



Promoting Campus Equity In The New Normal: What's Our Plan?

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JED Taskforce Meeting: Monday, July 13, 2020, 1:00pm

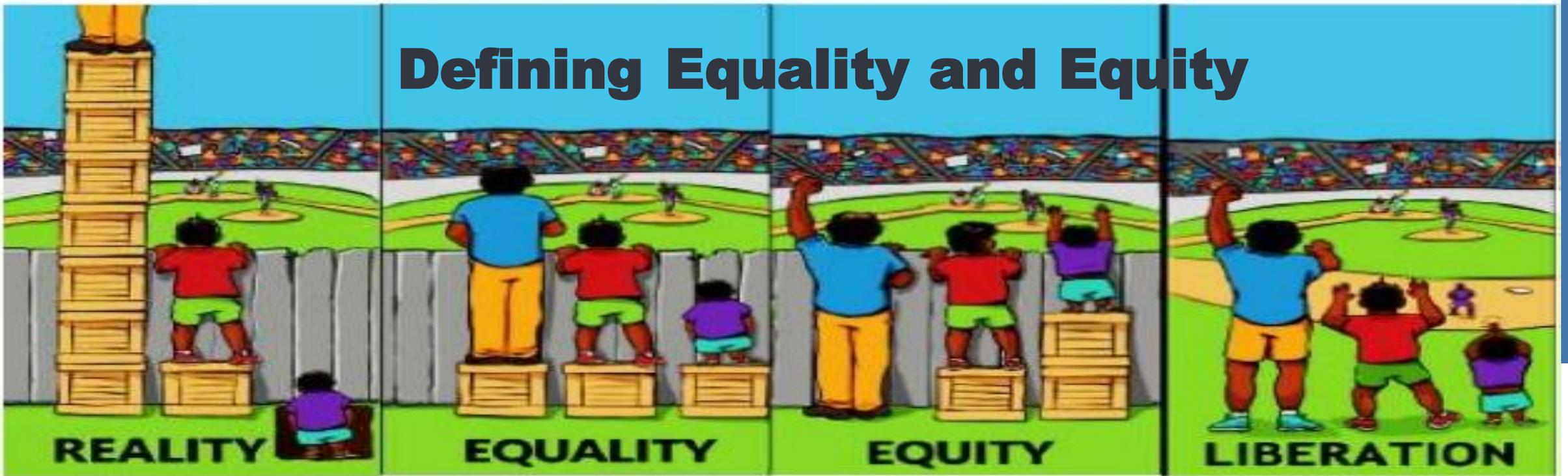


Housatonic Community College JED Campus Taskforce

Today's Agenda

- Define and Discuss:
 - Equity and the New Normal
 - Where are we now and what needs to happen next?
- Moving Forward During A Pandemic:
 - Moving Students From Post-Traumatic Stress to Post-Traumatic Growth.

Defining Equality and Equity



Equality is about sameness; it focuses on making sure everyone gets the same thing.

Do we deliver educational services to students including mental health services in a way that everyone gets the same treatment?

Equity is about fairness; it ensures that each person gets what he or she needs.

How do we ensure that HCC is providing equitable services that meet the academic and mental health needs of our students?



March 2020

National emergency declared over the Covid-19 pandemic.

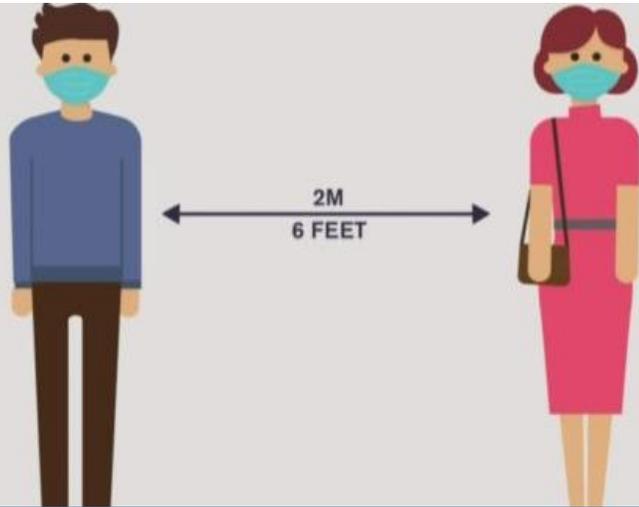
May 2020

Nationwide protests against racism and police brutality break out following the killing of African-American George Floyd by Minneapolis police.

