SOCIETY REPORT

Advancing the Professionalization of Diversity Officers in Higher Education: Report of the Presidential Task Force on the Revision of the NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice

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The National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) has developed and approved standards of professional practice for diversity officers in higher education (Worthington, Stanley, & Lewis, 2014). A more recent, revised set of standards have been adopted by NADOHE (2020) to reflect the rapid evolution of the field, and update existing standards to further promote the advancement of the professionalization of diversity officers in higher education. This article provides a summary of work on the development of the revised NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice, along with some of the most significant advancements in the field of study to encompass a broad range of knowledge and practices reflected in the work of diversity officers across differing institutional contexts. Understanding that diversity is an imperative for excellence requires linking diversity to an institution's mission. Standards of professional practice are useful guideposts to specify and clarify the flexibility and scope of work of diversity officers, and inform administrators and institutions in aligning the work of diversity officers with the rapidly advancing characteristics of the profession. The standards account for variations in the organizational structures, fiscal resources, professional backgrounds, specialized expertise, and scope of administrative authority that exist across institutional contexts.

Keywords: diversity officer, equity, diversity, inclusion, standards

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives are some of the most complex areas of policy and practice in contemporary higher education contexts (American Association of State Colleges, and Universities and National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges Task Force on Diversity, 2005; Clayton-Pederson, O'Neill, & McTighe Musil, 2008; Clayton-Pederson, Parker, Smith, Moreno, & Teraguchi, 2007; Gurin, 1999; Harvey, 2014; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Smith, 2015; Stanley, 2014; Williams, 2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013; Worthington, 2012). Increasingly, colleges and universities are appointing cabinet-level diversity officers with highly specialized expertise to provide leadership that advances EDI. The NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice were developed across more than a decade of efforts to increase the professionalization of diversity officers in higher education (see Worthington et al., 2014), and were recently updated and revised as part of the formative advancement of the field (NADOHE, 2020; see the Appendix). This article serves as a report of the task force on revision of the standards of practice and provides additional context and clarification on how the standards have evolved to advance the work of cabinet-level diversity officers in higher education.

During the 2007 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity, Worthington (2007) argued for advancing the professionalization of diversity officers and outlined the characteristics of a profession as follows: (a) specialized expertise; (b) educational credentials, certification, or licensure; (c) standards of professional practice; (d) self-governance and accountability; and (e) a code of ethics (Benveniste, 1987; Chambers, 2004). Whereas many professions begin with specialized training through educational credentials at the graduate level, the history and nature of the work of diversity in higher education

resulted in a wide-ranging set of pathways to the role of diversity officers as cabinet-level campus leaders. The types of expertise and professional backgrounds of diversity officers were so widely varied across time that the field itself struggled to form a conceptual framework about the focus and boundaries of the work, much less achieve legitimacy, recognition and respect as a profession in higher education settings. This set of circumstances was exacerbated by social and political pressures against affirmative action in admissions and hiring, which served as a delegitimizing force (Garces, 2014; Sturm, 2006). In 2009, NADOHE established a strategic plan to advance the professional standing of diversity officers among higher education administrators (NADOHE, 2009), and in 2012 NADOHE President Ben Reese commissioned the first presidential task force on the development of standards of professional practice. In 2014 the Board of Directors approved the first set of standards, which were published in the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* in December (Worthington et al., 2014).

As the standards became widely adopted in the field, it was apparent that search firms and some institutions viewed them as "competencies" to be inserted into position descriptions and announcements, focusing on the individualized skills and practices diversity officers would bring to the work of resolving crises, managing conflicts, addressing hate and bias, promoting a campus climate of inclusion—essentially doing much of the work of EDI with few resources or

institutional authority to make progress toward transformational institutional change. A "standard" is defined as a "a level of quality that is normal or acceptable for a particular person or in a particular situation," whereas a "competency" is defined as "a skill that you need in a particular job or for a particular task" (*Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, 2020). Standards of professional practice are "living documents," and are subject to periodic review and enhancement based on issues occurring within higher education and the evolving nature and roles of diversity officers in different contexts. Thus, in 2018, NADOHE President Archie Ervin commissioned the second presidential task force to revise the standards of practice, and over the course of nearly two years, the revised standards took shape and were adopted by the Board of Directors (NADOHE, 2020).

Beginning in the fall of 2018, the work of the task force was guided by a continued focus on the professionalization of the role of diversity officers in higher education cabinet-level positions. Figure 1 provides a framework to illustrate how the newly developed NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice are organized under the following three categories: (a) Foundational Cornerstone Standards, (b) Organizational Processes Standards, and (c) Operational Standards. In the sections that follow, we provide a description of the framework along with the interconnected features of the work of diversity officers in higher education. We conclude with a description of the role of cabinet-level diversity officers in
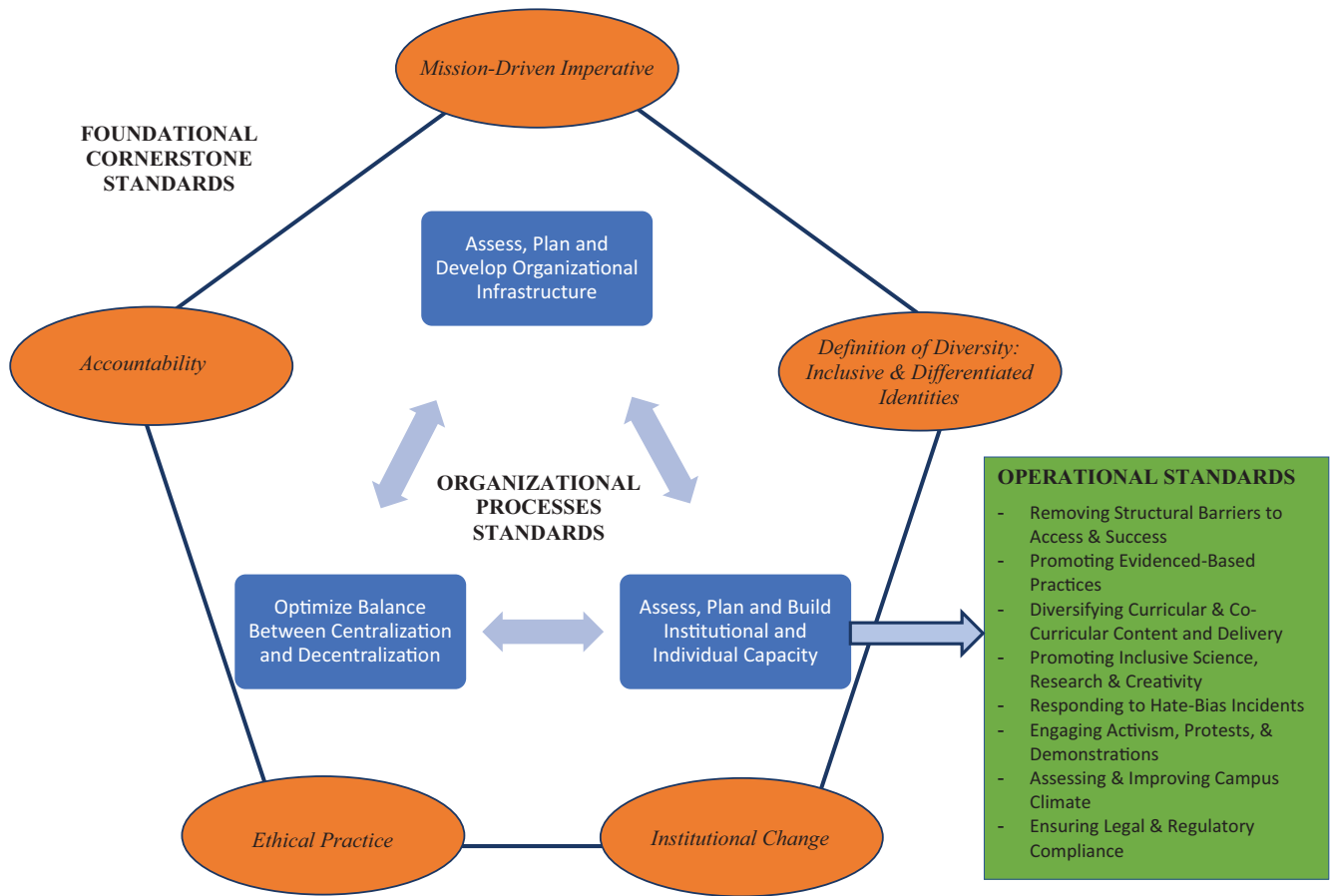

Figure 1. Framework for NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

higher education as reflected by the NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice.

Foundational Cornerstone Standards

We began our work with the assumption that there are five key foundational cornerstones to the work of EDI in institutions of higher education: (a) in order for institutions to achieve excellence, EDI are embedded as imperatives in the institutional mission, vision, and strategic plan; (b) the work of EDI must proceed from a frame of comprehensive definitions of EDI that are inclusive, differentiated, and complex with respect to the intersectionality of social identities; (c) the work of EDI requires institutions to engage in planning, catalyzing, facilitating, and evaluating processes of institutional and organizational change; (d) the professional work of diversity officers, and the institutions they work within, must reflect the highest levels of ethical practice; and (e) institutions of higher education, and diversity officers, are committed to accountability for advancing EDI (NADOHE, 2020). Cornerstone foundational standards provide the structural supports for the *organizational processes standards*, and *operational standards* arise from the organizational processes that advance institutional and individual capacity for the work of EDI (see Figure 1).

