

Dear Colleagues,

Here at the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California, we work hard to help policymakers and higher education institutions produce equitable student outcomes. That's why we invite you to review and use our new tools, which we built to help leaders understand the equity imperative at the state level and to incorporate an equity focus in planning, goal-setting, and policy. You can find the tools at <http://cue.usc.edu/equity-and-state-policy/>

The new series includes three resources that provide guidance to state leaders and policymakers at each step of the process of building equity-focused state higher education policies. The resources are:

1. *Overcoming Common Challenges to an Equity Agenda in State Policy*, a practical guide to helping state policy and higher education officials navigate difficult conversations about equity and race.
2. *Making Equity Part of Your State's Postsecondary Planning*, which provides strategies and examples that will help state leaders develop and build broad buy-in for plans and policies that adequately focus on race to achieve results.
3. *Protocol for Assessing Equity-Mindedness in State Policy*, a user-friendly workbook with step-by-step guidance and tasks to help facilitate the review of existing policy, or to aid in the development of new plans and policies that prioritize equity.

These materials are the result of an intensive collaboration between CUE researchers and Lumina Foundation that began with a co-sponsored policy academy in 2015. That academy sought ways to increase the number of states with higher education attainment goals that address closing the gap for underrepresented populations. These new CUE materials help advance that goal.

The political climate in the United States has become increasingly volatile over the last few years, but **now is not the time to stop talking about race**. States will not be able to keep up with rapidly changing workforce demands without addressing long-standing equity gaps. It is

the responsibility of higher education officials and state policymakers to recognize this need and engage sensitive conversations about improving completion rates of African American, Hispanic, and Native American students.

We invite you to use CUE's new tools, which are available for free on our website, to carry out practices and strategies that will help leaders pursue equity in higher education policy. We stand ready as well to support your efforts to use the tools to improve postsecondary attainment for students who have been historically left out of higher education. I hope you will join us in this essential work.