Oregon

Higher Education Coordinating Commission
775 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-378-5690

April 18, 2014

Dear President-

We would like to draw your attention to the attached Equity Lens that has been adopted by the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB), the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), and other state and local education-related boards in order to help guide discussions and practice at pre-schools, K-12 schools, colleges, and universities throughout Oregon.

We have established equity as a cornerstone of the State's approach to policy and budgeting. As a practical matter for education, that means that the OEIB, the HECC, and their associated state agencies will be guided by the commitments we have made through the adoption of this Lens. For the HECC, for example, the Equity Lens shapes the Commission's (a) early efforts to significantly increase access to the federal Pell Grant, and (b) interest in establishing weighted funding for outcomes attained by students of color.

We know that your institution is committed not merely to achieving educational outcomes for Oregonians, but to ensuring that those outcomes are achieved equitably. Too often, however, *conviction* about equity has not been matched by *clarity* about what it means and or *direction* how it shall be achieved. The Lens is especially helpful in this regard. It establishes, for example, that the primary focus of the equity lens is on race and ethnicity. It clearly defines the terms such as "equity," "race," "underserved students," and "achievement gap." It poses eight questions that are designed to help guide resource allocation decisions both at the state and institutional levels. We hope that your Board of Trustees will adopt that Lens, and that it will serve as a jumping-off point for your own conversations and efforts.

We look forward to following up with you to learn more about your institution's equity work, including how you are putting into practice the beliefs and commitments that are made in the Lens. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with any questions or comments.

Yours sincerely,

John A. Kitzhaber	Ben Cannon	Nancy Golden
Governor	Executive Director	Chief Education Officer

Education Investment Board:

Equity Lens

OEIB Vision Statement

To advise and support the building, implementation and investment in a unified public education system in Oregon that meets the diverse learning needs of every pre-K through postsecondary student and provides boundless opportunities that support success; ensuring a 100 percent high school graduation rate by 2025 and reaching the 40-40-20 goal.

OEIB Equity Lens: Preamble

The Oregon Educational Investment Board has a vision of educational equity and excellence for each and every child and learner in Oregon. We must ensure that sufficient resource is available to guarantee their success and we understand that the success of every child and learner in Oregon is directly tied to the prosperity of all Oregonians. The attainment of a quality education strengthens all Oregon communities and promotes prosperity, to the benefit of us all. It is through educational equity that Oregon will continue to be a wonderful place to live, and make progress towards becoming a place of economic, technologic and cultural innovation.

Oregon faces two growing opportunity gaps that threaten our economic competitiveness and our capacity to innovate. The first is the persistent achievement gap between our growing populations of communities of color, immigrants, migrants, and low income rural students with our more affluent white students. While students of color make up over 30% of our state- and are growing at an inspiriting rate- our achievement gap has continued to persist. As our diversity grows and our ability to meet the needs of these students remains stagnant or declines- we limit the opportunity of everyone in Oregon. The persistent educational disparities have cost Oregon billions of dollars in lost economic output[1] and these losses are compounded every year we choose not to properly address these inequalities.

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[1] Alliance for Excellent Education. (November 2011). *The high cost of high school dropouts: What the nation pays for inadequate high schools.* www.all4ed.org

The second achievement gap is one of growing disparity between Oregon and the rest of the United States. Our achievement in state benchmarks has remained stagnant and in some communities of color has declined while other states have begun to, or have already significantly surpassed our statewide rankings. If this trend continues, it will translate into economic decline and a loss of competitive and creative capacity for our state. We believe that one of our most critical responsibilities going forward is to implement a set of concrete criteria and policies in order to reverse this trend and deliver the best educational continuum and educational outcomes to Oregon's Children.

The primary focus of the equity lens is on race and ethnicity. While there continues to be a deep commitment to many other areas of the opportunity gap, we know that a focus on race by everyone connected to the educational milieu allows direct improvements in the other areas. We also know that race and ethnicity continue to compound disparity. We are committed to explicitly identifying disparities in education outcomes for the purpose of targeting areas for action, intervention and investment.