Mission-Driven Imperative

Institutional mission is the central driver of everything that becomes the focus of attention through goals, objectives, initiatives, vision statements, and strategic plans. Understanding how diversity is an imperative for excellence requires linking diversity to each institution's particular mission. One reason institutions have differing approaches to the work of diversity in higher education is because they have different missions, and consequently different organizational structures, resources, capacities, and change processes. The optimization of diversity change efforts requires a high level of calibration to the institutional mission, and should be clearly articulated in strategic planning documents, vision and mission statements, and accountability metrics.

Diversity in higher education has shifted from a projection about rapidly changing demographics anticipated in the future to become a powerful current and urgent reality in colleges and universities that has dramatically changed the landscape of EDI in higher education (Espinosa, Gaertner, & Orfield, 2015; United States Department of Education, 2016). Excellence within an increasingly diverse society requires expanding institutional capacity for EDI and an understanding of how diversity is an imperative for excellence, linking diversity to an institution's mission. Institutions have begun to see diversity, like technology, as central rather than parallel or peripheral to their work as one way to become more relevant to society, the nation, and the world while remaining true to their core missions (Croissant, Rhoades, & Slaughter, 2001; Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004; Smith, 2015). In the same way that higher education institutions could not possibly survive, much less thrive, without dedicated professionals and resources allocated to computing technology, excellence in higher education is inextricably tied to the professional expertise and resources within an institution in the area of EDI. Institutions cannot survive or thrive without dedicated, integrated organizational capacity to do the work of *inclusive excellence*, a guiding principle for access, success, high-quality learning, scholarship, and creative activities designed to help colleges and universities integrate diversity, equity, and educational quality efforts into their missions and institutional operations (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2020; Brown, 2016; Clayton-Pedersen et al., 2008; Smith, 2011). While these roles have grown in significance, it has become increasingly clear that the accountability for institutional transformation must be anchored in the particular mission of an institution, distributed across multiple levels of leadership throughout an institution, and not reside with a single cabinet-level diversity officer.

Smith (2015) provided a framework for diversity in higher education that situates the institutional mission within global and local contexts, exemplified by access and success, climate and intergroup relations, education and scholarship, and institutional viability and vitality (Figure 2). This framework reflects the many dimensions of diversity work and locates these elements around institutional mission. The first dimension of access and success for historically underrepresented populations remains a core element. Campus climate and creating conditions for intergroup dialogue has emerged as a central focus not only for students but also for the campus in general, including faculty, staff, and administrators. The third dimension of education and scholarship is central to the academic core of any institution. The focus here is the educational mission of an institution and how students are being prepared for a pluralistic society. The scholarly aspect of this requires addressing how diversity is embedded in the research questions and the adequacy of knowledge creation. The last dimension, institutional viability and vitality, addresses not only how an institution handles issues of bias, but also whether it has the leadership and professional capacity in terms of its diversity and skills to address institutional change. If understood as an imperative for institutional excellence, diversity will require building capacity at the leadership level and throughout the institution to address all the ways diversity is integrated and embedded in institutional excellence. The role for the cabinet-level diversity officer, then, has become more essential in facilitating capacity building and monitoring change, than in adding programs that are parallel to core functions (Smith, 2015).

Definition of Diversity

Across more than seven decades, the imperative for excellence has become inextricably tied to the access and success of people from a more inclusive set of identity groups. Whereas the initial focus was almost exclusively on issues of access and equity related to race and gender, institutions across a variety of contexts and cultures define the work of diversity and inclusion using many dimensions. This is true not only for the characteristics of social identities that are included under the diversity umbrella, but also in terms of the rapidly evolving theory, research, and societal trends for how people use language and self-identification. These trends require institutions, and diversity officers, to change and adapt to the new ways human identities, differences, and movements affect conditions of EDI.

Whereas historical efforts to address issues of access and equity focused primarily on the identity dimensions of racial/ethnic and (cis)gender identities (Aultman, 2014), contemporary definitions of EDI include a broader array of social identity characteristics
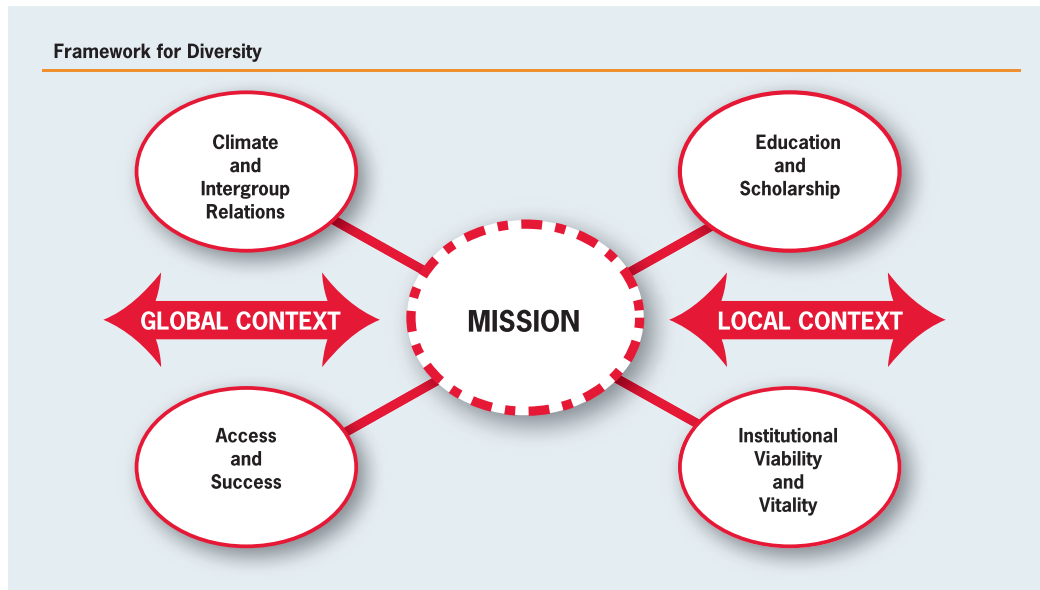
Figure 2. Framework for diversity - Smith (2007). Copyright 2015 by Daryl G. Smith. Reprinted with permission from Diversity's promise for higher education: Making it work (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

such as nonbinary gender expression and identity, sexual orientation, ability and disability, religion and spirituality, national and geographic origin, language use, socioeconomic status, first-generation status, age, military and veteran status, and political ideology. Accordingly, this field of study has been rapidly evolving to incorporate advanced conceptualizations of intersectionality (e.g., Byrd & Brunn-Bevel, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989) and the fluidity of multiple identities reflected in all constituents of higher education institutions including students, faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, alumni, and others (Harris & Patton, 2019; Museus & Griffin, 2011; Smith, 2015; Worthington, 2012; Worthington et al., 2014). Whereas the majority of higher education professionals seem to persist in thinking about EDI primarily in terms of race and (cis)gender, and in terms of numerical or compositional diversity (e.g., counting people), increasing diversity in society as well as in higher education requires greater depth and breadth in the complexity with which we conceptualize the work of EDI—substantially expanding the need for highly specialized expertise to address concerns about inclusion, campus climate, systemic inequities, and other critical issues.

Institutional Change

Diversity in higher education has progressed so dramatically over the course of many years that the very nature of the work of diversity officers is also constantly evolving. Within that context, colleges and universities have expanded the scope of their EDI efforts beyond compositional diversity to include a broader set of concerns that require mission-driven institutional and organizational change, including but not limited to efforts directed toward (a) recruitment and retention; (b) equitable, diverse, and inclusive campus climates; (c) curriculum and instruction; (d) research and inquiry; (e) intergroup relations and civil discourse; (f) student,

faculty, and staff achievement and success; (g) leadership development; (h) nondiscrimination; (i) procurement and supplier diversity; (j) institutional advancement; (k) external relations; and (l) strategic planning and accountability (NADOHE, 2020; Worthington, 2012; Worthington et al., 2014;). In each of these domains, the agenda for organizational EDI capacity-building has increased with a sense of greater urgency.

Institutional and organizational change require a deep understanding of how change occurs. A *change agent* refers to an individual who plays a role in creating, establishing, developing, reorganizing, redesigning, operating, reconfiguring, or transforming a system, organization, or institution (Egan, 1985). By definition, diversity officers have historically filled the role of institutional change agents (Williams, 2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013; Worthington, Hart, & Khairallah, 2009; Worthington et al., 2014). Furthermore, studies show that the rate of change in institutions are influenced by interactions of economic, political, social, organizational, and cognitive factors (Aoki, 2007; Roland, 2004). Organizational and institutional change in higher education are often difficult and slow processes (Bensimon, 2005; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; McNair, Bensimon, & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020), and Harvey (2014) argued that although the role of the diversity officer is to effectively identify and plan organizational change efforts to achieve EDI goals and objectives, higher education institutions are inherently resistant to change. Under normal circumstances, academic leaders are assumed to be those responsible for change despite being part of the traditional organizational structure of the university or college (Hart, 2009), making them both agents of change and keepers of the status quo.

Similarly, EDI efforts require institutional commitment central to its viability and excellence and the placement of diversity efforts in the portfolios of virtually every aspect of institutional practice.

Leadership from key senior administrators such as chancellors, presidents, provosts, and faculty governance as well as boards are required for the broadest level of systemic change to take place (Donovan & Kaplan, 2019; Krisberg, 2019). Yet, there are many ways that individual students, staff, and faculty can take ownership to organize grassroots change efforts from the bottom-up that build momentum for facilitating and sustaining change. At times institutional change efforts occur at cross purposes, or in the context of adversarial relationships that minimize the potential for successful change to occur. cabinet-level diversity officers can be key players in building relationships for institutional and organizational change for diversity and inclusion. Critical to playing a facilitative role in institutional change efforts, diversity officers should be skilled in the art of difficult dialogues and effective communication (often through code switching) with parties holding differing perspectives, worldviews, values, and agendas (Worthington et al., 2009; Worthington & Arévalo Avalos, 2016).

