Affairs Leaders
COVID-19 Response Team

360-Degree Student Equity Audit

Answering the Renewed Urgency to Advance
Student Equity in Higher Education

A note from the authors: We conceived of and wrote this piece before the tragic and senseless murder of George Floyd and the ensuing protests for justice. More than ever, equity and systemic racism need to be at the forefront of our national conversation, not just for law enforcement but for all institutions, including our own. There is no better time than now for higher education leaders to recognize where and how systemic racism still impacts our campus communities, including how these inequities are being exacerbated by the pandemic. We stand ready to support you.

Project Director

Alyssa Buccella

Contributing Consultants

Michelle DiMenna

Executive Director

Megan Adams

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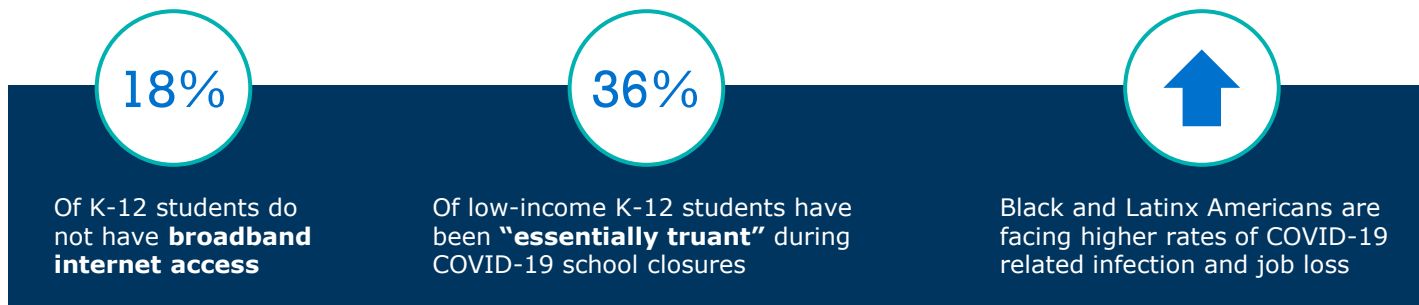
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Executive Summary

Keep Equity at the Center of Your COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plans

As the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected low-income communities and people of color, higher education’s commitment to equity has never been more challenging—or more urgent.



A commitment to equity in student outcomes requires critical examination of institutional policies and practices that negatively effect Black, indigenous, people of color and other historically underserved student groups. Use this audit to determine if the policies and practices in place at your institution support these students.

Section 1

Audit Your Institution’s Existing Strategies to Promote Student Equity

Understanding Five Critical Institutional Equity Priorities



Do policies and partnerships at my institution encourage college access and college readiness?

Right now, college may feel more out of reach than ever for students. [SAT and ACT tests have been canceled](#), in-person campus visits are out of the question, and [FAFSA filing rates are down](#). Students may be doubting that your college or university is the right next step for them, particularly if there is still uncertainty around the mode of delivery for the fall semester.

Your institution must remain dedicated to promoting college access for all students—especially those who traditionally face the most barriers to college enrollment and completion. Reaching out to high school students, adjusting admissions policies, and easing the path to transfer can help ensure students are making informed decisions about their next steps and reduce the administrative hurdles they face in successfully arriving on campus.

Promote College Access and Ease the Path to Transfer.7

Source: Silber, Jeffrey M., Henry Sou Chien. "A Deep Dive: Education and the Coronavirus, Part III," *BMO Capital Markets*, May 18, 2020.

Executive Summary



How can my institution mitigate the increased financial strain that students are likely to experience as a result of the COVID-19 economic downturn?

In just a few months, the U.S. has seen what [some economists](#) are calling the “worst economic downturn since the great depression.” Over 30 million Americans have filed unemployment claims since mid-March, and millions of students have lost employment or have parents who have lost theirs.

While the CARES Act will certainly alleviate immediate financial strain for many, students are only eligible for funds if they are eligible for Title IV aid, shutting out undocumented and international students. Regardless of any short-term government aid, students are likely to face long-term financial strain, and institutions need to be prepared.

Maximize Financial Support for Students in Need. 8



Is my institution prepared to deliver academic and career support to students, including those graduating into an economic crisis?

Low-income, underrepresented, international, and first-generation students may be especially struggling as they pivot to learning and academic planning in a remote environment. During this period of heightened instability and uncertainty, some students may decide they need to pause their education, international students may face new challenges with visa requirements or travel, and students will be highly vulnerable as they graduate into an economic crisis.

Though students are no longer on campus, institutions must be proactive about identifying struggling students and connecting them with the resources and support they need to be successful.

Provide Essential Advising and Registration Support. 9

Meet Students’ Academic and Career Development Needs. 10



Has my institution done enough to ensure equitable student learning, especially in a suddenly remote learning environment?

Inclusive teaching has always been a key ingredient for combating equity gaps in student performance. With the rapid transition to remote learning and an uncertain outlook for future semesters, the need for equitable teaching practices is both more important and more challenging than ever. The crisis presents an opportunity for faculty to improve teaching strategies for remote and eventual in-person learning.

In a remote environment, faculty must adapt their teaching to reach students who have new home responsibilities, limited technology access, or who may have disabilities. Downstream, colleges and universities must be prepared to teach students whose K-12 learning was disrupted by the COVID-crisis.

Implement Inclusive Teaching Practices. 11

Executive Summary



How is my campus supporting sense of belonging, engagement, and basic needs security in a remote world?

Student success doesn't occur in a vacuum; COVID-19 and the move to fully remote instruction has caused many non-academic barriers to be especially disruptive. The complex lives of students can shape their successes, but also their challenges as they struggle with access to technology and mental health care, maintaining a sense of belonging, basic needs insecurity, or COVID-related racism. Other students are also facing new work obligations or increased family care responsibilities.

Campuses and private companies have scaled up technology support and many college communities are rising to the occasion with extensive mutual aid efforts. But institutions can't rely on the generosity of the community alone and must prepare to support struggling students beyond the immediate crisis.

Bridge the Digital Divide	12
Address Heightened Basic Needs Insecurity	12
Increase Engagement and Sense of Belonging	13

Section 2

Implement and Sustain Equity Initiatives at Your Institution

A suite of implementation tools will help you to reflect on, plan for, and track progress on your student equity strategy as a leadership team. Contact your strategic leader if you would like to connect with an EAB researcher for a consultation about equity at your institution.