July 2020

Nearly 50 Million Americans have filed for unemployment.

HCC and “The New Normal”



The New Normal

- A colloquial term used to refer to the act of adjusting to significant changes brought upon by a prevailing event that disrupts normalcy of life as we know it.
- **What It Really is...**
 - A unique pandemic experience that is effecting all of us globally but not in the same way.
 - Students of color have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Covid-19 presents an extra challenge for students of color to overcome.

- **Inequities in the term “The New Normal”**
 - Too early to say if this will be our “new normal.”
 - Has a psychological impact that people emotionally react to.
- **The term “Normal” implies conformity and that everyone is the same**
 - Pathologizes people that don’t fit into social norms established by dominate culture
 - People of color
 - LGBTQIA , Non-Binary
 - People with Pre-existing Mental Health Conditions
 - People with Disabilities



Not A New Normal But An Extraordinary Circumstance

- The term “the new normal does not account for everyone’s experience of the pandemic as being equal or equitable.
- There are huge disparities in how Covid-19 impacts communities of color.
 - Most impacted areas include:
 - Physical and Mental Health
 - Access to adequate and comprehensive care
 - Economic Instability
 - Unemployment, Food and Housing Insecurities
 - Greater risk for infection and the spread of infection to family members
 - Essential Employees
 - Educational and the Achievement Gap
 - The use of the term the “New Normal Paradigm” can further exacerbate anxieties already related to related to Covid-19 in students of color.



College Is Stressful All By Itself

Pre-existing Mental Health Issues

Lack of Awareness and the Stigmatization of Mental Health Disorders

Barriers to Seeking Help

Lack of Established Mental Health Policies and Procedures

Lack of Culturally-Trained Faculty and Staff With The Ability to Identify and or Work With Students in Distress

Lack of Access to Comprehensive Health Care for Community Referrals

Economic Barriers



- Corona Virus Pandemic
- Systemic Racism
- Economic Recession
- CT Community College Consolidation
- Budget Cuts

Who Are Our Most Vulnerable Students?



LIFG Students of color



Students Who Are Struggling Financially and Identify as Poor



Latin X Students



LGBTQIA Students

Stressors Students of Color Face

Pre-Pandemic

- Students of color were more likely to report feeling over-whelmed most or all the time during the first term as compared to their white peers.
- College students of color were less likely to:
 - Seek out mental health treatment
 - Receive or stay in mental health treatment.
- Students who face challenges prior to their entrance in college will have added stressors. Students of color are more likely to fall into this category as compared to their white peers.

Currently

- The Covid-19 Pandemic does not affect college students equally.
- The Covid-19 Pandemic has increased and intensified the unique mental health needs of students of color, LGBTQIA+ students and Low-income students.

Students of Color and Discrimination

One of the most notable stressors that has been examined for college students of color is the role of prejudice and racial discrimination.

Racial discrimination contributes to racial disparities in health.

Negative stereotypes about students of color contribute to negative college experiences.

Black females report more depression and anxiety and perceived racial discrimination.

Black males experience increased hostility towards them leading to psychological distress.



How The Covid-19 Pandemic Impacts Students of Color

Where Are My Mirrors?

It's normal for students of color to seek out encounters with others who they share an ethnic and cultural relevance with.

Students of colors look for persons on campus who ethnically and or culturally mirror them and can identify with their experiences as well as understand them on an intuitive level.