Even in the context of slow and inconsistent progress over the course of decades, increases in compositional diversity have intensified the imperative for organizational and institutional change (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, & Chessman, 2019; Stevens, Plaut, & Sanchez-Burks, 2008), and the deepening social, cultural, religious, and political divisions within the broader society are being played out in dynamic and often controversial ways within higher education. Colleges and universities have the potential to function as agents of positive social and behavioral change, yet institutions of higher education commonly reproduce social inequalities because they are microcosms of the larger society reflective of systemic racism and other forms of marginalization, making it essential that they assess and understand how they reify and reflect systems of oppression (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Mwangi, Thelamour, Ezeofor, & Carpenter, 2018).

Ethical Practice

There are tremendous challenges in addressing the potentially conflicting interests, perspectives, and demands of different groups of students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members, donors, legislators, and political groups. Furthermore, in some institutions, diversity officers function both as administrators and practitioners, overseeing the institution-wide efforts for capacity-building and transformative organizational change, providing supervision, consultation, and guidance to those carrying out the work of EDI, while at the same time delivering the educational, facilitative, and programmatic activities designed to directly affect change. Moreover, diversity officers are situated within institutions as cabinet-level administrative leaders with responsibilities to hold people and organizations within the institution accountable for making advances, yet they are frequently constrained by their roles and positions from engaging in transformative change efforts that might cast the institution in a negative light, often prompting activists to view diversity officers as adversaries rather than allies (Griffin, Hart, Worthington, Belay, & Yeung, 2019; Harvey, 2014). As such, diversity officers are required to foster change in the organizational climate and culture by engaging different institutional constituents in efforts to assess, analyze, implement, monitor, and modify policies and procedures that will facilitate progress toward goals and objectives to increase diversity and inclusive-

ness. Ultimately, this leads to multiple levels of paradox in the work of diversity in higher education, in which institutions outwardly express interests in ameliorating racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, while simultaneously operating to maintain the status quo, at times through structural and procedural constraints originally rooted within the oppressive forces they claim to disavow (Ahmed, 2012; Basham, Donner, Killough, & Rozas, 1997; Berrey, 2015; Feagin, 2010; Kendi, 2019; Park, 2018; Slay, Reyes, & Posselt, 2019).

Diversity officers must have the capacity to engage constituents and other administrative leaders within a framework of ethical principles for civil and human rights, accountability, justice, transparency, veracity, fidelity, respect, and integrity, among others. There are potentially intense challenges to the work of diversity officers on a daily basis, and often the challenges come from those who are the strongest advocates rather than detractors of EDI as a mission-driven institutional imperative. They must have the vision, interpersonal style, and communication skills to work collaboratively with people from the broadest spectrum of backgrounds and perspectives at all levels of the university system and community (Worthington et al., 2014). As shown in Figure 3, external and internal threats require institutional commitment to advance the work of EDI and support the efforts of diversity officers in carrying out their work. Where tensions or conflicts arise, diversity officers and the institution should be held to the high standards of ethical practice in service of the mission-driven imperative.

Accountability

Inclusive excellence requires moving from a singular focus on improving compositional diversity—who is present or absent on campus—to "embrac[ing] comprehensive performance measurements linked to goals, objectives, strategies, indicators, and evidence" (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005, p. 19). At the center of this work is a fundamental foundation of institutional accountability to pursue meaningful goals for organizational change. The nature and process of organizational change and accountability are derived from the mission-driven imperative to pursue excellence through equitable and inclusive means. Where institutions are deficient in capacity to support and pursue their institutional goals, cabinet-level diversity officers help the institution to identify and ameliorate those deficiencies through leadership, coordination, resources, and evidence (see Figure 3). Within that framework, cabinet-level diversity officers also help institutions to identify the optimal balance between centralized and more decentralized or localized EDI activities, efforts, programs, and initiatives while attending carefully to capacity building and organizational infrastructure as supports for EDI work. Whereas some diversity officers may have specialized expertise in one or more functional areas (e.g., curricular diversity, campus climate research, hate-bias incident response, research and scholarship, activism, legal and regulatory compliance), no single diversity officer will have expertise in all areas that require attention related to EDI, and thus, accountability translates to the institution rather than the individual diversity officer.
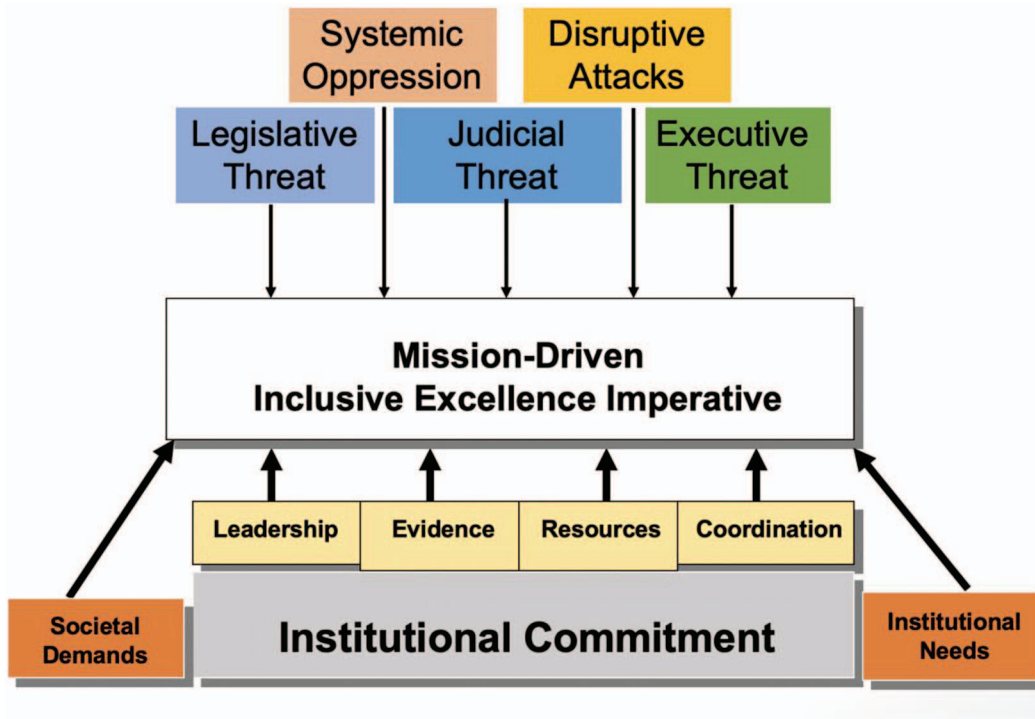
Figure 3. Institutional commitment to mission-driven inclusive excellence imperative. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Organizational Processes Standards

Organizational processes enable an institution to carry out the work through the development and allocation of resources (human, fiscal, and physical space)—they are a manifestation of the institutional commitment to the institutional mission-driven inclusive excellence imperative. Higher education institutions have different histories and contexts, giving them different starting places regarding organizational infrastructure and capacity to carry out the work of EDI—and the unique nature of different institutions warrant differing levels of centralized versus decentralized efforts. Cabinet-level diversity offices work closely with other institutional leaders to (a) assess, plan, and develop organizational infrastructure; (b) optimize the balance between centralization and decentralization; and (c) assess, plan, and build institutional and individual capacity for EDI efforts. These organizational processes are reciprocal in nature—meaning that they are inextricably linked in ways that changes in one result in necessary changes in the others. Ultimately, the specific activities reflected in the operational standards arise from institutional and individual capacity building.

Organizational Infrastructure, the Balance Between Centralized and Decentralized Efforts, and Institutional and Individual Capacity-Building

Colleges and universities are often complex, decentralized institutions, containing numerous siloed and some outdated organizational units (The Advisory Board Company, 2016). Whereas organizational and institutional change are fundamen-

tal to the work of diversity officers, issues of capacity building, organizational infrastructure, and the balance between centralized and decentralized efforts are critical to achieving institutional goals. Institutional and organizational change efforts are not possible without capacity to enact change efforts, which are intimately tied to organizational infrastructure and the balance between centralized and decentralized efforts. Organizational infrastructure arises from allocations of fiscal, physical, and human resources to achieve the broader needs, goals, and objectives of EDI efforts. Mismatch between the articulated institutional commitment to EDI and the resources allocated to diversity initiatives, efforts, offices and/or divisions have the potential to become sources of tension, conflict, and failure. Similarly, both organizational infrastructure and capacity-building efforts are inextricably tied to the optimal balance of centralized and decentralized activities, efforts, programs, and initiatives because decentralized activities must align with a more centralized vision and the allocation of resources to support infrastructure and capacity-building efforts. Diversity officers understand the interwoven nature of these core processes and structures of higher education institutions and the ways they operate to facilitate (or inhibit) institutional goals for EDI. Capacity-building requires resources, and, in turn, new levels of capacity to engage in the work of EDI expands the scope and strength of organizational infrastructure throughout the institution. In addition, capacity-building reflects work at the institutional and individual levels—for example, expanding competencies among individuals to engage in difficult dialogues should enhance the broader institutional capacity for civil dis-

course about protests, demonstrations, activist demands, responses to hate-bias incidents, and concerns about campus climate. Ultimately, the balance between centralized and decentralized efforts are also reciprocally interconnected to the availability of resources, organizational needs to build capacity, and the need to address issues of duplication, redundancy, siloes, and outdated modes of action. Institutional leaders focused on quick fixes in the wake of campus crises may neglect the reciprocal nature of the organizational processes by promoting "projectitis" (focusing on one or two activities associated with the operational standards) to address unitary symptoms rather than broader institutional and organizational change efforts (Shireman, 2003; Smith, 2015).