Data Analyses to Guide Your Equity Strategy	15
Equity Strategy Discussion Guide	16
Practice Implementation Planning Exercise	17

Section 1

Audit Your Institution's Existing Strategies to Promote Student Equity

Instructions

Use this audit to evaluate the policies and practices in place at your institution to support historically underserved students. Indicate which practices your institution has adopted by checking the "in progress" box for each statement. For incomplete items, refer to the supplementary resources for expert advice and sample practices. You can also see EAB's [COVID-19 resource center](#) for more implementation resources and sample peer practices.

Note: Across the entire audit, "student success staff" refers to any individual charged with supporting students and may include advisors, financial aid staff, or student workers.

Audit Key








High impact practice



Look for the "high impact practice" designation for guidance on where to focus limited time and resources to improve student equity.




Promote College Access and Ease the Path to Transfer



Quick Wins	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution offers an application fee waiver to prospective students and proactively reminds prospective students about how to access a waiver to reach those newly financially affected by COVID-19.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's expert advice and learn more from Rowan University
Our institution has made SAT and ACT scores optional for the 2020 application cycle and has adjusted our admissions evaluation process to more heavily weight student grades and other factors.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more about institutions waiving SAT and ACT requirements
Our admissions and registrar's offices have coordinated to allow prospective transfer students to transfer all credits with a "pass" grade for terms affected by COVID-19.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read EAB's expert advice here and here and learn more about reducing barriers to transfer enrollment
Graduate programs have adjusted acceptance policies to allow for a "pass" grade in lieu of a letter grade for terms impacted by COVID-19.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more from Harvard Medical School

Longer-Term Strategies	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution is adopting a permanent policy to make SAT and ACT scores optional for admission.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	Read this blog post and learn more from the National Center for Fair & Open Testing
Our institution has partnerships with community colleges and other main feeder colleges with joint advising, regularly updated degree paths, and streamlined onboarding steps to support prospective transfer students.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more about reducing barriers to transfer preparation, guided pathways implementation, and UCF DirectConnect
Our institution has adopted a multiple-measures approach to placement in developmental education, implemented a co-requisite developmental education structure, and aligned developmental education pathways to students' academic goals.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Coming soon: EAB expert advice on developmental education reform</i>
Our institution has developed a strategy to combat summer melt with text nudges or an AI-enabled chatbot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more about text nudges and Georgia State University's chatbot
Our admissions team has adopted virtual campus tours and virtual information sessions as part of their regular student outreach strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tell your campus' unique story with a virtual campus tour
Our admissions office partners with K-12 institutions to offer college access programs and working sessions on the college application and FAFSA submission processes for prospective high school students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn about a college application bootcamp , college affordability academy and scaling college access programs
Our institution hosts parent-focused college access programs and tailored events to engage parents of first-generation students to demystify the enrollment process and foster a college-going culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn about supporting parents of first-generation students



Maximize Financial Support for Students in Need

Quick Wins	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution has waived registration and bursar holds from terms affected by COVID-19 to facilitate student persistence.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	Read this case study and learn about bursar hold and registration reform
Our institution has temporarily expanded the types of expenses covered by our emergency grant program, proactively clarified to students what it can be used for, and minimized application, approval, and disbursement steps associated with accessing funds.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See section one of EAB's expert advice
Our institution has implemented new criteria for maintaining GPA-dependent scholarships to continue delivering funds to students whose GPAs have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	Omit semesters affected by COVID-19 from GPA calculations used to determine scholarship eligibility
All emergency grant applicants are connected with a staff member who can help students find alternative forms of support if they do not receive any or enough funds through the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more from the Hope Center
Our institution maintains federal work study requirements to continue to pay student employees during COVID-19 disruptions and has redeployed student staff, if necessary, to continue their employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	See section three of EAB's expert advice
Campus offices with non-federal work study student employees continue to pay students during COVID-19 disruptions and are providing virtual work opportunities, as necessary, to continue their employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hire students to support admissions, social media content, marketing content creation, etc.
The campus bookstore is waiving late fees and increasing their mailing options for returning rented textbooks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more from Wayne State College
Our institution has developed a refund policy to reimburse students for housing, student fees, dining, or unfinished credits.	<input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's expert advice on refunds here

Longer-Term Strategies	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution has maximized allocation of CARES Act funds to support students facing COVID-related financial challenges.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's expert advice here and here
Student success staff reach out to students with high financial need to proactively remind them of critical deadlines to refile financial aid forms.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	Learn how to encourage FAFSA renewal
If students do not respond to outreach emails about missing financial aid information and forms, student success staff continue with phone or in-person outreach until they connect with students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn about student aid renewal nudges
Student success staff proactively reach out to students who lose financial aid eligibility to help those students develop an academic recovery plan and work with the financial aid office to access bridge funding.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more from Georgia State University
Financial aid staff proactively work with their advancement colleagues to continue fundraising to sustain emergency grant programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn how to fundraise for grant programs here

Provide Essential Advising and Registration Support

Quick Wins

In Progress

For More Information

Our institution has created policies allowing exceptions or extensions to experiential learning requirements for students whose experiences were affected by COVID-19.



See EAB's [expert advice](#), read [this case study](#), and [watch this webinar](#)

Student success staff have optimized virtual advising by scheduling a series of short, focused appointments to engage in academic planning or connect students with needed support services.



See EAB's [expert advice](#) and watch [this video](#) on virtual advising

Student transcripts will include a marker for terms affected by COVID-19 so future employers and educators are aware of the disruption.



Learn more about [evaluation and grading policies](#)

Our institution has introduced a non-letter (or non-numerical) grading system to ensure student degree progression and have enabled advisors to help students make informed decision about their grading choices.



See EAB guidance on [revising grading policies](#)

Our institution has excluded terms and courses affected by COVID-19 from academic standing calculations to prevent penalizing students for unavoidable conflicts and stressors.



Read [section two of this resource](#) for more information

Our institution has adjusted deadlines for major declaration and dropping courses to allow students more time to consider important academic progress decisions.



Read [section three of this resource](#) for more information

Longer-Term Strategies

In Progress

For More Information

Our institution triages advising outreach to high-risk students by monitoring alerts from faculty and staff, student grades, financial concerns, missed administrative deadlines, and engagement with the learning management system.