Beliefs:

We believe that everyone has the ability to learn and that we have an ethical responsibility and a moral responsibility to ensure an education system that provides optimal learning environments that lead students to be prepared for their individual futures.

We believe that speaking a language other than English is an asset and that our education system must celebrate and enhance this ability alongside appropriate and culturally responsive support for English as a second language.

We believe students receiving special education services are an integral part of our educational responsibility and we must welcome the opportunity to be inclusive, make appropriate accommodations, and celebrate their assets. We must directly address the over-representation of children of color in special education and the under-representation in "talented and gifted."

We believe that the students who have previously been described as "at risk," "underperforming," "under-represented," or minority actually represent Oregon's best opportunity to improve overall educational outcomes. We have many counties in rural and urban communities that already have populations of color that make up the majority. Our ability to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse population is a critical strategy for us to successfully reach our 40/40/20 goals.

We believe that intentional and proven practices must be implemented to return out of school youth to the appropriate educational setting. We recognize that this will require us to challenge and change our current educational setting to be more culturally responsive, safe, and responsive to the significant number of elementary, middle, and high school students who are currently out of school. We must make our schools safe for every learner.

We believe that ending disparities and gaps in achievement begin in the delivery of quality Early Learner programs and appropriate parent engagement and support. This is not simply an expansion of services -- it is a recognition that we need to provide services in a way that best meets the needs of our most diverse segment of the population, 0-5 year olds and their families.

We believe that resource allocation demonstrates our priorities and our values and that we demonstrate our priorities and our commitment to rural communities, communities of color, English language learners, and out of school youth in the ways we allocate resources and make educational investments.

We believe that communities, parents, teachers, and community-based organizations have unique and important solutions to improving outcomes for our students and educational systems. Our work will only be successful if we are able to truly partner with the community, engage with respect, authentically listen -- and have the courage to share decision making, control, and resources.

We believe every learner should have access to information about a broad array of career/job opportunities and apprenticeships that will show them multiple paths to employment yielding family-wage incomes, without diminishing the responsibility to ensure that each learner is prepared with the requisite skills to make choices for their future.

We believe that our community colleges and university systems have a critical role in serving our diverse populations, rural communities, English language learners and students with disabilities. Our institutions of higher education, and the P-20 system, will truly offer the best educational experience when their campus faculty, staff and students reflect this state, its growing diversity and the ability for all of these populations to be educationally successful and ultimately employed.

We believe the rich history and culture of learners is a source of pride and an asset to embrace and celebrate.

And, we believe in the importance of supporting great teaching. Research is clear that "teachers are among the most powerful influences in (student) learning."[2] An equitable education system requires providing teachers with the tools and support to meet the needs of each student.

Oregon Educational Investment Board Case for Equity:

Oregonians have a shared destiny. Individuals within a community and communities within a larger society need the ability to shape their own present and future and we believe that education is a fundamental aspect of Oregon's ability to thrive. Equity is both the means to educational success and an end that benefits us all. Equity requires the intentional examination of systemic policies and practices that, even if they have the appearance of fairness, may in effect serve to marginalize some and perpetuate disparities. Data are clear that Oregon demographics are changing to provide rich diversity in race, ethnicity, and language.[3] Working toward equity requires an understanding of historical contexts and the active investment in changing social structures and changing practice over time to ensure that all communities can reach the goal and the vision of 40/40/20.

Purpose of the OEIB Equity Lens: The purpose of the equity lens is to clearly articulate the shared goals we have for our state, the intentional investments we will make to reach our goals of an equitable educational system, and to create clear accountability structures to ensure that we are actively making progress and correcting where there is not progress. As the OEIB executes its charge to align and build a P-20 education system, an equity lens will prove useful to ensure **every** learner is adequately prepared by educators focused on equity for meaningful contributions to society. The **equity lens** will confirm the importance of recognizing institutional and systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that have limited access for many students in the Oregon education system. The equity lens emphasizes underserved students, such as out of school youth, English Language Learners, and students in some communities of color and some rural geographical locations, with a particular focus on racial equity. The result of creating a culture of equity will focus on the outcomes of academic proficiency, civic awareness, workplace literacy, and personal integrity. The system outcomes will focus on resource allocation, overall investments, hiring and professional learning.