Operational Standards

Structural Barriers to Access and Success, and Evidence-Based Practice

Systemic racism and sexism continue to be major barriers to access and success in higher education, and it has been increasingly acknowledged that homophobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of oppressions have also contributed to social inequity and disparities in our colleges and universities (Freshman, 1999; Garner & Selod, 2015; Sundstrom & Kim, 2014). Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, and Milem (1998) identify the historical legacy of inclusion as one of the key features of campus climate for diversity—and indeed, the histories of most United States institutions of higher education are embedded in societal legacies of exclusion and inequities. Policies and procedures may have been written decades ago, reflecting exclusionary perspectives and assumptions from the past—which in many cases create structural barriers to access and success for members of oppressed groups. Significantly, these structural barriers have also impacted the adequacy of knowledge creation, the ability to create healthy pluralistic communities and require building capacity for all. Institutional and organizational change efforts are unlikely to be successful without direct attention to potentially problematic standard operating procedures and policies. Working to revise or remove the embedded institutional policies, procedures and norms that create differential structural barriers to the access and success of students, faculty, and staff who belong to marginalized and oppressed groups (NADOHE, 2020) means that diversity officers are deeply engaged in the work of recruitment, retention, persistence, graduation, and success of students, as well as the search, selection, hiring, onboarding, retention, and advancement processes for faculty and staff.

Evidence-based practices, found in many professions such as the allied health professions, education, management, law, public policy, and other fields, are efforts or activities that rely on scientific evidence for guidance and decision-making. One of the critical questions asked of senior administrators and diversity officers charged with leading EDI efforts is, "How do we know if we are making good decisions?" EDI efforts necessitate bringing to the institution the use of the best qualitative and/or quantitative evidence in making decisions about policies, processes, and practices that affect diversity outcomes. In their article on the institutionalization of a diversity plan, Stanley, Watson, Reyes, and Varela (2019) share an organizational change model based on evidence to document change in diversity efforts. They state that, "While recruitment and retention initiatives for faculty, staff, and students remain a priority for institutions, it is becoming increasingly evident, particularly for the public good and sustainability, that diversity plans evidence progress and success" (Stanley et al., 2019, p. 255). Diversity and inclusion goals and outcomes that are not evidence-based often draw critiques because they may rely on tradition, intuition, or methods that are difficult to measure and assess.

In addition to evidence-based practices, the use of metrics to monitor institutional progress is essential. So often, there are competing views about institutional progress. Having a core set of metrics can allow various constituent groups to share areas where there is positive change and areas where progress has yet to be made. While demographic metrics concerning undergraduate enrollments are commonly used, they are essential but not sufficient. Student success at each level, hiring and retention, curriculum, and scholarship along with basic climate metrics are manageable and important elements for evidence-based work (Smith, 2015). As such, institutional change and accountability as foundational cornerstones rely heavily on evidence-based metrics to monitor effort, progress, change, and sustainability.

Diversifying Curricular and Cocurricular Content and Delivery, and Promoting Inclusive Science, Research, and Creativity

Increasingly, national accreditation and disciplinary agencies have longstanding expectations for diversity learning outcomes for college graduates. The academic curriculum is the primary means by which colleges and universities guide student learning outcomes and goals for success. Cocurricular activities are programs and learning experiences that support and mirror the learning outcome goals of the academic curriculum. Curricular and cocurricular efforts must work in concert to further the educational mission of diversity. Educating students for leadership requires that students understand how to build diverse teams that work. It requires that students understand the salience of identity and also the embedded structural biases that impact success. This necessitates leadership and commitment from faculty governance along with support and facilitation from senior level academic administrators, including diversity officers to help develop and assess courses, activities, and programs that facilitate, for example, inter- and intragroup dialogue and discourse, multicultural teaching innovations, study abroad, inclusive research and creative activities, and community engagement and public scholarship (Cantor, 2006; Nind, 2017; Pendakur, 2016; Rendón & Hope, 1996).

It is now clear that 21st century knowledge in virtually every domain requires an understanding about human diversity and also the embedded ways in which bias is manifest in knowledge creation. Generic approaches to scholarship, typical of past generations of research are no longer adequate whether in medical research, or research in any discipline. It is becoming apparent that considerations of diversity even have to be established in the work in big data, algorithms, and computer applications (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016; Catalyst, 2019; Drosou, Jagadish, Pitoura, & Stoyanovich, 2017; Eberhardt, 2019; Fine, 2018; Perez, 2019; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). New perspectives are more likely when the field itself is more diverse suggesting that issues of hiring and retention are essential components. However, whether in medicine, where generic approaches to best practices are no longer adequate or even in computer science and big data analysis, where

embedded biases have now been revealed and lead to false or limited conclusions, diversity is an essential lens through which to view knowledge creation and application (Eberhardt, 2019; Friedman, Friedman, & Leverton, 2016; O'Neil, 2017; Page, 2017; Perez, 2019; Smith, 2012).

Responding to Hate-Bias Incidents, Engaging Activism, Protests, and Demonstrations, and Assessing and Improving Campus Climate

Institutions of higher education are experiencing increased social unrest in the form of hate and bias incidents, demonstrations, protests and counterprotests, and political activism—increasing the need to improve capacity for facilitating difficult dialogues, civil discourse, responding to challenges to free expression and academic freedom, and other legal challenges as part of the EDI imperative (Figures 3 and 4; American Association of University Professors, 2018; Anti-Defamation League, 2018; PEN America, 2019). Some highly publicized demonstrations and counterdemonstrations have also been attributed to neo-Nazi and White Supremacist groups seeking to promote their ideological messages to potentially vulnerable college students under the guise of First Amendment rights. Along with the increased frequency of hate and bias incidents (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019) there are also dramatic increases in activism, protests, and demonstrations on college and university campuses (Rhoads, 2016). Frequently, activism takes the form of social justice advocacy with a common focus on hate and bias. Accordingly, in the face of longstanding systemic oppression, disruptive attacks, and legislative, judicial, and executive threats, institutional commitment to EDI is a mission-driven imperative for excellence, characterized by leadership, evidence, resources, and coordination (see Figure 3).

The Anti-Defamation League (2018) reported that White Supremacist propaganda increased 77% from 2017 to 2018—targeting 287 campuses in 47 states. Swastikas, racist stickers and fliers, racist graffiti, racist social media posts, nooses, threats of violence, and actual violence all commonly occur on college and university campuses. These acts of hate can come from on or off campus, and often include elements of recruitment in which hate groups seek to "inspire" vulnerable college students to act out their propaganda. Universities have inherent obligations to uphold academic freedom and freedom of expression while simultaneously protecting the safety of students, faculty and staff (see Figure 4). Victims of hate crimes are at heightened risk for psychological distress beyond that of the consequences of violent crime in general (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999; Sullaway, 2004). Psychological distress following victimization by hate crime can include depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Bisson & Shepherd, 1995). Hate crimes threaten the group that the victim belongs to in addition to the particular individual (Sullaway, 2004). Members of a community targeted because of a central identity (e.g., one's race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation) may feel less safe after a fellow group member is targeted (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002). Witnessing discrimination against someone who is from the same group as oneself (e.g., same gender, ethnicity) can lead to depressed emotion and lower self-esteem (McCoy & Major, 2003).

The reputational paradigm of higher education status, prestige, and marketing requires intensive attention to the costs and consequences of publicity, and often produce tensions between offices of communications and offices of equity, diversity, and inclusion because their fundamental approaches to dealing with hate and bias incidents might be at odds. Students, and at times faculty, staff, and administrators, are confused about the distinctions between bias incidents and hate crimes (the latter requiring a crime to be committed), as well as the protections and mission-driven principles of free speech and free expression on college and university campuses. Diversity officers are increasingly called
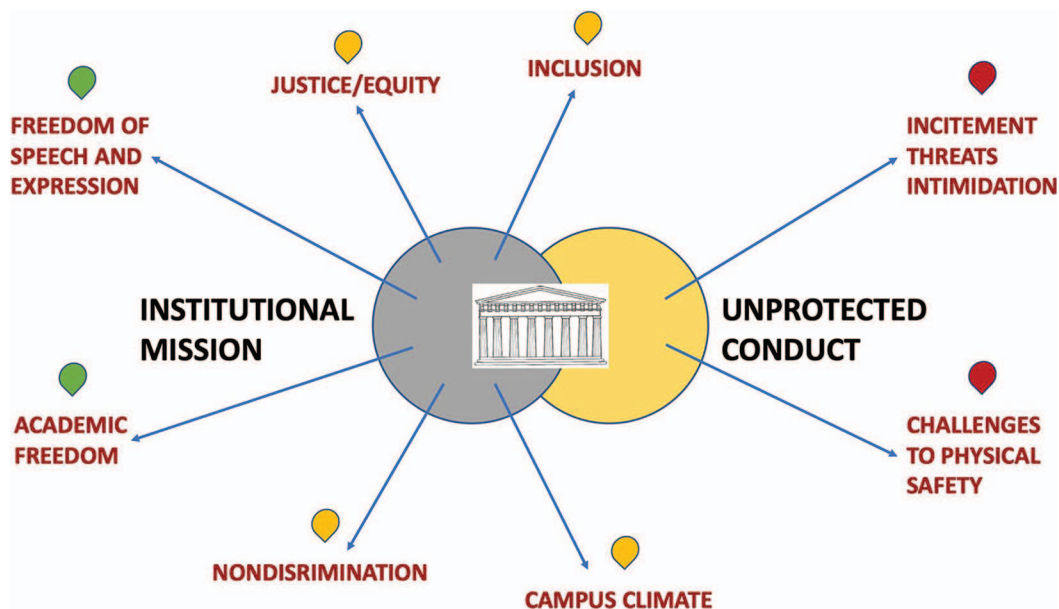

Figure 4. Policy tensions between equity, diversity, inclusion, free speech and academic freedom. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

upon to identify ways campuses can manage tensions between student activists who are justifiably outraged by acts of hate and bias on campus and legal requirements to avoid infringements on free speech (PEN America, 2019).