See how you can [track LMS activity](#), [triage student outreach](#), and [strategically deploy staff](#)

Student success staff strive to create academic degree plans that allow students to complete 15 credits per term or 30 credits per year to ensure timely completion.



Learn about [on-time degree plans](#) and promoting [timely degree completion](#)

Student success staff connect with students who need to pause their education due to COVID-19 related issues to create an updated academic plan and get permission to re-approach them in the future.



Create [re-approach campaigns](#), [engage stop-out students](#), and help [update academic plans](#)

Our institution identifies and addresses unique registration issues by proactively sending re-enrollment messages to students who have not registered for the fall term.





Learn how to [encourage re-enrollment and registration](#)

Our institution has developed a coordinated care network of faculty, mental health counselors, tutoring staff, and advisors with procedures in place to facilitate information sharing and ensure holistic support.

See EAB's [expert advice](#) and this [webinar](#) with implementation guides

Meet Students' Academic and Career Support Needs

Quick Wins	In Progress	For More Information
Our career services office has developed email templates that students can adapt to communicate with prospective employers.		<input type="checkbox"/> Use these templates developed by the University of Virginia
Our career services office has moved upcoming career fairs and other employer engagement opportunities to a virtual environment.		<input type="checkbox"/> See section three and four of EAB's expert advice and learn from the University of Toronto Scarborough
Our career services office has created a one-stop self-service resource page to promote career development opportunities and resources students can use to learn new skills.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from Boise State University , University of Virginia , and University of South Florida, St. Petersburg
Our career services office has enlisted volunteer support from alumni to conduct virtual resume reviews, identify internship and job opportunities, mentor students, and share career journeys.		<input type="checkbox"/> See EAB's expert advice here and here
Our institution is proactively doing outreach to graduating students/new alumni to identify where they are in their job search and how we can best help		<input type="checkbox"/> See EAB's expert advice
Our career services office actively seeks out alumni and employers with different backgrounds and identities to participate in career services events		<input type="checkbox"/> Be sure to consider race, gender, sexual orientation, industry, and geographic location

Longer-Term Strategies	In Progress	For More Information
Our career services office has increased the number of virtual internship opportunities and project-based experiential learning activities.		<input type="checkbox"/> See EAB's expert advice and learn more about virtual internships
Our institution offers grants for networking trips, employer treks, and for students pursuing necessarily unpaid internships so they can gain critical professional experience and eliminate or reduce the need for additional part-time work to fund their education.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from Claremont McKenna College and work with your advancement office to help secure and sustain grant funding
Our institution scales virtual academic support services by deploying students as peer tutors and advisors.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more about improving peer-to-peer support programs
All regularly available career and academic support services (study skill sessions, supplemental instruction, tutoring, writing, and math centers) continue to operate virtually, and proactively share access information with students.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from Wayne State University
Our career services office provides guidance on professional dress and access to no-cost or discounted professional clothing for students participating in interviews.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from UNC Charlotte



Implement Inclusive Teaching Practices

Quick Wins	In Progress	For More Information
Courses are administered synchronously, but faculty record sessions so content remains accessible for student whose circumstances do not allow for synchronous learning.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from the University of Southern California
All learning materials used for remote instruction are in PDF format, primarily text-based, or use short video content to remain mobile-friendly.		<input type="checkbox"/> See EAB's expert advice
Our institution connects students with open educational resources or other freely available textbooks and learning materials to ensure that students who relied on library reserve textbooks or shared with classmates can continue access to key study materials.		<input type="checkbox"/> Help students access open educational resources or freely-available textbooks
Our institution has shared resources with faculty geared towards building community in asynchronous online courses.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from Duke University
Faculty establish rules of engagement for each virtual class and are transparent about expectations of attendance, class participation, and respectful dialogue, including why those expectations are in place.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more about class meeting guidelines here
Faculty allow students to engage in class in different ways such as virtual breakout rooms, "raising their hand," chat functions, and "reacting" to comments.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more about different engagement strategies here
Our institution has created an online course orientation module to prepare students for online learning and ensure students are aware of the expectations and policies for online learning.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn about UCF's online orientation modules
Our institution has proactively shared the process to request accessibility accommodations in a virtual learning environment.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from UC, Santa Cruz

Longer-Term Strategies	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution mitigates faculty bias in course development, pedagogy, and interactions with students and actively promotes the use of inclusive teaching practices in face-to-face, hybrid, and online classes.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn about bias on online discussion boards and see this guide on inclusive teaching
Our institution has a specific, data-informed strategy in place to increase the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty members.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to instill equity and inclusion in departmental practices
Faculty and staff have ensured that learning materials are accessible to all students through items like transcripts and captions for videos and alternative text for images.		<input type="checkbox"/> See U of Washington's checklist and guide , Association on Higher Education and Disability resources , and EAB accessibility guidance
Faculty are discouraged from using norm-referenced, or curved, grading practices.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn more from UCLA
Our institution has incorporated principles of universal design (designing spaces and products to be accessible to all) into face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses, especially critical introductory or other milestone courses.		<input type="checkbox"/> See examples of universal design



Bridge the Digital Divide

Quick Wins	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution has surveyed students to determine if they have access to a computer and created a laptop loaner program to ensure all students can continue to learn.		<input type="checkbox"/> See section one of EAB's expert advice and watch this webinar
Faculty and staff minimize the need for students to download learning materials to accommodate those with data and broadband restrictions.		<input type="checkbox"/> See section three of EAB's expert advice

Longer-Term Strategies	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution has partnered with state and local governments and internet providers to begin long-term planning for extended crises.		<input type="checkbox"/> See EAB's analysis and case studies here
Our institution has created a technology fund to support the short- and long-term technology needs of our students.		<input type="checkbox"/> Learn about technology support at UC Berkeley
Our institution has expanded Wi-Fi coverage on campus to parking lots and proactively shares information about other public Wi-Fi hotspots so local students and faculty can access the internet.		<input type="checkbox"/> See EAB's expert advice