Students of color seek out these cultural markers in order to help them navigate and feel safe in new spaces.

Closed campuses and distance learning can hinder or take this ability away if faculty and staff members aren't mindful about the cultural needs of students of color.





Overt and Covert Bias

2020 Healthy Minds Survey

- The survey asked students about race-based discrimination.
 - 6% of students experienced race-based discrimination as a result of the pandemic
 - 41% reported witnessing race-based discrimination either online or in person.
- Distance online learning does not shield students of color from experience racial bias in the forms of:
 - Micro-Aggression
 - Hate Crimes
 - Assault
- Students are still going to experience racism.
- The normalcy of racism makes it difficult for students of color to see and navigate the college environment.

Inequities and Biases in Distance Learning

- Students of color face numerous challenges in being forced to learn on-online platforms.
- The impacts of this unexpected transition to distance learning are not equal among students of color who are:
 - **Low-income students**
 - May have inadequate housing options, limited access to technology and high-speed internet and be pressured to work.
 - **First generational college students from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds**
 - More likely to return to multi-generational homes where maintaining boundaries may be a challenge.
 - **Women may experience greater domestic workloads, including child and eldercare responsibilities**
 - **Toxic living environments**
 - Students of color may face having to navigate sub-standard, toxic, abusive or violent living conditions as they are forced to isolate.
- **As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic students of color:**
 - Lost access to the college campus which may serve as a safe haven.
 - Lost access to professionals that they trust and have relationships with.
- In order to address the inequities students of color face in the second phase of the pandemic, colleges must take leadership roles in identify what the barriers are that our students face.



Race and Gender Bias in the Online-Class Room

- Research has found that female and minority students who face a variety of discriminatory practices in traditional classrooms may also face discriminatory practices in online classrooms.
 - For example, white teachers are more likely to rate black students misbehavior more harshly than similar behavior of white students, and teachers direct more positive and neutral speech toward white students than toward Latino and black students.
 - In synchronous classrooms students who refuse to “turn their cameras on” were viewed as being non-compliant.
 - In a study conducted by Stanford University, found that bias appeared to be strong in online course discussions.
 - The study found that instructors are 94 percent more likely to respond to discussion forum posts by white male students than by other students.
 - Simply attaching a name that connotes a specific race and gender to a discussion forum post changes the likelihood that an instructor will respond to that post,” the study said.
 - White students and Indian students were more likely to respond to discussion board post of students who they thought shared the same racial or ethnic backgrounds as themselves.
 - There is also the assumption that students of color, “need to learn how to be responsible.”
 - More importantly students of color need to know that they belong at our institution.

How The Covid-19 Pandemic Has Changed The College Environment

- Increased mental health and wellness issues for students of color
- Displaced vulnerable students
 - Voluntarily and Involuntarily stop attending college
- Increased Risk of Financial Insecurities
 - Job Loss
 - Food Insecurities
 - Housing insecurities
- The safety nets that kept many students of color in school before the pandemic were already thin.
 - College communities must be operate under the threat that
 - The continuation of the crisis could collapse an already weak or non-existent support systems for students of color.
 - Worst cast scenario is that colleges will see students of color withdraw, not enroll, fail to matriculate, drop out and not experience the success of graduating and earning a degree.
- Closing campuses and moving to on-line delivery service pulled the “community rug” out from under students of color who rely on the campus community for connection, direction, support, encouragement and overall development.