In some instances, faculty are the perpetrators of biased teaching methods portrayed as "originalism"—teaching the unfiltered and unquestioned racist and sexist works of decades or centuries past. Or even more subtly, other forms of bias creep into lectures and readings in ways that require critical analysis and purposeful refutation, but receive inadequate attention or are left unaddressed. Trigger warnings remain a hotly debated approach for addressing material with the potential to be emotionally disturbing (e.g., graphic sexual violence, dehumanizing language). Proponents argue that trigger warnings expand academic speech by engaging students more fully in their own learning, in part, by respecting students' intellectual, emotional, and physical boundaries, thereby improving accessibility, engaging students better in learning, and cultivating more socially just and livable campuses (Spencer & Kulbaga, 2018). Although the research on trigger warnings is scant, and lacks methodological rigor, highly publicized recent findings have been reported showing few benefits and some potential negative effects of their use (Bentley, 2017; Sanson, Strange, & Garry, 2019). These circumstances lead to policy tensions on college and university campuses, in which principles of EDI are seemingly cast in opposition to foundational, mission-driven principles of academic freedom.

In response to concerns about increasing instances of hate and bias on campus, along with a host of other climate issues, colleges and universities often use campus climate research as one important tool to assess the climate for EDI, and generate recommendations for strategic planning and action to improve. Broadly, the literature shows that campus climate research tends to utilize similar methodologies and produce common themes (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Such major themes in the campus climate research literature provide clearly demarcated benchmarks for individual institutions conducting campus climate research. Nevertheless, campus climate research is one of the most commonly misunderstood aspects of the work of diversity officers, in part because campus administrators often find themselves under pressure to satisfy some campus constituents who seek to apply deductive, logical-positivist assumptions that attempt to precisely quantify assessments of campus climate for EDI. Instead, campus climate research should be thought of as an inductive process of building a conceptualization of the lived experiences of people in an institution. Random, stratified, representative samples are of limited value outside of the logical-positivist paradigm in climate research—meaning that the size and diversity of a sample are more critical to meaningful, practical findings. Whereas comparisons to broad themes across a multitude of studies can be useful for individual institutions, there is very little value or validity to efforts to draw direct comparisons to peer institutions.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Colleges and universities are microcosms of our society and world, and must adhere to laws, regulations, guidelines, and specifications relevant to their teaching, research, and civic responsi-

bility mission and educational outcomes. This includes, but is not limited to admissions, recruitment practices, human resources, marketing and communications, research, learning, and campus environment and safety. As articulated in the standards, an institution free from discrimination is one of the key elements for an inclusive and safe campus. Cabinet-level diversity officers play a critical leadership role in using their knowledge, expertise, and training to work in collaboration with senior administrators, legal counsel, compliance officers, and other regulatory compliance-based officials to maximize operational transparency and minimize threats that influence the advancement of diversity and inclusion.

The Role of the Cabinet-Level Diversity Officer

At the highest levels of institutional leadership, cabinet-level diversity officers must work closely with other administrative leaders to achieve the goals and objectives of EDI for their institutions. Understanding how diversity is an imperative to each institutional function must be embedded in the domain of every sector of an institution, and cannot be the work solely of a single diversity officer. Critically, this requires intentionality coming from the senior leadership. Ultimately, change will emerge if diversity is understood to be an imperative by key leaders with authority over different operations and functions of the institution. Provosts, academic deans, department chairs, and faculty governance bodies that have broad authority over incorporating EDI into academic affairs, including (a) curriculum and research; (b) faculty hiring, promotion, tenure, and retention; (c) academic program planning; (d) enrollment management; (e) outreach and engagement activities; and (f) teaching and learning outcome goals, among others. Vice presidents, directors, and student governance bodies have authority over student affairs, including (a) residence life, (b) student life, (c) Greek life, (d) health and counseling services, (e) cocurricular initiatives, (f) student conduct, and (g) leadership growth and development, among others. Human resources vice presidents, directors, and coordinators have authority over a multitude of staff and employment policies and procedures, including (a) search, selection, and hiring policies; (b) required employment trainings; and (c) disciplinary actions, among others. General counsel administrators have responsibility to oversee and advise on interrelating issues of legal and regulatory compliance throughout the institution. Offices or divisions of institutional research have responsibility to oversee and manage the data-driven efforts and research projects designed to facilitate and assess progress and accountability on a wide variety of institutional goals and objectives. Trustees, governing bodies (faculty, students, and staff), labor unions, legislators, and others often have powerful roles to play in any advancement of major institutional change efforts related to mission, strategic goals, and objectives. Within that context, institutions that effectively advance EDI efforts must exhibit high levels of commitment to the mission-driven imperative for inclusive excellence through broad-based leadership, resources, evidence, and coordination (see Figure 3).

Whereas each of these divisions of higher education institutions typically have qualified individuals working independently and collaboratively with diversity officers to advance EDI efforts toward inclusive excellence, there are multiple points of interaction that require coordination and expertise on the part of diversity officers. Although the cabinet-level diver-

sity officer is rarely in a position of sole authority over all of these issues, they often have a consultative role in decision making at the highest levels. The intersection of roles and responsibilities occurs at the level of specialized expertise and administrative responsibility on a broad range of topics and issues.

Conclusions and Implications

The NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice (NADOHE, 2020) provide a major foundation for advancing the recognition of the highly specialized expertise diversity officers bring to the table in cabinet-level administrative roles in colleges and universities. An essential feature of the newly revised standards is the emphasis on EDI as a mission-centered imperative for excellence. Cabinet-level diversity officers help to craft strategic planning and programmatic initiatives for EDI that arise from and clearly reflect that institutional mission. Their efforts are grounded in a broadly inclusive and complex understanding of social identities, structural inequities, and the intersection of oppressive forces across time. As institutional and organizational change agents, diversity officers are charged with conceptualizing the organizational infrastructure, institutional capacity, and balance between centralized and decentralized features of EDI work within an institution to monitor progress and implement institutional accountability. Moreover, institutions substantially differ in terms of (a) the organizational infrastructure of the office or division headed by cabinet-level diversity officers (from single-person offices to unit-based operations to broad-based multifaceted divisional structures), (b) the level of fiscal resources dedicated to the unit (e.g., operating budgets ranging from thousands to millions of dollars), (c) the level and types of qualifications required to perform their duties (e.g., with degrees ranging from the bachelor's to the PhD, JD, or MD), (d) the career tracks across phases of professional development and advancement (e.g., arising out of tenured academic faculty positions through nonacademic staff positions in student affairs or human resources or coming from the business or government sectors outside the university), and finally, (e) the form and scope of administrative authority (e.g., institutional rank ranging from "director" to "associate provost," to "vice president"; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013; Worthington et al., 2014). Indeed, Leon (2014) concluded that no two diversity officer roles are alike. Harvey (2014) further explained, "because no two higher education institutions are exactly alike" and that the challenges experienced by many diversity officers are rooted within the institutions that employ them because they are entrenched in maintaining the status quo and resistant "to modifying internal structures and to implementing remedial measures that would facilitate accomplishing the very goals of diversity and inclusion that the institutions claim they want to achieve" (p. 92).

The professionalization of the diversity officer role in higher education has been a longstanding effort over the course of decades of rapidly increasing diversity, improving access, and shifting policy and political forces. This has implications for leadership, research inquiry in virtually every field, definitions and metrics of student success, hiring, sustaining change, and accountability. As the goal of creating pluralistic communities that work has increased in urgency, campuses are turning to diversity officers to help build institutional capacity to address the varied and changing issues confronting campuses without losing focus on the critical unfinished business of the past. Longstanding efforts to increase the compositional diversity among students from historically marginalized groups continue to be a central concern (United States Department of Education, 2016). Ultimately, cabinet-level diversity officers have overarching responsibility to organize, facilitate, and provide consultation for EDI work to be done, and, in some cases (as practitioners), to be directly engaged in getting the work done—but primarily, diversity officers should help build capacity, find the optimal balance between centralized and decentralized efforts, and to work with senior leadership to ensure that the organizational infrastructure exists to promote success and accountability as part of institution-wide transformational change efforts that advance the mission-driven imperative for inclusive excellence.

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(*Appendix follows*)

Appendix

Standards of Professional Practice for Chief Diversity Officers in Higher Education 2.0

National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education

March, 2020

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Preamble

The National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) has established standards of professional practice for chief[*] diversity officers (CDOs) in higher education (Worthington et al., 2014; Worthington, Stanley, & Smith, 2020). Institutional and individual members of NADOHE recognize the imperative for colleges and universities to reflect their espoused values and to deliver on their commitment to make their institutions inclusive learning and working environments for all. As members of NADOHE and through the appointment of CDOs, colleges and universities make a commitment to the pursuit of inclusive excellence as a mission-driven edict at all levels of the institution. The standards are written to reflect application at the highest operational level and, where appropriate, to provide guidance regarding how these standards can be applied at other levels (e.g., division, college, school, department, program).