Address Heightened Basic Needs Insecurity

Quick Wins	In Progress	For More Information
Our institutional food pantry is open during the crisis to continue to serve the community while adhering to CDC guidelines (e.g., by preparing grab-and-go bags for students to pick up).		<input type="checkbox"/> See section one of EAB's expert advice , this blog , and this Hope Center resource
International students and students without a safe home can remain in campus residence halls even when campus operations are closed.		<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain housing for international students and students with need
Student success staff send reminders to the campus community about the availability of basic needs resources with information on how to access them for students who may be using them for the first time.		<input type="checkbox"/> See section two of EAB's expert advice
Student success staff proactively connect students to local, state, and federal resources including food banks, state and federal unemployment forms, mental health and domestic violence helplines, and mutual aid.		<input type="checkbox"/> See EAB's expert advice and how to connect students with public aid



Increase Engagement and Sense of Belonging

Quick Wins	In Progress	For More Information
Messaging from my institution uses positive, asset-based language, which focuses on students' strengths instead of their deficits.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more about positive identity-based messaging
Our institution plans to adopt growth mindset and resiliency priming exercises for students during online orientation.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's expert advice and watch this webinar
Our institution has adapted summer bridge programs to an online format in response to COVID-19 to promote academic self-efficacy and a sense of belonging.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn about bridge programs and FAU's online summer success course
Our institution has created a one-stop-shop for online community engagement that includes wellness resources, upcoming activities, and local and national events to keep students connected with one another.	<input type="checkbox"/>	See examples at Bowling Green State University and Oregon State University's e-campus
Faculty, staff, and administrators are calling all students individually to check in on their wellbeing, connect them to resources, and catalog challenges students are facing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Watch this webinar and read how University of Tennessee at Knoxville called all their students

Longer-Term Strategies	In Progress	For More Information
Our institution has a method for regularly assessing campus climate and students' sense of belonging.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's campus climate survey and resource center
Our institution has developed a bias response team charged with developing a plan for bias incidents and preparing faculty to address racism, with specific resources to address COVID-related racism.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's expert advice , this webinar , this roadmap on climate flashpoints, and this supplementary resource
Our institution connects student concerns and lack of belonging to histories of discrimination and hostility that have occurred in the campus community.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's expert advice , this roadmap on student activism, and the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation
Our institution offers virtual counseling services, support groups, and virtual wellness events (e.g., fitness classes, mindfulness breaks, webinar on coping strategies) for students who are struggling with mental health challenges such as anxiety, grief, and social isolation.	 <input type="checkbox"/>	See EAB's expert advice and these sample virtual counseling groups
Our institution is creating or scaling up a virtual peer-to-peer support program to promote engagement and sense of belonging.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn more about peer-to-peer support programs
Faculty and staff incorporate mental health and well-being content into both in-person and online instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn from Ryerson University and Simon Fraser University

Section 2

Implement and Sustain Equity Initiatives at Your Institution

Instructions

To advance student success for historically underserved students, equity must be an integrated part of your institution's financial and academic planning, and the overall framework for how faculty and staff interact with students, identify needs, and provide services and supports.

Achieving equity begins with understanding the most pressing needs of historically underserved student groups at your institution, and then setting specific equity goals that are regularly informed by your student data.

Use the following tools to prioritize best practices and to keep student equity at the center of your institutional mission and strategy.

Data Analyses to Guide Your Equity Strategy	13
Equity Strategy Discussion Guide	14
Practice Implementation Planning Exercise	15



When using these tools, please keep the following questions in mind:

- Have we consulted a **diverse and representative** group of stakeholders to set institutional goals related to equity?
- Are the voices of historically underserved groups **reflected and amplified** in our strategy?
- What is our strategy for **regularly communicating** our equity goals with our school community?
- How will we **provide updates** on how goals are being met and what adjustments are being made in response to those outcomes?



Data Analyses to Guide Your Equity Strategy

Transformation Metrics

Average Time and Cost to Degree

Retention, Persistence, and Graduation Rates

Summer Melt Rates

Equity Gaps in All Metrics

Break down all data analyses by student demographic to identify disparities

Outcome Metrics

Student Performance

- GPA or Academic Standing
- Avg grade, DFW rates
- Midterm to final grade changes

Student Progress

- Credits attempted, earned, and completion %
- Major changes

Enrollment

- Registration, re-enrollments
- Application yield
- Earlier registration, holds cleared

Other

- Applications to graduate
- Staff or student time savings and satisfaction

Process Metrics

Appt. Activity

- Total appts., appt. per student
- No-show or cancellation rates
- Summary reports filed

Interventions

- Students contacted
- Scheduled and completed appts
- Completed actions
- Increased use of support services

Case Management

- Progress Report response rates
- Alerts issued
- Cases opened and closed

Student Adoption

- Mobile app adoption and utilization
- Completed to-dos
- Appts scheduled by students

Key Analyses for the COVID-19 Era

- Deploy quick polls and surveys through advising software and emails to generate lists of students who may need emergency aid without forcing an extensive application process
- Track students who have lost scholarship eligibility in order to deploy additional financial and academic support for these students
- Analyze course management software data for equity gaps in class participation.
- Have instructors use flash polls and questionnaires to identify students who are struggling and connect them with relevant resources.
- Develop an end-of-term engagement survey to gain student feedback for future planning.



Equity Strategy Discussion Guide

1 What are the most important **outcomes** that we want to achieve as a result of our equity initiatives? What are the specific **measure(s)** associated with these outcomes?

2 Are there any existing initiatives we should **adjust or discontinue** because they do not align with best practice, do not advance our primary goals for student success, or are not delivering intended outcomes?

3 Where are we likely to experience **resistance to proposed changes** to policies, programs, or instructional practices? What can we do to mitigate these potential challenges?

4 Who are likely to be our biggest supporters and **champions of proposed initiatives**? How can we elevate their roles so they have a leadership opportunity and can carry enthusiasm for the work to and through our institution?



Practice Implementation Planning Exercise

Based on your audit responses, circle the top 3 areas you will prioritize to improve student equity at your institution.



Promote **College Access** and Ease the Path to Transfer



Maximize **Financial Support** for Students in Need



Provide Essential **Advising and Registration** Support



Meet Students' **Academic and Career Support** Needs



Implement **Inclusive Teaching** Practices



Bridge the **Digital Divide**



Address Heightened **Basic Needs Insecurity**



Increase Engagement and **Sense of Belonging**

For each priority area you selected, indicate the practices you will implement at your institution along with notes on next steps. Be sure to include at least one longer-term strategy in your selection.