How The Covid-19 Pandemic Has Changed The College Environment

Reductions or eliminations of access to critical resources:

- Libraries
- Computer Labs
- Wi-Fi
- Study Spaces
- Social Spaces
- Cafeterias
- Lounges
- Friends
- Faculty, Counselors and Other Supportive Staff
- The assumption that every college student can quickly adjust to being virtual and responsive to academic demands.
- The assumption that because of social isolations students have the time to commit to academic work.
- The pressure for students to be “on camera”



Supporting Students of Color

- Students of color are experiencing mental health issues at much higher rates.
 - Higher Levels of Anxiety and Depression
 - Toxic Stress from Social Isolation that put students in toxic, abusive or volatile living environments.
- Students of color under utilize college mental health services
- Students of color often experience barriers to seeking help because:
 - There has traditionally been a lack of professionals who look like them or are culturally competent to meet their needs.
- Shame + Stigma = Silence
 - Students of color are less likely to seek mental health services:
 - Fear of seeking out mental health services because of the stigma associated with having a mental health condition.
 - Fear of being labeled with a diagnosis.
 - Negative impact on educational prospects



Equity is Creating A Safety Net Sometimes and Throwing Out the Life-line At Others Times.

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What Can We Do To Promote Equity?

Building Support Systems For Students of Color

- Students of color are going to require more equity in the areas of service and engagement.
- Students of color do not possess the “cultural capital” to navigate the traditional college environment let alone the online college environment.
 - How do we support students of color returning to campus or coming to campus for the first time who have experienced being marginalized or traumatized by racism and the covid-19 pandemic?
 - How do we help students transition from post- traumatic stress to post-traumatic growth?
 - How do we engage and create a sense of belonging for students of color despite the continued plans of phase 2 that include social distancing and the online platform?
 - Budget cuts increase inequities for students of color, what can we do as a college to ensure students of color have equitable access to services that support and enhance their college experience? What are ways that we can be creative?
 - How do we build community among ourselves so that we can build community among our students of color?

Equity Minded-Leadership

- Equity-minded leaders are aware of the historical context of exclusionary practices in higher education and recognize the impact of this history.
- They recognize the contradiction between the ideals of democratic education and the social, institutional, and individual practices that contribute to persistent inequities in college outcomes.
- Equity-minded leaders also reject the ingrained habit of blaming inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes on students' own social, cultural, and educational backgrounds.