These *standards* reflect definitional aspects of a profession rather than specific content of knowledge, awareness, and skills that characterize the *competencies* of an individual. Standards focus at a high level on the work of those in the profession rather than on specific job roles. Permeating themes such as specialized expertise, professional judgment, ethics, self-regulation, and professionalism are written into the standards to ensure they apply across the breadth of practice and to discourage their being treated as separate topics or areas of competence. Whereas CDOs may (or may not) have specific competencies to carry out a comprehensive campus climate study or deliver a workshop focused on implicit bias for faculty search committees, they are committed to the standards of practice that ensure the competent delivery of such critical activities within an institution. Within that context, CDOs must recognize the scope and limits of their unique set of competencies in advancing institutional objectives and must be able to build capacity from within or outside the institution to ensure the progress of EDI efforts.

Given the complexities of differing institutional types, missions, historical legacies, and current contexts and the varied professional backgrounds and trajectories of CDOs, institutions will inevitably apply these standards in different ways, with details and critical features that might include, but are not limited to, (a) the organizational structure in the portfolio of the CDO, (b) the allocation of human, fiscal, and physical resources, (c) the optimal degree of centralization versus decentralization of EDI efforts, (d) the processes of building institutional and organizational capacity, (e) the unique manifestations of institutional change, and (f) the specific focus and metrics related to accountability. CDOs play the central administrative role in guiding, facilitating, and evaluating these processes on behalf of the institution (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007, 2013).

The highest levels of commitment, responsibility, and accountability reside throughout institutional leadership. Cabinet-level CDOs serve as the principal administrators to advance mission-driven efforts through highly specialized knowledge and expertise. Institutional commitment to the work of CDOs is characterized by leadership, evidence, resources, and coordination; that is, executive administrators (e.g., trustees, presidents, provosts) seek out and examine evidence that reflects institutional strengths and weaknesses, allocate resources accordingly, and empower their CDOs to promote coordinated efforts toward institutional growth, change, and accountability related to EDI issues.

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[*] The National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) acknowledges that the term chief diversity officer is controversial, and NADOHE will appoint an independent task force to assess and to make a recommendation as to an official association position on nomenclature regarding the use of the word chief. The term chief diversity officer and CDO are used in this document as a historically common referent.

Over the past seven decades, the work toward access, nondiscrimination, equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice has been continuously evolving. Diversity in higher education has progressed from an almost singular focus on increasing access for protected groups to a comprehensive conceptualization of institution-wide social integration across all functions of colleges and universities. Whereas early efforts toward access primarily focused on compositional diversity in terms of race and gender, and in turn affirmative action, the subsequent recognition of the need to retain and promote the success of students, faculty, and staff from marginalized and oppressed groups led the field to aim above and beyond numerical diversity toward issues of equity, inclusion, and justice. Whereas, compositional diversity—especially in terms of critical mass—is in some sense a necessary (though insufficient in and of itself) precondition for achieving equity and inclusion, the vast majority of institutions have not reached even that precondition. The shift from monoculturalism toward nondiscrimination in turn has led to a focus on multicultural organizational development (Espinosa et al., 2019; Jackson, 2014; Jackson & Hardiman, 1997). With an increasingly diverse population, inclusive excellence has become an imperative for institutions across the curriculum, cocurricular programs, research and scholarship, leadership development at every level, and community engagement. From the framework of inclusive excellence, higher education institutions are compelled by the abundance of evidence that diversity is a critical factor in the quality of educational outcomes—the educational benefits of diverse learning and working environments—such that excellence is unachievable without diversity. Inclusive excellence is related to the educational benefits for students and for learning. It has become increasingly clear that diversity is critical for excellence in scholarship, research, and the resulting curriculum and leads to better knowledge for all fields in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, as well as in medicine, business, public affairs, and law. Indeed, the evolution of focusing on inclusive excellence emerges from the institutional level, requiring capacity-building throughout the institution in the context of its mission. As the complexity of the work increases, higher education leaders must recognize the essential need for highly specialized knowledge and expertise and foster the development and application of evidence-based practices. In that context, the professional development needs of CDOs must be understood to expand the depth, breadth, and scope of their expertise, while the professional development of faculty, staff, and administrators is promoted throughout the institution.

Historically, CDOs have come from a variety of career tracks, including tenured academic faculty positions and nonacademic staff positions (e.g., student affairs, human resources, business sector, government; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013; Witt/Keiffer, 2011) and from a wide variety of professional backgrounds and educational credentials (e.g., law, psychology, higher education administration, business, engineering, humanities, medicine). Very few CDOs have specialized educational credentials or foundational professional experiences that directly inform their EDI roles and responsibilities, and there is substantial variation in the levels and types of qualifications required to perform the duties of the CDO, as well as in the titles that are attached to the role (e.g., director, assistant/associate vice provost, vice president).

Broadly, CDOs have multiple responsibilities and allegiances to (a) their institutions, (b) divisions or units within the institution, (c) individual institutional constituents, (d) individuals and organizations outside their institutions, and (e) the profession. In some instances, allegiance to the institution may require CDOs to work with powerful individuals who might be averse to the EDI mission of higher education and with others who might attempt to advocate or legislate against their efforts. In that context, the work of CDOs can be inherently fraught with challenges, threats, incongruities, and conflicts in their allegiances and their advocacy for the interests of those with whom they work. Whereas CDOs have an obligation to identify their multiple allegiances openly in the spirit of transparency, institutional members of NADOHE recognize and understand the inherent tensions that may arise when CDOs advocate for accountability in areas of real or perceived deficit of individual leaders, units and divisions, or the institution more broadly. It is incumbent on institutions to respond to these potential tensions with the utmost fairness and professsionalism for all parties and to act in concert with the mission-driven imperative for advancing inclusive excellence in higher education.

Through the standards of professional practice that follow, NADOHE provides guidance and support to individuals serving as CDOs as well as the institutions where they work. This document is directed to individual CDOs, and a separate document (in the future) will provide more specific guidance for institutions. Where appropriate we have delineated the boundaries between responsibilities of institutions and the individuals serving in the roles of CDOs.

Standard One

Chief diversity officers have ethical, legal, and practical obligations to frame their work from comprehensive definitions of equity, diversity, and inclusion—definitions that are inclusive with respect to a wide range of identities, differentiated in terms of how they address unique identity issues and complex in terms of intersectionality and context.

(Appendix continues)

Comprehensive definitions and framing of equity, diversity, and inclusion vary widely in the literature and have evolved to become more inclusive of marginalized identities, to account for shifting conceptualizations of identities, to incorporate changing language regarding identities, and to respond to changes in legal and regulatory requirements in federal and state laws. Figure 1 provides a description of the multitude of dimensions of social identity characteristics inherent to the work of diversity in higher education (Worthington, 2012). Furthermore, Crenshaw (1989) defined the concept of intersectionality to account for multiple identities when considering how the different ways systemic social inequities, discrimination, and oppression interact to shape the experiences of marginalized people and, indeed, contemporary research and scholarship through structural, political, and representational processes.

Institutional historical legacies provide a foundational context for how CDOs work within the missions of colleges and universities (Hurtado et al., 1998). These institutional contexts provide the ethical, legal, and practical considerations for CDOs to address when planning and carrying out their work. When current missions and historical contexts reflect exclusionary practices, CDOs declare their commitment to frame their work from comprehensive definitions of equity, diversity, and inclusion and to work collaboratively with the institution towards organizational change.

The history of diversity in higher education has evolved from a narrow focus on compositional, structural, or representational diversity (e.g., counting students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented and minoritized groups) to more fully addressing issues of equity, inclusion, justice, nondiscrimination, climate, and inclusive excellence (Smith, 2015). CDOs advocate for institutions to adopt and frame the work of EDI from comprehensive definitions that recognize compositional diversity as a necessary but insufficient condition for success in addressing the institutional imperative for EDI.
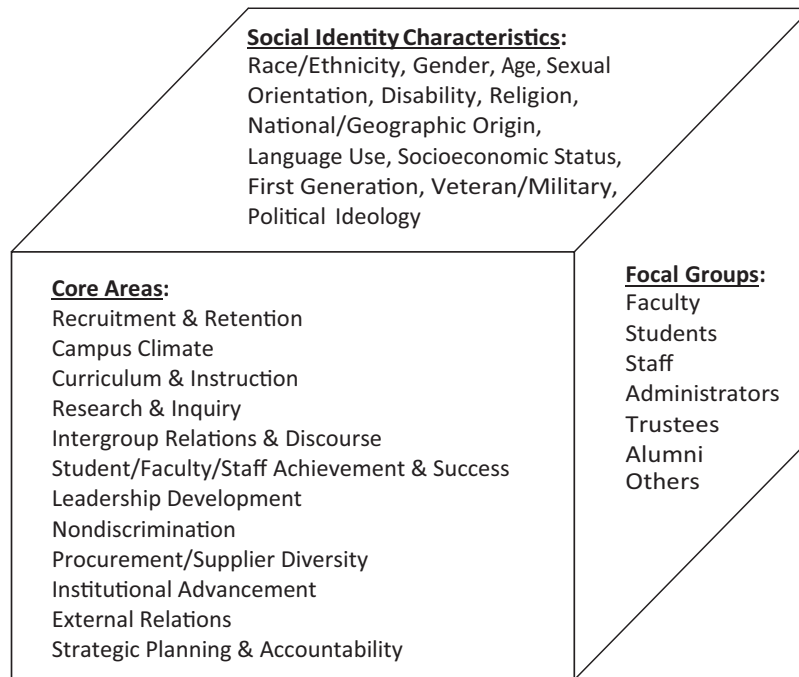

Social Identity Characteristics:
Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Sexual Orientation, Disability, Religion, National/Geographic Origin, Language Use, Socioeconomic Status, First Generation, Veteran/Military, Political Ideology

Core Areas:
Recruitment & Retention
Campus Climate
Curriculum & Instruction
Research & Inquiry
Intergroup Relations & Discourse
Student/Faculty/Staff Achievement & Success
Leadership Development
Nondiscrimination
Procurement/Supplier Diversity
Institutional Advancement
External Relations
Strategic Planning & Accountability

Focal Groups:
Faculty
Students
Staff
Administrators
Trustees
Alumni
Others

Figure 1. Three-dimensional model of higher education diversity. Adapted with permission from "Advancing Scholarship for the Diversity Imperative in Higher Education: An Editorial," by R. L. Worthington, 2012, *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 5*(1), p. 2 (https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027184). Copyright 2012 by the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education.