Priority Area #1:

Practice	Next Steps	Owner(s)	Timeline



Practice Implementation Planning Exercise

Priority Area #2:

Practice	Next Steps	Owner(s)	Timeline

Priority Area #3:

Practice	Next Steps	Owner(s)	Timeline



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November 21, 2022

Department Chairs and School Directors:

Provost Lorden charged the Student Equity Audit Working Group, a working group of the Faculty Academic Policy and Standards Committee (FAPSC), with the examination of policies that could have differential effects on low income, first generation students, and/or students of color. With the support of Academic Affairs and Institutional Research, the working group has studied the potential impact of applicable university-level academic policies on student success, and made recommendations for revisions for FAPSC's consideration; with subsequent discussion and revision in the Faculty Executive Committee and the Faculty Council.

The Student Equity Audit Working Group has now turned its attention to College, Departmental and Unit policies; and invite you to conduct a self-review of current practices. The working group has developed this document to help academic units conduct equity audits of their policies, practices, and curriculum. Throughout this audit, please consider a broad definition of diversity, equity and inclusion; including, but not limited to, the following:

- Students who are working full time
- Students with family obligations
- Student with high financial need
- Students from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds
- Students of underrepresented genders or gender identities
- Students who are the first in their families to attend college

While this audit was developed with undergraduate students in mind, it should be used to consider both undergraduate and graduate students and associated policies, procedures, and programs in your unit (including departmental honors programs), as appropriate.

The FAPSC and Faculty Council are invested in ensuring student success by holding ourselves and university policies to standards that ensure diversity, equity and inclusion. These efforts are particularly important as the university advances as a research institution and to be a welcoming environment for future graduate and undergraduate students.

Deadlines and Deliverables

We suggest that your Departmental Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee or Executive Committee lead the effort to undertake this audit, or you may choose to appoint a group. We ask that you begin this audit during the 2022-2023 academic year and complete it during the 2023-2024 academic year:

Steps 1, 2 & 3 (Review Data & Discussion):	Due Date: May 15, 2023
Step 4 (Unit Climate Study) & Recommendations:	Due Date: December 16, 2023

Results at each stage should be shared with the Office of Academic Affairs (academicaffairs@uncc.edu) and your College Dean. Each college will consider the unit and college-specific considerations that are illuminated by your findings and recommendations.

Thank you for your attention to this important work,

Undergraduate Student Equity Audit Working Group:

Crystal Eddins, Department of Africana Studies

Mira Frisch, Department of Music

Oscar Larsen, Department of History

Susan McCarter, School of Social Work

Matt Parrow, Department of Biological Sciences

Lisa Walker, Office of Undergraduate Education

Leslie Zenk, Office of Academic Affairs, facilitator

Unit Equity Audit

What is an equity gap? “Equity gaps refer to disparities in educational outcomes and student success metrics across race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, physical or mental abilities, and other demographic traits and intersectionalities. These gaps often signal that current practices and procedures are not effectively supporting all student groups.”¹ To consider equity gaps that may exist in your department/unit, please begin with gathering data and discussing the questions that follow.

Review Data

Step 1: Review student demographics provided from the last five years including race/ethnicity, gender², and Pell grant eligibility. Compare the enrollment, retention and 4- and 6-year graduation data over the last five years for your department to your college and to the University overall. Break down these comparisons by race/ethnicity and gender.

Additional data and workbooks can be found from Institutional Research [Interactive Fact Book](#) and [Public Dashboards](#).

Step 2: Interpret and discuss within the unit. What do the results tell you about students in your department? In what areas are you performing well? In what areas is there room for improvement?

Please provide a narrative overview discussing what you learned from review of the results.

Discussion Questions

Step 3: We recognize that for different departments there may be different solutions. Use the insight learned from the data to consider and discuss the following:

Recruitment

1. Are there particular courses or subfields that tend to attract (or not attract) especially large numbers of students from groups underrepresented in your field that you are or are not offering?
2. Are there any new topics, fields, or programs to explore in a future curriculum that may be especially attractive to students and faculty underrepresented in your current department/unit?

Curriculum: Structure

Education can be a powerful tool for social mobility, but at times, the structures and practices we put into place affect different students in such ways to reduce this potential. Consider the following:

3. How does the unit balance necessary course sequences with the ability of students to navigate the curriculum as they choose? Where is course sequencing necessary; where not?
4. Does your department/unit have equitable rules, deadlines, processes and requirements for progression and graduation for new freshmen, new transfer

¹ <https://eab.com/insights/daily-briefing/student-success/higher-education-equity-gaps/>

² UNC Charlotte student demographic data on gender is female/male only.

students, and students who apply to join our program from another program on campus that do not advantage one population over another?

5. Are required courses in your department/unit offered regularly and at varied times?
6. Are required courses in your curriculum taught by a range of faculty members? Consider an analysis of courses taught by full-time versus part-time faculty.

Instructor Practices

By [building inclusive courses](#), instructors recognize that some elements of the course, including course materials, teaching methods, or grading, may privilege some students while disadvantaging others. Consider the following:

7. How do course content, learning outcomes, and assignments relate to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion?
8. Do your faculty use [norm-referenced \(or curved\) grading practices](#)? If so, how can you educate about the disadvantages and invite instructors to consider more equitable practices?
9. Do your department/unit's instructors incorporate principles of [Universal Design](#), which provide flexible and multiple approaches for representing material, engaging students, and assessing learning; and how so? Universal Design strategies are designed to help address diverse learning styles, abilities, motivations, and levels of background knowledge that students bring to their studies. If not, how can you educate about more equitable practices among your instructors?

Step 4: Distribute a version of the Unit Climate Study to the faculty and staff in your department/unit. To access the survey, please log in to [Qualtrics](#). On the home page, go to "Create a new project" and select "Survey" and "Get started". Name your survey, then in the "How do you want to start your survey?" dropdown box, select "Use a survey from your library." Choose the "UNC Charlotte Default Division" library, then choose "Unit Climate Survey Template" from the uncategorized folder and "Create your survey". You may now distribute the survey to the faculty and staff in your unit using the "Distributions" tab. Please see this [FAQ](#) for more details on Qualtrics.

Please provide a narrative discussing what you learned from study, including strengths and opportunities for improvement within the unit.

Recommendations

Based on the results of your equity audit and climate study, what five action items are most important for your department/unit to address?

