Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Glossary of Terms

Ableism: Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other. Institutionalized ableism may include or take the form of intentional or unintentional organizational barriers that result in disparate treatment of people with disabilities.

Accessibility: In the educational context, buildings, materials, and technologies are "accessible" if they allow people with disabilities to "acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services" as people who do not have disabilities. Accessible design ensures both direct (unassisted) access and indirect access through assistive technology (e.g., computer screen readers). Universal design ensures that an environment can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people.

Affinity Group: In the educational context, an affinity group is a group of students, faculty, or staff linked by a common purpose, ideology, or interest. Affinity groups can contribute to an inclusive campus environment and provide a collective voice for members with common interests.

Algorithmic Justice: Refers to the application of principles of social justice and applied ethics to the design, deployment, regulation, and use of algorithmic systems (including artificial intelligence) to reduce the potential for harm from algorithmic systems, related to encoded bias and other causes.

Ally: A person who works actively in solidarity with individuals who either do not hold some form of power, or who do not share the same social identity, to end discriminatory or oppressive systems and practices. In the context of ableism, for example, allyship could refer to able bodied people advocating to dismantle institutional barriers for people with disabilities.

Anti-Racist: A person who actively opposes racism and the unfair treatment of people based upon their race. An anti-racist recognizes that all racial groups are equal (i.e. there is nothing inherently superior or inferior about specific racial groups) and that racist

policies have caused racial inequities. An anti-racist challenges values, structures, policies, and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism, including their own racial biases.

Anti-Racism: The active promotion of policies that promote fair treatment of all people and promote racial equity. Practicing antiracism requires identifying, challenging, and upending policies and practices that perpetuate racism on an individual, interpersonal, institutional, or structural basis.

Antisemitism: Refers to a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

Bias: Is an inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived, unconscious, or unreasoned. A bias can be unreasonably negative feeling, preference, or opinion about a social group, grounded in stereotypes and prejudices.

BIPOC: This is an acronym for "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color."

Color Blind: The belief that everyone should be treated "equally" without respect to societal, economic, historical, racial, or other difference. Actual differences are not recognized or acknowledged.

Culture: Is the composite of values, beliefs, traditions, behavioral norms, linguistic expression, knowledge, memories, and collective identities that are shared by a group of people and give meaning to their social environments. Culture is learned and inherited behavior that distinguishes members of one group from another group. Culture is not static and can change over time.

Cultural Change: Refers to the stages of development or new patterns of culture that occur as a response to changing societal conditions. Within an organization, cultural change is a new method of operating and a reorientation of one's role and responsibilities in the organization. Effective cultural change in an organization involves moving the organization toward a new vision or desired state. Such change may be influenced by many factors including effective leadership, intentional alignment of structures, systems and policies, staff and stakeholder participation, communication, feedback, evaluating progress, and managing emotional responses to change.

Cultural Competence: Refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviors of those receiving and providing services. Individuals practicing cultural competency have knowledge of the intersectionality of social identities and the multiple axes of oppression that people from different racial, ethnic, and other minoritized groups may face. In the context of education, cultural competence refers to the ability to teach students successfully who come from cultures other than one's own. This may require developing learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering skills for effective cross-cultural teaching.

Cultural Humility: Refers to ongoing process that involves self-exploration and self-critique combined with a willingness to listen and learn from others. For example, when entering a relationship with another person, cultural humility would involve having the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs, and values, acknowledging their differences, and accepting them for who they are.

Cultural Fluency: Refers to the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultures, racial, and ethnic groups. It includes awareness of how to respond properly to differences in communication and conflict, and may require appropriate application of respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interests, curiosity, openness, non-judgement, tolerance, and humor.

Deficit-Minded Language: In the educational context, deficit-minded language blames inequitable outcomes on students and discounts systemic factors that contribute to their challenges. It labels students as inadequate by focusing on qualities or knowledge they lack, their cognitive abilities, "motivation" to succeed in college, or socially-constructed or stereotypical "shortcomings" linked to the student.

Discrimination: The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, national origin, age, physical/mental abilities and other categories that results in disadvantages in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities, including in employment, education, and housing.

Diversity: The myriad ways in which people differ, including the psychological, physical, cognitive, and social differences that occur among all individuals, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, economic class, education, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, mental and physical ability, and learning styles.

Environmental Justice: Refers to the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, tribal affiliation, or disability in decision-making that affects human health and the environment to ensure they are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers.

Ethnicity: Is a category that identifies a social group of people on the basis of a shared culture, origins, social background, and traditions that are distinctive, maintained between generations, and lead to a sense of identity, common language or religious traditions.

Ethnic Studies: An examination of the histories, experiences and cultures of various racial and ethnic groups and explores race and ethnicity in various social, cultural, historical, political and economic contexts.

Equality: The condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted the same rights, and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences.