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Standard Two

Chief diversity officers work to ensure that elements of equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded as imperatives in the institutional mission, vision, and strategic plan.

CDOs frame their work as mission-driven efforts in service of the institution to achieve its vision, mission, and strategic goals/objectives. Ideally, colleges and universities have articulated how EDI is an imperative within their strategic plans, including their mission and vision statements, which provide guidance for members across the institution in carrying out mission-driven activities (Smith, 2015). In contexts where institutions have not yet integrated the imperative of EDI in their mission, vision, and strategic plans, CDOs work collaboratively toward that goal in accordance with the type, size, mission, and goals of their institution. In larger colleges and universities, CDOs may work with smaller units within the institution to establish localized departmental or divisional diversity plans to tailor localized efforts as needed. Strategic plans should be updated periodically to reflect advancements, accomplishments, gaps, deficits, developmental progressions, and the continuously evolving nature of the institution and the profession of diversity in higher education.

Standard Three

Chief diversity officers are committed to planning, catalyzing, facilitating, and evaluating processes of institutional and organizational change.

Leadership of institutional change is central to the work of CDOs. The very foundations of US higher education were established on exclusionary principles of preparing only affluent White men for positions of access, power, leadership, and governance. There is extensive evidence that higher education institutions continue to maintain the status quo and are slow to change when it comes to equity, diversity, and inclusion (Espinosa et al., 2019; Morphew, 2009; Smith, 2015). The work of diversity in higher education is highly complex, beginning with the expansive scope of the work that needs to be done across focal groups, core areas, and social identity characteristics (see Figure A1). In addition, institutional commitment to EDI requires leadership, coordination, resources, and evidence from the highest levels of administration and across all levels of the organization. Planning organizational change requires an understanding of strengths and deficits across time, collaboration and coordination of efforts throughout the institution, and the appropriate allocation of resources to achieve desired goals. Within that context there is value in working with financial and development/advancement offices to determine specific strategies for providing the resources needed to excel in EDI change efforts. CDOs provide highly specialized knowledge and expertise to help facilitate and catalyze efforts toward institutional change, whereas the responsibility for institutional and organizational change resides more broadly with members across the entire college or university community, which requires commitment from the highest levels of administrative leadership (e.g., president, provost, trustees).

Standard Four

Chief diversity officers work with senior campus administrators and, when appropriate, governing bodies to revise or remove the embedded institutional policies, procedures, and norms that create differential structural barriers to the access and success of students, faculty, and staff who belong to marginalized and oppressed groups.

Virtually all higher education institutions were established in contexts that limited access to education and employment based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, financial means, and other marginalized and minoritized identity statuses. Whereas institutions of higher education uniformly tend to seek to attract and retain students, faculty, and staff from a wide diversity of backgrounds, systemic societal forces are known to influence norms, procedures, and policies that create barriers to access and success for members of marginalized and oppressed groups. It is clear now that these barriers have also limited academic scholarship, research, and the applications of that knowledge in society. One prominent and ongoing focus of institutional change is to identify and remove or revise policies and procedures that create differential structural barriers to access and success. These efforts on the part of CDOs are often in collaboration with the shared governance structures which have direct authority to create, change, and eliminate existing institutional policies and procedures.

(Appendix continues)

Standard Five

Chief diversity officers work with faculty, staff, students, and appropriate institutional governance structures to promote inclusive excellence in teaching and learning across the curriculum and within cocurricular programming.

Inclusive excellence is a sine qua non of diversity in higher education teaching and learning. Academic excellence in the 21st century requires attention to issues of EDI integrated across the curriculum, in the classroom, on the part of instructors at every level of status and experience, on the part of many staff with responsibilities for cocurricular programming, on syllabi, in faculty development programs, and in relation to students of every background. Issues of EDI are fundamental to the teaching and learning mission of higher education institutions in ways that permeate and transcend disciplinary fields of study, academic programs, and instructional methods. In addition, CDOs also work to emphasize how a curriculum and teaching that are inclusive are essential for all students. Students are often most vocal about troublesome experiences they have inside the classroom in relation to their peers and their instructors, in addition to problematic content and pedagogical approaches. CDOs are often called upon to address complaints related to virtually every facet of teaching and learning across the curriculum and cocurricular programs and to identify ways to advance the professional development of faculty and staff in their instructional roles. CDOs need to work closely with faculty, centers for teaching excellence, and other teaching professionals to become a resource to them.

Standard Six

Chief diversity officers work within a community of scholars to advocate for inclusive excellence in research, creativity, and scholarship in all fields as fundamental to the mission-driven work of the institution.

Academic history is replete with examples of monocultural, exclusionary, exploitative, and oppressive research and scholarly works, which are often exacerbated by the glacial pace of diversifying the faculty and staff at many predominantly White institutions (PWIs; Kumashiro, 2000; Smith, 2015). Although extreme examples of racist, sexist, ableist, and other exploitative and oppressive forces continue to surface—not only historically but into current times—the vast majority of institutions continue to struggle with more pervasive and hidden practices that hinder scientific advancement through works and overgeneralizations from methodologies that are not inclusive and have ignored important differences and disparities. Inclusive excellence at its core reveals that embedding diversity issues into almost every knowledge domain will increase excellence in knowledge research for the 21st century. Understanding the ways diversity contributes to excellence requires a deep understanding not only of the particular mission of the institution but of disciplinary practices and questions. CDOs need to develop diversity champions to assist with this process, so they can become more knowledgeable from engagement with deans and department chairs as well as faculty champions across different disciplines. Ultimately, not only does this serve particular communities, but it advances knowledge for all whether in engineering, medicine, business, or the arts.

Standard Seven

Chief diversity officers are committed to drawing from existing scholarship and using evidence-based practices to provide intellectual leadership in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion.

An abundance of scholarship provides the basis for evidence-based practice among CDOs and contributes to the continuing evolution of the profession and field of study (Chang, Witt, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003). With burgeoning scholarship around EDI, the field evolves and CDOs must progress in their own professional development, advance the professional development of others, and improve the effectiveness of the work being done throughout their institutions.

Over the past several decades, scholarly inquiry has yielded substantial evidence for the educational benefits of diversity in higher education, which has become the basis for U.S. Supreme Court rulings upholding the practice of affirmative action in higher education admissions (Buckner, 2003; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 2007). Within that context there are requirements for localized evidence-based demonstration of the need and the impact of affirmative action practices. CDOs work collaboratively with admissions and enrollment management professionals to tailor their efforts within legal requirements to advance the educational benefits of diversity through evidence-based practices, which are not just to defend the work of diversity but to advance excellence in a pluralistic society. Indeed, CDOs draw from a wealth of scholarship for evidence-based practices in a multitude of core areas, such as, but not limited to: recruiting and retaining underrepresented students, faculty, and staff; assessing and improving the campus climate for diversity and inclusion; assessing and improving classroom climate and instruction; promoting inclusive excellence in scholarly and creative activity; encouraging intergroup relations and discourse; developing leadership; countering bias and discrimination; engaging the community; raising financial support.

(Appendix continues)

Standard Eight

Chief diversity officers work collaboratively with senior campus administrators to plan and develop the infrastructure for equity, diversity, and inclusion to meet the needs of the campus community.

Planning, assessing, and building the infrastructure necessary to accomplish the work of diversity in higher education is a major focus of CDOs. Wide variations in the type, size, mission, and goals of higher education institutions require careful assessment and planning across organizational and divisional lines to recognize and understand the physical, human, and fiscal resources needed to carry out the multifaceted work of EDI. Collaboration within and across organizational units is essential in the design of the institutional infrastructure for EDI efforts. Planning and developing for EDI to meet the needs of the campus community necessitate collaboration and building of strategic relationships (e.g., senior cabinet administrators, academic college deans, student affairs personnel, faculty and staff councils and leaders, external community leaders).

Standard Nine

Chief diversity officers strive to optimize the balance between centralization and decentralization of efforts to achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the institution.