Unit Climate Study (via Qualtrics)

During the 2020-2021 academic year, Provost Lorden charged the Student Equity Audit Working Group, a working group of the Faculty Academic Policy and Standards Committee (FAPSC), with the examination of policies and practices that could have differential effects on low income, first generation students, and/or students of color. As part of this review, the working group is now inviting Departments and Units to conduct a self-review of their areas.

The FAPSC and Faculty Council are invested in ensuring student success by holding ourselves and university policies to standards that ensure diversity, equity and inclusion. These efforts are particularly important as the university advances as a research institution and to be a welcoming environment for future graduate and undergraduate students.

Please use this anonymous climate study to evaluate current strengths and challenges of your department. The data collected will be shared with Department Chairs and used to facilitate discussions within the department and college about important action items to address.

Answer Key: Y=Yes, S=Somewhat, N=No, DK=Don't Know, N/A=Not Applicable

Y=4 S=3 N=2 DK=1 N/A=0

Departmental Climate: General					
1. Visible images and materials throughout the department/unit are welcoming and inclusive to diverse groups - for example, they include positive multicultural images, reflect the experiences of multiple communities, and/or showcase the department's/unit's equity efforts.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
2. All department-sponsored events and activities are accessible to participants with disabilities.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
3. There is a clear culture of respect, collegiality, intergroup dialogue, and collaboration across differences in all levels and positions of the department/unit.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
4. The department/unit provides opportunities for students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented or marginalized groups to connect with others who share their backgrounds and affiliations.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
5. If issues of sensitivity, exclusion, disrespect, or harassment arise, they are addressed directly and in a timely fashion.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
6. The department/unit provides a comfortable environment for discussion of personal and academic topics related to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability/disability,	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)

nationality, and other areas of diversity.					
7. Departmental/unit services, courses, meetings, and administrative practices reflect sensitivity to all groups and are conducted in culturally competent ways.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
8. In my opinion, all students, faculty and staff feel comfortable and welcome to be themselves within the department/unit.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
Students					
1. Our department/unit actively values and seeks to enroll students with diverse racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, immigrant, international, sexual orientation, ability/disability, and religious backgrounds.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
2. Our outreach and major recruitment processes employ targeted practices for attracting diverse populations.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
3. Students of all identities and experiences are valued by faculty and staff, and everyone has a place in department/unit study groups, labs, project teams, etc.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
4. We have a strong mentoring system, which is effective in supporting all students both academically and professionally.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
5. Extra support is provided, where needed, to ensure the success of students from under-resourced backgrounds, students with disabilities, students whose first language is not English, students with limited financial resources, and those facing other academic or social challenges.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
6. Success rates within the department/unit are comparable across students of all identity groups and backgrounds.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
Course Content					
1. In my courses, I assign readings, speakers, etc. that are inclusive and represent diverse perspectives.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)
2. In my courses I have considered which modules or projects I feel could benefit from the inclusion of additional diversity, equity and inclusion resources, greater accessibility, more diverse perspectives, and/or the addition of a public engagement component moving forward.	Y (4)	S (3)	N (2)	DK (1)	N/A (0)

<p>3. Our students engage in scholarly inquiry about topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and public service as appropriate to their chosen field of study. This kind of inquiry is actively supported and valued.</p>	<p>Y (4)</p>	<p>S (3)</p>	<p>N (2)</p>	<p>DK (1)</p>	<p>N/A (0)</p>
<p>4. Our department/unit has shared values or guidelines related to the inclusion of diverse and multicultural perspectives in curriculum materials that are clearly communicated to students.</p>					

Credit:
EAB, 360-Degree Student Equity Audit, 2020
Hanover Research, Higher Education Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Toolkit, October 2020

General Comments:

Name:

Pandemic Impact Statement for Annual Review

Introduction: The University recognizes that faculty have faced numerous professional and personal challenges since March 2020, that the impacts of these challenges are interconnected, that the impacts of these challenges have been unequal, and that the effects of these challenges particularly related to productivity and performance may be long-term. **The impacts of the pandemic will continue to affect faculty careers in future years. Thus, we believe that documenting these impacts will help the institution and our community recognize the multiple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and act to help mitigate against unequal outcomes. Creating an account of these impacts through annual reviews will allow the institution to provide this documentation and acknowledge the unusual working conditions under which faculty have been working. This document is designed to allow the University to recognize conditions impacting productivity and performance that are beyond faculty control.**

Proposed Guidelines: The following is a suggested template for departments and units to use as a supplementary section for faculty to complete as part of the annual activity report to document the effects of the pandemic on productivity and performance. Use of this template is completely optional as is the extent to which faculty choose to provide details through choices marked or comments made. In their reviews, unit heads should acknowledge the pandemic impacts identified by individual faculty as well as providing a standardized acknowledgement of the ways in which their discipline has been impacted in teaching, research, and service.

Pandemic-related Impact Statement

Since March 2020 I have experienced significant impacts from the following issues (check any that apply):

I. Personal and Domestic Impacts:

- (a) Health issues
- (b) Increased economic burden
- (c) Illness or loss of family members
- (d) Caregiving
- (e) Childcare
- (f) Homeschooling or supervising remote learning
- (g) Loss of income or employment for domestic partners
- (h) Pandemic fatigue/mental health issues
- (i) Other: _____

Comments (optional):

II. Impacts on Research:

- _____ (a) Reduction of networking opportunities
- _____ (b) Conferences cancelled
- _____ (c) Invited talks or session organization cancelled
- _____ (d) Closing of archives
- _____ (e) Limited or no access to laboratories and studios
- _____ (f) Additional work to develop plans for closing/reopening laboratories
- _____ (g) Additional work to begin or synthesize new projects in lieu of previous work
- _____ (h) Limited interaction time with research students, postdocs, and lab technicians
- _____ (i) Limited or curtailed travel or access to archives or field sites
- _____ (j) Delays in the publishing industry and difficulties/slowdowns in the review process
- _____ (k) Reduction of publishing opportunities due to financial cuts and/or closings of journals and presses
- _____ (l) Other: _____

Comments (optional):

III. Impacts on Teaching:

- _____ (a) Learning new technologies, including trainings attended or led
- _____ (b) Overhauling course design and maintaining student engagement
- _____ (c) Course overloads due to personnel changes and/or increased enrollment
- _____ (d) Developing substitutes for class labs and studios
- _____ (e) Other: _____

Comments: (optional):