Equity: An approach to the distribution of resources that accounts for systematic and other forms of inequality, and attempts to ameliorate the effects of inequality by supporting those who are most in need of assistance. Examples of equitable policies would include the CalFresh (SNAP) program, and Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible design.

Educational Equity Gap: Refers to significant and persistent disparities in educational attainment between different groups of students.

Employee Resource Group (ERG). Typically, an employer-sponsored or –recognized affinity group of those who share the interests and concerns common to those of a particular race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

Equity-Minded: In the educational context, this is a model framework for identifying causes of student equity gaps in outcomes, and seeking actions that could reduce them. Equity mindedness de-emphasizes the a focus on student deficits, and interprets inequitable outcomes as a signal that educational practices, policies, culture, and routines require inquiry and evaluation, and may require reform.

Gender: Gender refers to socially-constructed roles, behavior, activities, and attributes that society considers “appropriate” for men and women. A person’s gender may not necessarily correspond to their birth-assigned sex or be limited to the gender binary (woman/man).

Gender Identity: Refers to one’s internal sense of being a man, woman, both, in between, or outside of the gender binary which may or may not correspond with sex assigned at birth. Gender identity is internal and personally defined, it is not visible to others, which differentiates it from gender expression (i.e., how people display their gender to the world around them).

Global citizenship: Describes the concept that all individuals are citizens of the world, and that this recognition results in social, environmental, and economic actions that consider their Worldwide impact.

Heteronormative: Relates to the attitude or believe that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality.

Implicit Bias: A form of bias that results from the processing information based on unconscious associations and feelings, even when these are contrary to one’s conscious or declared beliefs.

Inclusion: The meaningful sharing of involvement, decision-making, and power with excluded individuals and/or groups.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality describes overlapping or interdependent systems of inequality, discrimination, or oppression related to age, disabilities, race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, sex, socioeconomic status, sexuality, etc.

Intergenerational Trauma: Refers to the notion that psychologically traumatic events experienced during an individual’s lifetime can significantly influence the well-being of their descendants.

Institutional Racism: Refers to racial discrimination, inequality, exploitation, and domination rooted in organizational or institutional structures and contexts, and which may be overt or present as disparate impact. For example, an informal policy of excluding employment applicants from a low income, minority neighborhood due to its reputation for gangs would have a disparate impact on members of the minority group.

Islamophobia: Refers to fear, prejudice, and hatred of Muslims that leads to provocation, hostility and intolerance by means of threatening, harassment, abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims, both in the online and offline world. Motivated by institutional, ideological, political, and religious hostility that transcends into structural and cultural racism, it targets the symbols and markers of being a Muslim.

Justice: the active and intentional process of dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities in society so that all individuals and communities can live a full and dignified life.

LGBTQIA2S: This term is an acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or gender expansive, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit.”

Low Income: Is defined by federal guidelines as household incomes that are at or below 100% of the poverty threshold. These households are considered “in poverty.” Household incomes that are below 50% of the poverty threshold are considered in “severe” or “deep poverty.” Low income persons face housing, food, transportation, and health disparities.

Marginalized/Marginalization: The process by which minority groups/cultures are excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community. A tactic used to devalue those that vary from the norm of the mainstream, sometimes to the point of denigrating them as deviant and regressive. Marginalized (groups) have restricted access to resources like education and healthcare for achieving their aims.

Merit: Merit refers generally to a person’s virtues, achievements, or praiseworthiness. In the academic context, concepts of merit historically focus on forms of achievement that are appear objectively measurable, and are biased toward members of the dominant culture. Concepts of merit tend not to account for the effects of systemic inequalities—particularly those related to family wealth and race—and fail to account for personal qualities that are not easily measurable.

Microaggressions: Are commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental actions that communicate intentionally or unintentionally hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults that have potentially harmful or unpleasant psychological impacts.

Minoritized: Describes a process by which individuals are afforded less power and representation based on their social identities or membership in non-dominant groups.

Neurodivergent: Refers to people whose brain differences affect how their brain works. That means they have different strengths and challenges from people whose brains don't have those differences. The possible differences include medical disorders, learning disabilities and other conditions.

Non-binary: Refers to people whose gender is not solely male or female, but blends elements of being a man or woman, or that is different than either male or female. Related terms include genderqueer, agender, bigender, and genderfluid.

Obligation Gap: Is the call for civic consciousness and acts of genuine care with the intention of catalyzing change toward becoming a more equity-centered college through epistemological disruption and the reconstruction of educational structures and policies that negatively impact poor and ethno-racially minoritized students. It places the onus of change on the higher education institution rather than the student.

Oppression: Systemic and pervasive social inequality woven throughout social institutions, and embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures. Oppression also signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.