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[2] Hattie, J. (2009), *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to student achievement. P. 238.*

[3] Oregon Statewide Report Card 2011-2012. www.ode.state.or.us

ADDENDUMS

Basic Features of the Equity Lens:

Objective: By utilizing an equity lens, the OEIB aims to provide a common vocabulary and protocol for resource allocation and evaluating strategic investments.

The following questions will be considered for resource allocation and evaluating strategic investments:

1. **Who are the racial/ethnic and underserved groups affected? What is the potential impact of the resource allocation and strategic investment to these groups?**
2. **Does the decision being made ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences? What is the impact on eliminating the opportunity gap?**
3. **How does the investment or resource allocation advance the 40/40/20 goal?**
4. **What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial)**
5. **How have you intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by the strategic investment or resource allocation? How do you validate your assessment in (1), (2) and (3)?**
6. **How will you modify or enhance your strategies to ensure each learner and communities' individual and cultural needs are met?**
7. **How are you collecting data on race, ethnicity, and native language?**
8. **What is your commitment to P-20 professional learning for equity? What resources are you allocating for training in cultural responsive instruction?**

Creating a culture of equity requires monitoring, encouragement, resources, data, and opportunity. OEIB will apply the equity lens to strategic investment proposals reviews, as well as its practices as a board.

Definitions:

Equity: in education is the notion that EACH and EVERY learner will receive the necessary resources they need individually to thrive in Oregon's schools no matter what their national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, differently abled, first language, or other distinguishing characteristic.

Underserved students: Students whom systems have placed at risk because of their race, ethnicity, English language proficiency, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, differently abled, and geographic location. Many students are not served well in our education system because of the conscious and unconscious bias, stereotyping, and racism that is embedded within our current inequitable education system.

Achievement gap: Achievement gap refers to the observed and persistent disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Race: Race is a social – not biological – construct. We understand the term "race" to mean a racial or ethnic group that is generally recognized in society and often, by government. When referring to those groups, we often use the terminology "people of color" or "communities of color" (or a name of the specific racial and/or ethnic group) and "white."

We also understand that racial and ethnic categories differ internationally, and that many of local communities are international communities. In some societies, ethnic, religious and caste groups are oppressed and racialized. These dynamics can occur even when the oppressed group is numerically in the majority.

White privilege: A term used to identify the privileges, opportunities, and gratuities offered by society to those who are white.

Embedded racial inequality: Embedded racial inequalities are also easily produced and reproduced – usually without the intention of doing so and without even a reference to race. These can be policies and practices that intentionally and unintentionally enable white privilege to be reinforced.

40-40-20: Senate Bill 253 - states that by 2025 all adult Oregonians will hold a high school diploma or equivalent, 40% of them will have an associate's degree or a meaningful postsecondary certificate, and 40% will hold a bachelor's degree or

advanced degree. 40-40-20 means representation of every student in Oregon, including students of color.

Disproportionality: Over-representation of students of color in areas that impact their access to educational attainment. This term is a statistical concept that actualizes the disparities across student groups.

Opportunity Gap: the lack of opportunity that many social groups face in our common quest for educational attainment and the shift of attention from the current overwhelming emphasis on schools in discussions of the achievement gap to more fundamental questions about social and educational opportunity.[4]

Culturally Responsive: Recognize the diverse cultural characteristics of learners as assets. Culturally responsive teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes.[5]

[4] (The Opportunity Gap (2007). Edited by Carol DeShano da Silva, James Philip Huguley, Zenub Kakli, and Radhika Rao.

[5] Ladson-Billings, Gloria (1994). The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children.