IV. Impacts on Service:

_____ (a) Increases in advising load as students navigated changing course formats and requirements

_____ (b) Increased number of meetings and other service activities addressing pandemic-specific issues

_____ (c) Other: _____

Comments: (optional):

V. Resource Issues:

_____ (a) Limited access to broadband and/or software

_____ (b) Financial impacts (some caused by impacts mentioned above)

_____ (c) Other: _____

Comments: (optional):

VI. Pandemic-related Activities

_____ (a) Engaged in essential work

_____ (b) Participated in pandemic-related research

_____ (c) Contributed to departmental, university, professional-society, interdisciplinary, or community-engaged pandemic initiatives

_____ (c) Support for students or colleagues experiencing pandemic-related physical, mental, economic, or social consequences

_____ (d) Other: _____

Comments: (optional):

VI. Other Pandemic-related Impacts:

Comments: (optional): _____

College and Departmental Best Practice Recommendations for Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure

Date: February 15, 2022

Originating Committee: Faculty Equity Audit Working Group (Ad Hoc subcommittee of the Faculty Employment Status Committee (FESC) formed by the Provost in Fall 2020)

Members: Yvette Huet, ADVANCE Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office, Chair; Beth Auten, Library (FESC Representative); Craig Depken, Economics (FESC Representative); Othelia Lee, Social Work (FESC Representative); Chance Lewis, Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education, Faculty Council Committee Representative; Clare Merlin-Knoblich, Counseling (FESC Representative); John Stogner, Criminal Justice and Criminology (CLAS Committee Representative); Leslie Zenk, Academic Affairs (ex-officio)

Introduction

In Fall 2020, the Provost created and charged the Faculty Equity Audit Working Group with the task to:

- Consider continuing impact of the pandemic on faculty work
- Examine policies/procedures that may have differential impacts on faculty based on discipline, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Presentations about this work were made to the Chancellor's Leadership Team (April 2021) and Deans Council (April 2021). The Faculty Equity Audit Working Group has made the following recommendations that have been endorsed by the FESC (Spring 2021) and Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) (Fall 2021). These recommendations are intended to serve as guidance to inspire, inform, and catalyze revisions to reappointment, promotion and tenure at the department and college level. There is a timeliness to these recommendations and we seek to work with college administration to develop a responsive timeframe to address these recommendations.

Context

Nationwide debate among faculty and academic administrators indicates that faculty evaluation methods often do not adequately represent or weigh areas of responsibility, such as formal and informal service and community engagement activities. Evaluation and rewards systems at many institutions often reflect outdated values, goals and aspirations and fail to acknowledge new tasks and goals assigned to faculty by the institution. To redress this issue, this committee is making recommendations to amend evaluation methods in order to align with the goals of our new institutional [Strategic Plan](#). To uphold the guiding commitments of the new Strategic Plan, faculty work must be reviewed in a manner that demonstrates our institutional values, especially for faculty that engage in inquiry to generate new knowledge, modes of expression, understanding, and solutions to society's most significant challenges; and those who collaborate with local, state, national, and global partners and work to eliminate barriers and help to create an inclusive and equitable culture.

As our fields change in the methodologies and topics; as disciplines move in new directions; we need to review our reward systems so that they too can evolve, support and value the new areas of work being done by the faculty that are engaged in newer forms of scholarship and alternate ways of research communication. Finally, we must also acknowledge shifts, both nationally and

locally, that have begun and are continuing to change faculty work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These shifts have brought focus on our evaluation processes and the trepidation that both new and more senior faculty have on how the reward system reflects the changing circumstances of their work in teaching, community engagement, service, leadership and creative activity.

As we know from national data and our own COACHE data (see Resources below and COACHE Faculty Climate data from the [ADVANCE Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office website](#)), clarity and transparency are important for our faculty and administrators. We should use the opportunity of a new Strategic Plan to complete this review now, in a timely manner.

In order to do the job of review well, we must engage in continuing and regular discussions of what we value, how this is reflected in our reappointment, promotion and tenure processes and in how we implement and do our reviews, using best practices from the literature. All departments and colleges should review their policies and procedures at least every five years and make sure they provide updated, clear guidance for all faculty and administrators.

Recommendation 1: Bias Training

There is a significant body of literature¹ that has shown that bias in letters of recommendation and student evaluations of teaching can have disproportionately negative impact on women and faculty from groups underrepresented in academe. As such, it is recommended that the ADVANCE Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office and Office of Legal Affairs continue to provide a training module for those involved in the campus review process (Deans, Department Chairs, Department Review Committee members and College Review Committee members) to clarify best practices in asset-based assessment and to cover bias and potential sources of bias in the review process. This training should be required at the time individuals are elected to the Department/Unit Review Committee/College Review Committee and/or at least every three years for **all** those individuals involved in the review process.

Recommendation 2: Standardized Review Files

This recommendation asks the Provost and Deans to build greater alignment of RPT guidelines and processes within the colleges and across the university for faculty review files submitted to the University in reappointment, promotion, and tenure until such time there is an institution-wide software solution. This may require revision to the RPT guidelines for colleges. RPT review file contents across the university should include, but are not limited to, the items on the following list. Departments should not require materials, like tables, that duplicate previously provided information, remove the context for evaluation, and make it more difficult to review materials in an unbiased, holistic manner. The process and the materials should strive to create a clear and streamlined set of parameters and provide the reviewers (URC, CRC, chairs, deans, Provost) the opportunity to better understand the context, impact and significance of the work of the faculty member and support the use of balanced quantitative metrics with qualitative inputs. This list was informed by the [Review for Reappointment, Promotion, and Conferral of Permanent Tenure information](#) provided by the Office of the Provost.

- Current *Curriculum Vitae*.
- Personal statement of no more than 12 pages that describes significant areas of focus

¹ Hefferman, 2022; Schmader, Whitehead & Wysocki, 2007

and impact through accomplishments, current progress, and future plans in all three areas of review.