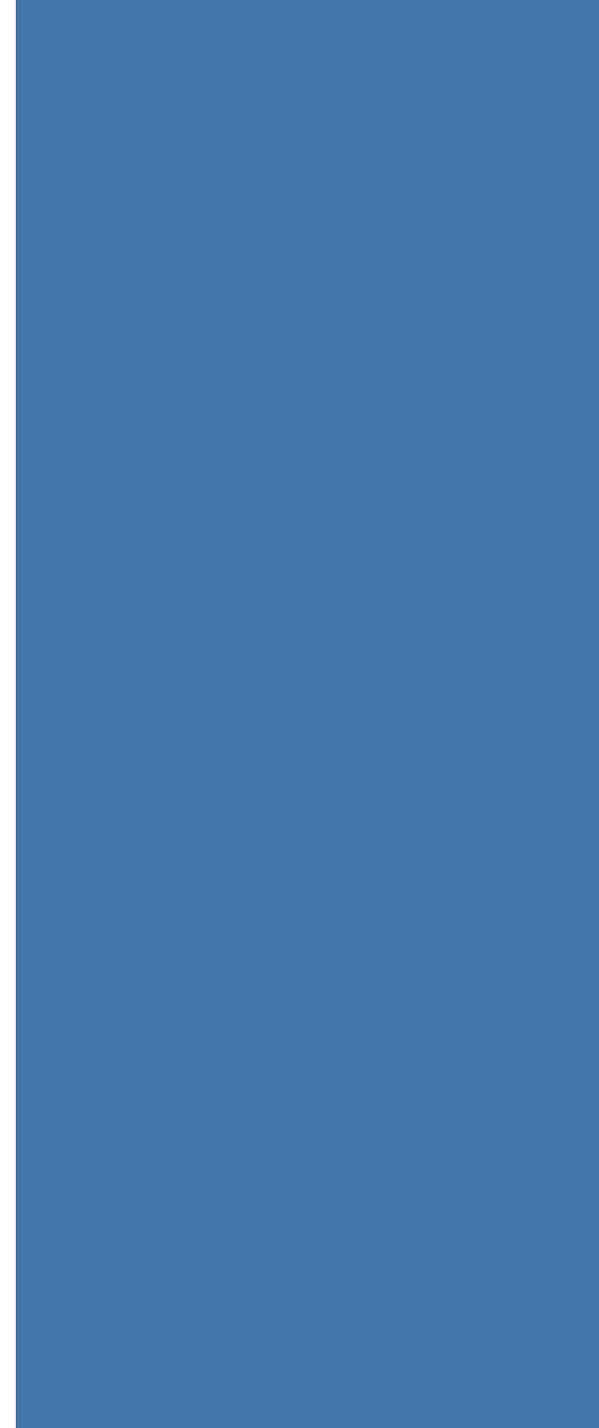
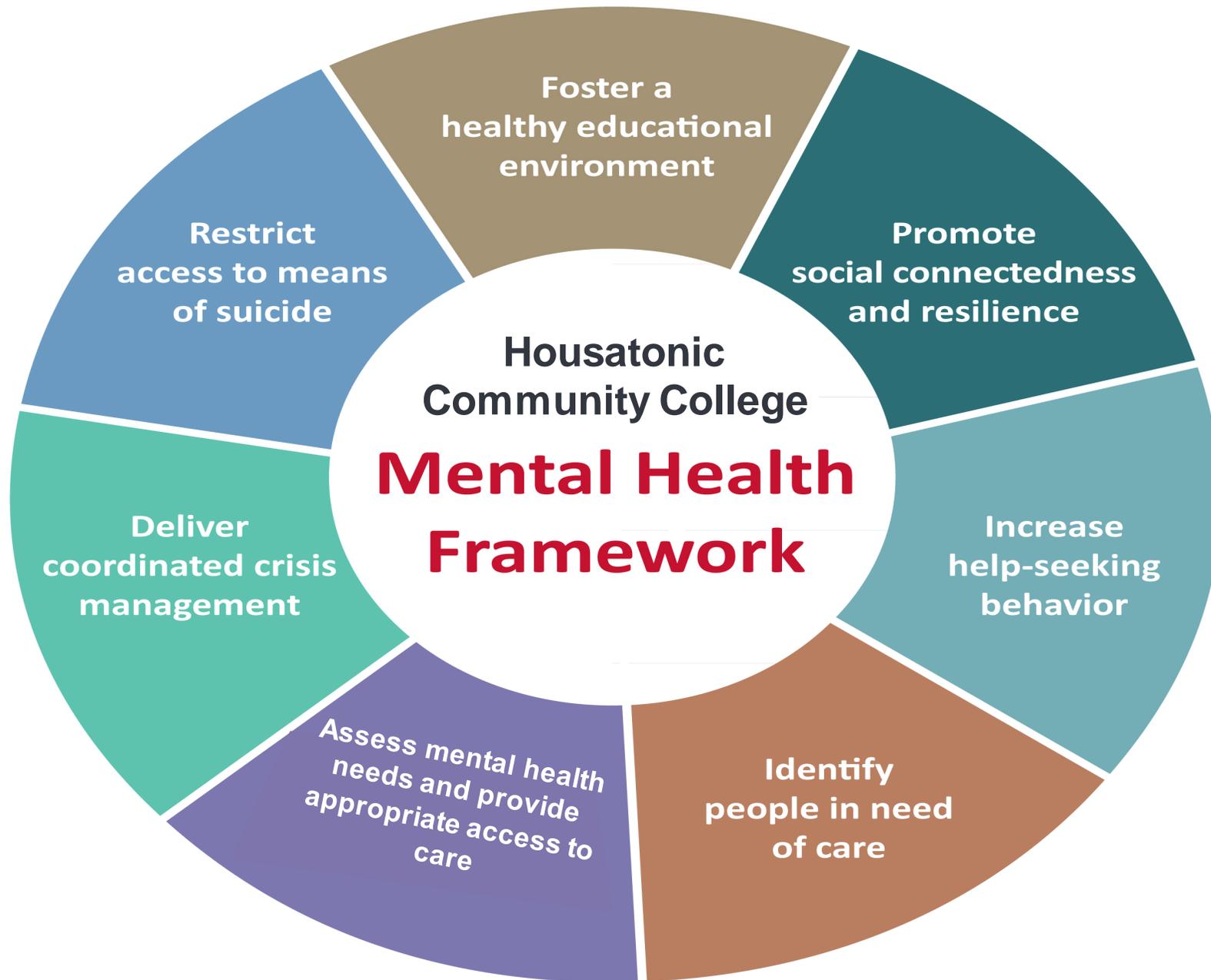
What Does It Mean To Be Equity-Minded?

