Causes & Contributing Factors of Inequitable Outcomes in Higher Education

Campus systems do not support equitable outcomes for students

Teaching and Learning

- Lack of feedback mechanisms/accountability for instructors both in terms of delivering quality instruction and student support
- Faculty - lack of willingness/interest to participate in DEI work (different than whether they think we need it)
- Issues related to a lack of common language and clearer language (multiple levels of this)
- Lack of understanding of relevant technology and how to leverage it for student learning
- Lack of understanding around developmental education. Grading practices.
- Student voice is rarely considered
- Issues linked to access to technology and virtual learning. Including a lack of learning opportunities (Professional Development) for all involved.
- Lack of culturally responsive teaching
- Limited professional development: pedagogy training for faculty: HIPS, Inclusivity, mindset, cultural capital
- Lack of integration/connection points across faculty/courses
- Students lived experiences and assets are infrequently recognized, considered, or valued
- Gateway courses are designed (often to weed out)
- Failure to recognize and build systems for the varying levels of educational readiness/student experience in secondary education
- Gateway courses. Limited first-year achievement often limits persistence options
- Limited tools provided to students and faculty
- A general lack of support and planning for historically marginalized student populations entering higher education
- Faculty Mindset: They don't think they need training
- Limited training on virtual instruction

Financial Aid Policy

- Specify policy - specifically if it is institutional (which is workable) vs federal (more fixed) 2) The way things are written are abstract - a little hard to decipher if you are not an FA expert
- Fin Policy is linked to SAP, there may be barriers related to how colleges are supporting students holistically for which there is no measure of accountability.
- Harmful policies in how internal/external scholarships are applied (front loading, opt-in for internal scholarships vs. everyone considered for what they're eligible)
- Policy and lack of safe data-streams to collect and measure effectiveness
- Lack of training/support for helping students navigate and understand the process
- There is a lack of transparency and understanding on what information and data can be shared
- Lack of safe spaces to talk about fin aid
- The calculations used for the student budget can be rigid and does take into account familial circumstances
- The process is burdensome and there is a lack of support for students and families navigating the FAFSA
- Institutions often abuse or "game" the financial aid system
- Additionally, fin aid policy should be connected to academic advising because students run out of aid if they are not advised well on which courses to complete in a timely manner.
- Financial Aid is not always nimble in relation to student need
- Overall look of multi-year funding (the annual process is a contributor to uncertainty for students. How financial aid are awarded on an annual basis opposed to a multi-year basis
- Dependent vs Independent - issues on parent support
- Process issues with completing FAFSA
- Limited Financial Aid training for students and stakeholders
- Policy focuses on equal rather than equitable dist. of Financial Aid (FA)
- FA drives progress and completion: lack of equity based on disadvantage inhibits the most at-risk students
- No thoughtful analysis of the effectiveness of the current FA model for diverse populations-data are limited

Institutional Policy

- Disconnect between who designs policy vs. who implements it/how it gets implemented
- Lack of direct input from relevant stakeholders (students, faculty, admin, support staff, etc.)
- Which policies are driving unequal outcomes for students? Institutional policies go beyond operations and mission.
- Lack of questioning policies internally
- Data not driving policy decisions
- A lot of folks don't know their institutional policy--how is policy implemented. Local policy awareness. Inconsistent application of policy.
- Not enough capacity to manage effective policy (not enough jobs with this focus)
- Having one person wearing many hats at institutions - need to specialize knowing operations and knowledge - sometimes folks are burned out - not enough compensation
- We have not articulated the full value of an educated population.
- There is often not often an equity lens on policy
- Lack of policy training, the unifying understanding of policy
- Margin v. Mission: Survival may lead to lack of student focus
- Tyranny of job security often drives policy
- Lack of PD related to operationalizing Mission and org. psychology
- Little training on org. design

Campus Cultures

- Institutions don't have training on valuing the quality of the student experience
- Student voice not captured, measured, valued--limited power to impact decisions
- Limited training on how to create a culture of care across an institution (widespread ownership of student success)
- The racist history of higher education, trying to change a historically racist structure without calling it out.
- Limited campus culture to celebrate the diversity of race and cultures
- Limited training on how to create a culture of care across an institution (widespread ownership of student success)
- ***Student signaling of the learning community that comes from senior leadership - How do the different experiences get valued by all stakeholders not captured, measured, valued
- Lack of Governance and leadership--commitment, development, and representation.
- It is often unclear who should be initiating culture on campus
- Institutions are trying to determine what is their culture
- Lack of integration/connection points across faculty/courses
- Student belonging is not often addressed systemically or in relation to academics
- Limited PD on cultural awareness, student support, student risk, value
- Polish v. Grow: Institutional mindset regarding polish v. growth of students has not been addressed systemically through PD and cultural development
- Unwritten/hidden curriculum and cultural norms can negatively impact students
- Faculty often do not have teaching and learning training-only discipline
- Not many tools are available to capture campus culture -especially the "invisible" aspects of culture
- No accountability system for culture
- Cultural Taxation: Marginalized individuals often targeted as changemakers-unequal dist. of responsibility
- A lack of diverse cultural understanding predominates leadership
- Institutions fail to start with an asset-based student approach

Advising/Pathways

- Role/activities of advisors are neither recognized nor rewarded systemically in the academy
- The limited number of advisors-- Forces a transactional focus
- Many institutions have limited tools such as career maps, curriculum maps to support students
- Curriculum and career pathways do not always align
- Faculty advisors and career service advisors do not always have alignment
- Current models do not always account for the importance of credentials
- Current advising models don't always consider the needs of adult learners and students with children.
- Advisors often have limited authority to make change and or highlight issues--this can lead to apathy
- Limited transfer resources for advisors and students
- Current advising models do not provide SOC and 1st Gen Students with the resources and info needed to matriculate
- HIPS are often ancillary; thus, there is inequitable opportunity/access
- Hidden Curriculum: Informal systems dominate culture-esp. harmful to 1st Gen
- Lack of systematic approach to development of cultural competency
- Lack of Communication Between Advisors and Programs
- Lack of Advisor Program Knowledge
- Lack of PD for advisors
- Lack of Alignment between how students are Assessed and Program Design
- Advising staff do not represent student diversity; same for leadership

Student Support Services

- Failure to reward excellence in teaching and learning.
- Communications strategy for helping students know services are available
- The stigma around requiring services - how do you remove the stigma
- Limited integration of services across the campus, student support services treated in isolation, limited integration across campuses
- Student mental health is often a factor, but rarely addressed
- Limited Student Voice
- We have not articulated the full value of an educated population.
- Lack of diverse representation (and lived experience) leads to a narrow view of the system and problems impacting students- trauma is not adequately addressed.
- IR depts have limited resources and context on SS programs. Fear of looking at disaggregated data; no plan to operationalize the data.
- Limited data on impact of support programs
- Student services are not always designed to meet the needs of diverse student populations
- Limited funding inhibits progress
- Culture of Compliance v. planned improvement

catalyst:ed

Gardner Institute