The work related to inclusive excellence requires balance between activities that are localized within different units across institutions and work that is implemented and guided at a central level. With the increasing complexity and specialization of many institutions—that might include, for example, medical centers or multiple campuses—this balance is important to consider. Centralized administrative units on college campuses are responsible for providing an overarching conceptual framework and vision for developing an institutional plan for EDI, as well as specific campus-wide efforts related to planning, programming, assessment, evaluation, and reporting. Monitoring progress and communicating areas where progress is being made or is needed are essential for substantiating the work as imperative throughout an institution. Inclusive excellence efforts at the campus level must target recruitment, retention, campus climate assessment and response, faculty and staff development, research, accessibility, nondiscrimination and antibias efforts, and equity policies, processes, and practices, among others. CDOs work with campus constituents to optimize the balance between centralization and decentralization for EDI efforts, in which larger institutions are likely to have a network of decentralized diversity professsionals connected to the diversity strategic plan through a shared framework and direct or indirect reporting lines. Achieving balance between centralized and decentralized organization can translate into the difference between disconnected, siloed, incongruous, and redundant EDI activities, programs, and operations versus those that are coordinated, integrated, conceptually consistent, and supportive. When EDI efforts are too highly centralized, the danger is that collective responsibility does not take shape within an institution and progress flounders instead of flourishing through actively engaged, collaborative efforts. Alternatively, decentralized organization can result in poorly communicated efforts, activities and programs that are disconnected and hidden within silos, promising and effective practices that function in isolation, and outdated or ineffective programs that continue without accountability or in competition with other siloed units working at cross-purposes within the same institution. Fundamentally, the work of EDI is about embedding the work throughout the institution and building capacity in every unit. It is also about how the centralized CDO helps facilitate the sharing of evidence-based and promising practices, as well as problems and challenges across otherwise siloed units, departments, and campuses. The planning, prioritizing, resourcing, and coordination of decentralized responsibilities occurs from within a centralized conceptual framework.

Standard Ten

Chief diversity officers work with senior administrators and members of the campus community to assess, plan, and build institutional capacity for equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Institutional capacity for the work of EDI depends on highly specialized expertise, planning, resources, assessment, accountability, and coordination. CDOs help members of the campus-wide community increase their competencies to address EDI, and they are committed to their own ongoing professional development as well. Organizationally, building institutional capacity requires professional development for diversity professsionals throughout the institution, but also the development of competencies among all institutional constituents to build strong, high performance teams and to cultivate leaders who inspire inclusion and promote diversity. CDOs are often asked to deliver or oversee professional development programming as one way to help build institutional capacity for EDI. Capacity building within institutions is intricately tied to leadership, vision, strategy, resources, communications, measurement, assessment, and accountability. Successful capacity building ultimately results in an organizational culture characterized by a system of shared beliefs, values, norms, habits, and assumptions to advance EDI efforts.

(Appendix continues)

Standard Eleven

Chief diversity officers work to ensure that institutions conduct periodic campus climate assessments to illuminate strengths, challenges, and gaps in the development and advancement of an equitable, inclusive climate for diversity.

Campus climate assessments are an integral component of the work of diversity in higher education (Worthington, 2008, 2012). CDOs commonly have the principal responsibility for planning, implementing, and utilizing campus climate studies to (a) assess the climate for equity, diversity, and inclusion, (b) advance a plan of action to enhance or improve areas of concern regarding EDI, (c) assist campus leaders and constituents in recognizing and addressing issues that are illuminated by climate assessments, and (d) incorporate findings of campus climate research into strategic EDI planning for the institution. Periodic, iterative campus climate assessments are generally the norm for institutions of higher education. In some cases, for institutions large and small, there are needs for assessments that are either comprehensive (broad-based, institution-wide) and more narrowly focused (local, tailored to specific issues). The nature and methodology of campus climate research differs substantially from most other forms of research inquiry, and even the most advanced scholars sometimes do not recognize the conceptual frames from which climate studies are conducted. CDOs must stay current with the literature on campus climate research to keep abreast of the methodological and conceptual frameworks for this work as it continues to evolve, especially in terms of how it differs from other forms of research and in light of the conceptual debates that may occur with advanced scholars unfamiliar with climate inquiry. Institutional research offices as partners for the CDO can be critical for securing available data, obtaining IRB approval, and receiving assistance with the proper distribution of data from climate surveys.

Standard Twelve

Chief diversity officers work with senior administrators and campus professionals to develop, facilitate, respond to, and assess campus protocols that address hate-bias incidents, including efforts related to prevention, education, and intervention.

College and university campuses are some of the most common settings for hate and bias incidents to occur (Anti-Defamation League, 2018; Jones & Baker, 2019). Perpetrators of hate and bias incidents can be students, staff, or faculty within an institution or may come from outside the institution, sometimes by invitation from one or more campus constituents. Many higher education institutions have formed bias response teams comprised of institutional professionals (e.g., CDOs, counselors, medical personnel, law enforcement officers, residential life staff, student conduct staff) with responsibilities for efforts designed as prevention, education, intervention, and response. CDOs often play a key leadership role in overseeing the appointments, training, and functioning of bias response teams on college and university campuses. Based on how social media operates on and off campus, dealing with hate crimes and bias incidents often requires that the CDO work with presidents and media relations teams to determine protocols for notifying both the internal and external communities about incidents.

Standard Thirteen

Chief diversity officers work with senior administrators and campus professionals to facilitate and assess efforts to mentor, educate, and respond to campus activism, protests, and demonstrations about issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Colleges and universities have long been the locations of social and political activism. Rhoads (2016) described the long history of student activism beginning in the 1960s, highlighting the pivotal roles played by college students in the civil rights, feminist, anti-war, and gay liberation movements, through the anti-apartheid, Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter movements in subsequent decades. Student activism had a dramatic resurgence on college and university campuses after 2015 with a significant uptick in student demands for revised curricula, diversity among student, faculty, and staff representation, and political protests centered on social justice issues. CDOs need to have close working relationships with the offices of student affairs, campus safety, and general counsel for how students can have their needs and rights protected even as the institution manages matters that can be disruptive. CDOs can play a role in how the institution responds to student concerns in ways to mitigate campus unrest; but they also need to be aware that some protests are about issues of local, national, or global concern outside of campus. Being knowledgeable about how to deploy teach-ins and dialogue sessions is critical for CDOs. There is a great deal of complexity involved in mediating between and among varied interest groups with sometimes dramatically different worldviews, making it important to have an institution-wide response team when protests and demonstrations arise. CDOs are often engaged with student activism on campus, playing central roles in proactive planning and campus responses. Mentoring and safety have become critical focal points of these efforts.

(Appendix continues)

Standard Fourteen

Chief diversity officers are committed to accountability for advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the institution.

CDOs have the responsibility and authority to ensure that accountability for EDI efforts are integrated throughout the entire institution. CDOs are not solely responsible and accountable for EDI, but they are expected to identify ways to accomplish the work of the institution, using measurable and realistic metrics of assessment to establish benchmarks, demonstrate progress, measure outcomes, and evaluate institutional change. Accountability often arises from goals and objectives established with the institutional strategic plans or EDI strategic plans of colleges and universities. CDOs must maintain institutional accountability for the commitment to EDI through careful monitoring of goals, objectives, activities, programs, initiatives, benchmarking, measurement, assessments, metrics, and communications across the institution about progress, gaps, strengths, weaknesses, and achievements. Often this will include working with other senior administrators, governing boards, and trustees to include them in the accountability process.

Standard Fifteen

Chief diversity officers work closely with senior administrators to ensure full implementation of and compliance with the legal and regulatory requirements for the institution.

Colleges and universities espouse values for equal opportunity and access in their educational programs and activities (Harper, 2008). An educational environment free from discrimination is one of the key elements for an inclusive and safe campus. CDOs must have highly specialized knowledge, expertise, and training to work in collaboration with legal counsel, compliance officers, and other regulatory officials in addressing potential legal issues and threats that influence the work of EDI for the institution. Highly specialized training and expertise include demonstrated knowledge of current state and federal law regulations and trends in education related to legal and regulatory compliance with diversity and equity issues in higher education, which include, but are not limited to working in partnership with senior and system administration such as general and legal counsel, the chancellor, president, provost, and campus and community law enforcement officials, as well as the offices of academic affairs, student affairs, and human resources: (a) to minimize risk and negligence of and to ensure compliance with legal requirements, (b) to oversee, assess, and sustain campus policies that elevate equity, fairness, inclusion, and safety, and (c) to develop, implement, monitor, and make recommendations for nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies, processes, and practices associated with Equal Employment Opportunity, Title VII and Title IX programs, Americans With Disabilities Act, affirmative action, and other applicable human rights protections pursuant to local, state, and federal laws and regulations. CDOs will require periodic professional development to stay up to date on the nuances of the law as it relates to protected class areas and related matters.

Standard Sixteen

Chief diversity officers engage in their work in ways that reflect the highest levels of ethical practice, pursuing self-regulation as higher education professionals.

Self-governance and accountability are defining features of a profession. As such, CDOs adhere to a set of ethical principles in their work to establish the highest standards of practice, to promote the welfare of those they serve, to maintain competencies, to resolve potential conflicts of interest between constituents and the institutions they serve, to act responsibly, to avoid exploitation, and to uphold the integrity of the profession through exemplary conduct (Welfel, 2016). Within that context, CDOs are committed to principles of civil and human rights, accountability, justice, transparency, veracity, fidelity, respect, and integrity, among others. CDOs face a multitude of moral and ethical dilemmas in carrying out their work, and within that context, they must act with the highest standards of moral and ethical conduct. When they encounter conflicts related to EDI issues that occur between their institution and the interests of those they serve within the institution, CDOs seek resolution in ways that demonstrate fidelity, respect, integrity, veracity, transparency, justice, and accountability in pursuit of higher order human and civil rights. Institutions of higher education have an obligation to recognize and understand the ethical principles inherent to the work of CDOs and to actively support, protect, and facilitate their efforts.

NOTE: Appendix references are included in the reference list on pages 10–13.