Equity-minded practices are created through:

- Willingness to look at student outcomes and disparities at all educational levels disaggregated by race and ethnicity as well as socioeconomic status.
- Recognition that individual students are not responsible for the unequal outcomes of groups that have historically experienced discrimination and marginalization in the United States.
- Respect for the aspirations and struggles of students who are not well served by the current educational system.
- Belief in the fairness of allocating additional college and community resources to students who have greater needs due to the systemic shortcomings of our educational system in providing for them.
- Recognition that the elimination of entrenched biases, stereotypes, and discrimination in institutions of higher education requires intentional critical deconstruction of structures, policies, practices, norms, and values assumed to be race neutral

What Our Plan Has To Include

- **Ensure that communication to students of color is consistent, caring and clear.**
 - Many students report a lack of regular and compassionate communication from their institutions as a primary stressor during COVID-19, according to a nationwide survey (Active Minds 2020).
 - Not only do students report uncertainty about academic options and what those options mean for their future, but more than half say that they do not know where to turn for mental health support.
 - This lack of clarity is concerning since one in five students report that COVID-19 has significantly worsened their mental health.
- **Consider the mental health and wellbeing of all campus members.**
 - Faculty and staff are on the front lines of serving and supporting students, leading the charge during these uncharted times. Supporting them is one of the most effective ways leaders can support students.
- **Inform decision-making through assessments**
 - Student mental health needs can vary substantially from campus to campus, meaning that campus leaders cannot simply rely on data from elsewhere.
 - For example, in national data collected prior to COVID-19, the prevalence of past-year suicidal ideation among students was as low as 5 percent at some institutions and as high as 25 percent at others (Lipson et al. 2015).
 - Access to services and rates of help-seeking for mental health also vary substantially across institutions.
 - Moreover, the upheaval and trauma of the pandemic introduces a whole new layer of uncertainty, meaning that campus leaders cannot assume that past assessments reflect the current situation in their student populations



JED Foundation: Equity in Mental Health Framework



Equity in Mental Health Framework

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities to Support the Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health of Students of Color



A Joint Project of



THE STEVE FUND



jedfoundation.org

1. Identify and Promote The Mental health and Well-Being of Students of color as a Campus-Wide Priority
2. Engage Students to Provide Guidance and Feedback on Matters of Student Mental health and Emotional Well-Being
3. Actively Recruit, Train and Retain a Diverse and Culturally Competent Faculty and Professional Staff
4. Create opportunities to Engage Around National and International Issues/Events
5. Create Dedicated Roles to Support Well-Being and Success of Students of color

6. Support and Promote Accessible, Safe Communication With Campus Administration and an Effective Response System
7. Offer a Range of Supportive Programs and Services in Varied Formats
8. Help Students Learn About Programs and Services by Advertising and Promoting Through Multiple Channels
9. Identify and Utilize Culturally Relevant and Promising Programs and Practices, and Collect Data on Effectiveness
10. Participate in Resource and Information Sharing (Within and Between Schools)

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