- Evidence to support contributions in all three areas of review. Please note that community engagement is inherent in all three areas of review. For clarification see the academic-budget-personnel/handbook which states: Community engagement refers to research/creative activities, teaching, and service activities that are collaboratively undertaken by faculty members with community partners, staff, and/or students through processes that exemplify reciprocity in partnerships and public purposes.
 - Scholarly Research, Creative, and Other Professional Activities
 - Teaching, Advising, Curriculum and/or Instructional Development (course evaluations, syllabi, peer reviews, etc.)
 - Service to the University, the Public, and/or the Profession (appointment letters, etc.)
 - Evidential materials should not simply replicate content provided in the CV, but demonstrate the quality and significance of contributions in each area. Additional materials that merely duplicate the identified content above should not be included.
- Letter from a secondary unit if applicable.
 - If the faculty member has an MOU, joint appointment, or has provided significant service and/or teaching to a secondary unit, they have the opportunity to include a letter from the secondary unit head in the file. This letter should be in the file at the start of the review process.
- Copies of annual evaluation letters to the candidate for the period since the last appointment, reappointment or promotion decision for the candidate.
- External Evaluation Letters for cases involving promotion and/or tenure.

Recommendation 3: College and University Level Review of RPT Guidelines

Current policy does not require that departments/units seek university-level review of RPT guidelines, although some units choose to seek feedback. This recommendation formalizes that departments/schools and colleges seek university-level review of revisions to ensure guidelines are aligned with institutional policy and best practices.

Recommendation 4: Updating RPT Guidelines for Contemporary Best Practices

Review and revise Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure guidelines with consideration for the following additional items to promote equity in our expectations for excellence in research and education. Achievement(s) should be reviewed with respect to opportunities and restrictions faced by faculty (e.g. pandemic) and with an asset-based focus which starts from a place of considering the evidence where the candidate has met the guidelines.

- Flexibility - The expectations articulated for faculty members should be reviewed with respect to context and opportunities available. Frameworks should take into account that evaluation should allow for differences in the following areas:
 - Time frames for meeting expectations (e.g. productivity over a longer time frame and not a specific year; calculating the overall time available for a given period and then measuring the performance in light of this time; productivity should be identified in ranges)
 - Types of activities - The areas of teaching, research and service are not distinct

and some achievements may be relevant to more than one area. In some cases, changes in focus are required in response to needs or opportunities (e.g. pandemic responses altered the needs of the institution relative to teaching, research and service).

- Roles - Faculty have different roles and responsibilities within a department and the context of these are important to understand in the review process. Units need clear discussions about individual faculty members' expectations in teaching, research and service either individually or as part of departmental/unit and/college policies and procedures. Role expectations should be reviewed annually.
 - RPT guidelines should make invisible work that is valuable, visible and reviewed explicitly within the process (e.g. good mentoring, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts) In addition, individual faculty have different loads with respect to their teaching, research, and administrative expectations and should be evaluated accordingly.
- Impact of Scholarship - We strive to achieve excellence in faculty work and this includes building an engagement with the state, the nation, and the world in order to positively impact our communities. We must reconsider how we measure impact. Faculty members are responsible for articulating the impact of their scholarship in their review materials, however, departmental/unit and college RPT guidelines should be broadly based to include work that is described as valued by the institution. These areas include but are not limited to:
 - Contributions made through peer-reviewed articles, presentations, exhibitions, performances, etc.
 - Grants or contracts
 - Other avenues through which scholarship impacts communities based on the person's academic credentials, reputation and knowledge.
 - Invitations to speak/perform/lead projects
 - Non-academic press books
 - Talks to the general public
 - Interviews with the media
 - Podcasts, Blogs, or Social media content
 - Consulting (paid or non-paid) work with agencies, institutions, non-profits, etc.
 - Adoption of work products by academic or non-academic institutions, policy work, and resonance with identifiable communities

Resources:

- Bensimon, Estela Mara, and Tierney, William G. (1996) Promotion and tenure: community and socialization in academe. United States, State University of New York Press.
- Chávez, K., & Mitchell, K. (2020). Exploring Bias in Student Evaluations: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 53(2), 270-274.
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<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/04/09/covid-19-demands-reconsideration-tenure-requirements-going-forward-opinion>
- Davies SW, Putnam HM, Ainsworth T, Baum JK, Bove CB, Crosby SC, et al. (2021) Promoting inclusive metrics of success and impact to dismantle a discriminatory reward system in science. *PLoS Biol* 19(6): e3001282.
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- Gordon CK (2008) *Organizational rhetoric in the academy: Junior faculty perceptions and roles*. University of North Texas.
- Harley D, Acord SK, Earl-Novell S, et al. (2010): Assessing the future landscape of scholarly communication: An exploration of faculty values and needs in seven disciplines. Center for Studies in Higher Education.
- Troy Heffernan (2022) Sexism, racism, prejudice, and bias: a literature review and synthesis of research surrounding student evaluations of courses and teaching, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 47:1, 144-154, DOI: [10.1080/02602938.2021.1888075](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1888075)
- Kuo, M. (2017) Consciously combating unconscious bias. *Science*, 30 Jan, doi:10.1126/science.caredit.a1700010
- Malish, C.M. (2020). Measuring Access to Higher Education: Indicators and Indications. *Economic and political weekly*. 54-56
- Monash University. Achievement Relative to Opportunity:
<https://www.monash.edu/academicpromotion/achievement-relative-to-opportunity>
- O'Meara, K. Academic Reward Systems:
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- Schimanski LA, Alperin JP. (2018) The evaluation of scholarship in academic promotion and tenure processes: Past, present, and future. *F1000Res*. 7:1605.
doi:10.12688/f1000research.16493.1
- Schmader T, Whitehead J, Wysocki VH. A Linguistic Comparison of Letters of Recommendation for Male and Female Chemistry and Biochemistry Job Applicants. *Sex Roles*. 2007;57(7-8):509-514. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9291-4
- Schmidt, R and Hatch, A (2020) Official PLOS Blog Rethinking Research Assessment: Addressing Institutional Biases in Review, Promotion, and Tenure Decision-Making.
<https://theplosblog.plos.org/2020/09/rethinking-research-assessment-addressing-institutional-biases-in-review-promotion-and-tenure-decision-making/>
- Weisshaar, K. (2017) Publish *and* Perish? An Assessment of Gender Gaps in Promotion to Tenure in Academia, *Social Forces*, 96 (2): 529–560, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sox052>

Hatch, A. and R. Schmidt. (2020). Rethinking Research Assessment: Unintended Cognitive and System Biases. DORA:

Judgment and decision-making biases that impact how we weigh options and make choices have been shown to result in inequitable review, promotion, and hiring practices. While recognizing these biases at a personal level is important, creating new structural and institutional conditions to reduce bias can be even more valuable.