Power: Refers to the ability of individuals or institutions to exercise actual or apparent authority over others. Power may be abused when it is exercised to obtain an unlawful or unfair advantage to obtain greater access to, or control over, resources or other individuals or institutions. There are six bases of power: reward power (i.e., the ability to mediate rewards), coercive power (i.e., the ability to mediate punishments), legitimate power (i.e., based on the perception that the person or group in power has the right to make demands and expect others to comply), referent power (i.e., the perceived attractiveness and worthiness of the individual or group in power), expert power (i.e., the level of skill and knowledge held by the person or group in power) and informational power (i.e., the ability to control information). Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social constructs through which power may operate.

Prejudice: Refers to a preconceived judgment, opinion or attitude directed toward certain people based on their membership in a particular group. It is a set of attitudes, which supports, causes, or justifies discrimination.

Privilege: Is unearned social power (i.e., a set of advantages, entitlements, and benefits) accorded by formal and informal institutions of society to members of a dominant group (e.g., white/Caucasian people with respect to people of color, men with respect to women, heterosexuals with respect to homosexuals, the able-bodied with respect to the disabled). Privilege tends to be invisible to those who possess it, because its absence (lack of privilege) is what calls attention to it.

Race: A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, based upon the social, economic and political preferences of a society's dominant group at a given period of time. Race falsely defines human worth and social status for the purpose of establishing and maintaining privilege and power in the dominant social group. Race is independent of ethnicity.

Racial Color-Blindness: Refers to the belief that racial group membership should not be taken into account, or even noticed, as a strategy for managing diversity and intergroup relations. It is criticized by scholars as an approach to achieving racial equity because the refusal to take account of race leads people to ignore, and therefore perpetuate, systemic racial discrimination.

Racial Color-Evasiveness: This is a preferred term for racial color-blindness that avoids referring to blindness as a metaphor.

Racial Justice: The fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in more progressively equitable opportunities and outcomes for all, regardless of race, through the adoption of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

Racism: Refers to the intentional or unintentional use of power to isolate, separate or exploit others on the basis of race. Racism refers to a variety of practices, beliefs, social relations, and phenomena that work to reproduce a racial hierarchy and social structure that yield superiority, power, and privilege for some, and discrimination and oppression for others. It can take several forms, including representational, ideological, interactional, institutional, structural, and systemic. Racism exists when ideas and assumptions about racial categories are used to justify and reproduce a racial hierarchy and racially structured society that unjustly limits access to resources, rights, and privileges on the basis of race.

Racism (Covert): A form of racial discrimination that is disguised and indirect, rather than public or obvious. Covert racism discriminates against individuals through often evasive or seemingly passive methods. Since racism is viewed as socially unacceptable by mainstream society, people engage in covert racism in subtle ways, and therefore it may go unchallenged or unrecognized.

Racism (Individual): Refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. Examples include believing in the superiority of white people, not hiring a person of color because "something doesn't feel right," or telling a racist joke.

Racism (Interpersonal) occurs between individuals. These are public expressions of racism, often involving slurs, biases, or hateful words or actions.

Racism (Institutional): This involves institutionalized discriminatory treatment, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for whites over people of color and extending beyond prejudice. These institutional policies often never mention any racial group, but have the intent to create racial disparities. Example: A school system where students of color are more frequently distributed into the most crowded classrooms and underfunded schools and out of the higher-resourced schools.

Racism (Overt): Is an unconcealed, unapologetic form of ethnocentrism and racial discrimination that is observable. Historically, overt racism is a creation and product of white supremacy. Characterized by blatant use of negative and/or intentionally harmful attitudes, ideas, or symbols and actions directed at a specific racial group or groups deemed nonwhite or colored, overt racism persists in many forms throughout contemporary society. Overt racism occurs in individual and group interactions, institutions, nations, and in international relations. Examples would be Nazism, and white supremacist groups.

Racism (Structural): Refers to the normalization and legitimization of historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal dynamics that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism refers to a conception of white domination that is diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. An example would be legacy admissions policies at prestigious universities.

Sex: Is the biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person's sex may differ from their gender identity.

Sexism: Refers to discriminatory and prejudicial beliefs and practices directed against individuals based on their biological sex, which may be expressed overtly or covertly, and could be associated with acceptance of sex-role stereotypes by individuals, organizations, institutions, and cultures.

Transgender: Is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth (i.e. the sex listed on their birth certificates). Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies through the use of hormones and/or gender affirmation surgery. Transgender people may identify with any sexual orientation, and their sexual orientation may or may not change before, during, or after transition. Use "transgender," not "transgendered."

Underserved Students: Are students who have not been afforded the same educational opportunities and equitable resources as some of their peers or as other students in the academic pipeline. This group of students may include low-income, minoritized, disabled, and first-generation students.

White Supremacy: Refers to the false beliefs that the “white race” is inherently superior to other races, and that this justifies the control of white people over others. It also refers to social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable or result in the dominance of white people in positions of control or power over others.

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