

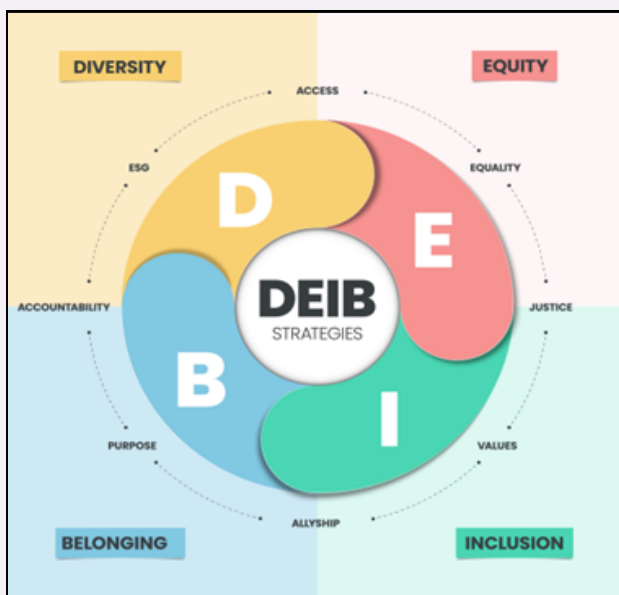
WHY EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI) HAS TO BE A PRIORITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and society at large. To ensure institutions fulfill their potential and align with the values of equity and diversity, it is imperative that they foster inclusive environments for students, staff, librarians, and faculty where they can show up as their authentic selves, experience belonging, and be valued for who they are, and what and how they contribute to the growth of the institution. One key player in this effort are the role higher education unions, which can significantly impact the culture, policies, and practices within academia. This critical analysis explores the importance of prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within higher education unions and provides guiding questions for self-reflection and improvement.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are not merely buzzwords or theoretical concepts. They are action-oriented verbs that should underpin the operations of higher education unions. Inclusive institutions promote equitable access to education, celebrate diversity, and create environments where all members can thrive. This includes not only recruitment strategies but how to create supporting and healing spaces upon entry into the academy.

A critical examination of EDI in higher education reveals that EDI issues are often overlooked, inadequately addressed, or implemented superficially using a checklist approach. Below are a series of guiding questions for higher education unions to reflect upon to assess and examine where they are in their EDI journey and how to identify next steps for improvement and growth.



Representation and Leadership

How diverse is the leadership within the union?
 Are marginalized voices adequately represented in decision-making processes? How are they recruited and through what means?
 Are there reporting tools to identify concerns from the membership? What data is being collected? Demographical data? Race-based data?
 Do we value international experiences?

Bargaining for Equity

Does the collective bargaining agreement include provisions for EDI?
 How can we negotiate for policies that promote pay equity, anti-discrimination measures, and support for underrepresented groups?
 Are we advocating for a diverse faculty and staff through our negotiations?

Professional Development

Are there opportunities for members to engage in EDI-focused training and development?
 Are there opportunities for culturally reflective mentorship?
 How can we ensure that all members have access to resources that foster intercultural competence?

Safe and Inclusive Work Environments

How are tracking and addressing concerns related to harassment, discrimination, and bias within our institutions?
 Are there channels for reporting EDI-related incidents, and are they effective?
 How can we support community initiatives that promote EDI in higher education? Are there partnerships we can establish or strengthen to advance EDI efforts?

Transparency and Accountability:

How are we communicating our EDI initiatives and progress to union members?
 Do we have mechanisms in place to hold ourselves accountable for EDI-related goals and shortcomings?
 What metrics are we using to track and assess our EDI efforts?