

Resource

Hard Truths

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Jan 15, 2020 by [Tiffany Jones](#) and [Andrew Howard Nichols](#)

Why Only Race-Conscious Policies Can Fix Racism in Higher Education

Despite the popular belief that affirmative action gives Black and Latino students an unfair advantage, these students are still underrepresented at the nation's selective colleges and at two- and four-year public colleges and universities in the vast majority of states. The truth is, it isn't enough to just believe that racial inequality is a problem; what policymakers, advocates, and citizens do about it matters most.



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More than 150 years after the 13th amendment was ratified to end slavery, nearly 3 out of 4 Black adults and more than half of White adults describe race relations as “bad,” and that the legacy of slavery still has a considerable impact on Black people in American society.

And more than 3 out of 4 Black adults believe that the United States hasn't gone far enough in giving Blacks equal rights with Whites; while the same is true for only 1 in 3 White adults.

In this next report in our *State of Higher Education Equity*, we answer common questions from advocates and policymakers. Questions like:

- How do you respond to opponents who prefer to not focus on race?
- Why can't we just focus on income (or socioeconomic status) since people of color are more likely to be from a low-income background?
- How can we advance race-conscious policies in higher education and states?

What are race-conscious policies?

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS REPORT, race-conscious policies in higher education include policies that explicitly address race in the design and provide higher education access, opportunity, or support to students of color and their colleges and universities serving them. While using race-conscious policies can help achieve racial justice in higher education for all students of color, for the purposes of this report, we will focus our data and discussion on Black students, as the data on Black students makes a strong case for why race-conscious policies are necessary.

3 Arguments for Race-Conscious Policies in Higher Education

- Historically, higher education has used racist policies to exclude students. Therefore, race-conscious policies are necessary to achieve racial justice.
- Racial inequalities remain, and, in some cases, have worsened because race-conscious policies were cut short, limiting their effectiveness.
- Policies that rely on substitutions (or proxies) for race, such as income, have not closed gaps in opportunity and outcomes for students of color.

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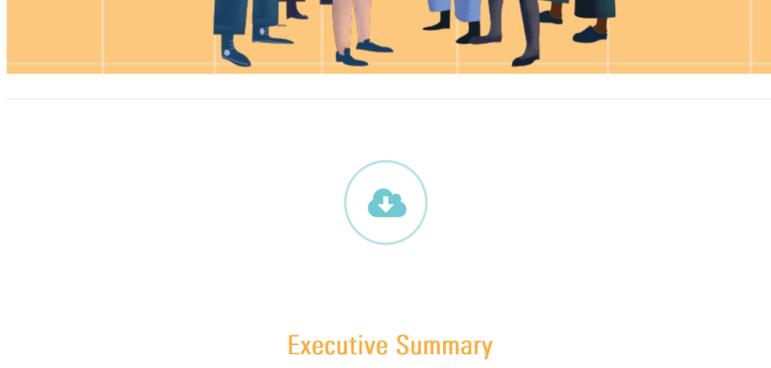
The Path Forward

10 Strategies for advancing race-conscious policies that are designed to lead to racial equity in higher Education

- Institutions should adopt a renewed commitment to affirmative action in higher education and use holistic admissions that include race as a factor
- Institutions should stop over-relying on traditional measures of “merit” and other admissions preferences that disadvantage students of color
- Institutions, states, and the federal government should provide more data that is disaggregated by race and ethnicity in higher education
- Remove state bans on affirmative action
- Design statewide race-conscious higher education attainment goals
- States should invest resources in colleges that provide high-quality opportunity for students of color, as opposed to race-neutral higher education funding formulas
- Federal government should invest more in HBCUs, tribal colleges, other minority-serving institutions (MSIs), and make sure enrollment driven MSIs are truly serving students of color
- Federal government should require states to work toward closing racial equity gaps in spending both in higher education and K-12 in order to participate in state/federal partnerships
- Design loan forgiveness and other student debt policy solutions to benefit students of color and help close racial wealth gaps
- Require accreditors to examine a college's campus racial climate

HARD TRUTHS:

WHY ONLY RACE-CONSCIOUS POLICIES CAN FIX RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION



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