Education is Where we Name who we Are

Rural Pathways Institute

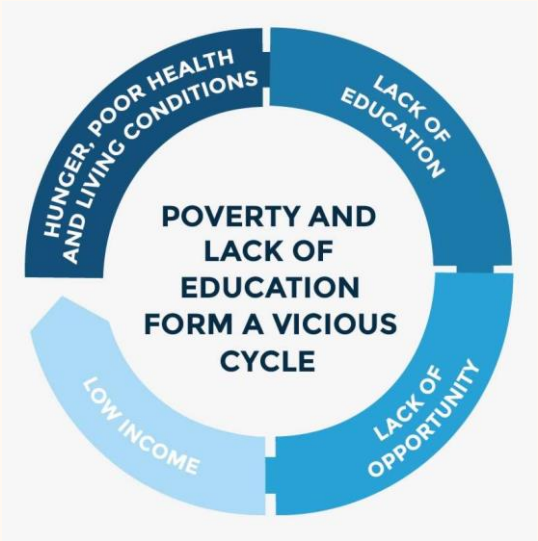
Mike Gavin, President & CEO Alliance for Higher Education

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Find your Reason for Focusing on and be able to Communicate it

“But houses exactly like the houses of our past yet dominated the landscape, boys exactly like the boys we once had been found themselves smothering in these houses, came down into the streets for light and air and found themselves encircled by disaster.”—James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues.”



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First, let's get clear-eyed

Our moment is about...

Power and Borders

Democracy and Freedom

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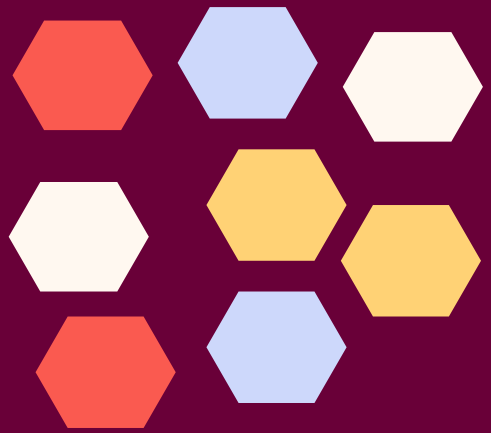
Our Problem is not Messaging Alone



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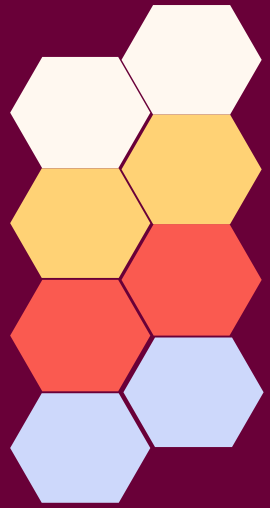
We are not organized...to organize

Fragmented Sector



Coalitional Force

The Fifth Pillar



By building a coalitional force, we move from a fragmented sector to a unified fifth pillar of democracy

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The Current Reality

Paradox

Defending institutions and students against anti-educational policies risks funding and support.

Myth

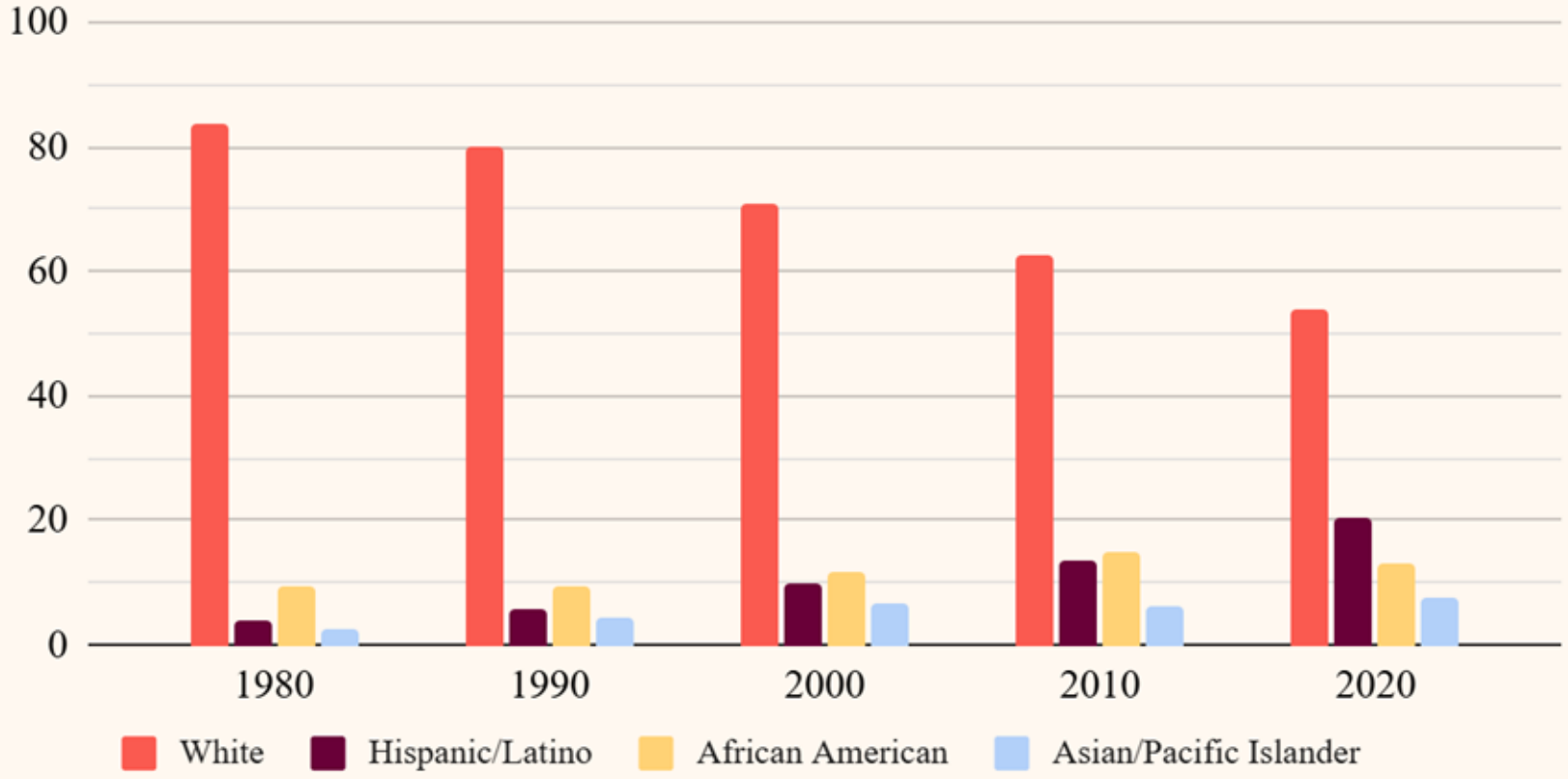
This will all pass – find workarounds until an election unseats the politicians engaging in problematic rhetoric and policy.

Leadership requires clear-eyed vision about the landscape and multiple risks. Avoids “this is a moment, not a movement” trap and sees this is an assault on the sector and democracy.

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Legislation and Funding has Gone Inverse to Diversity of Higher Education

Data from NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System



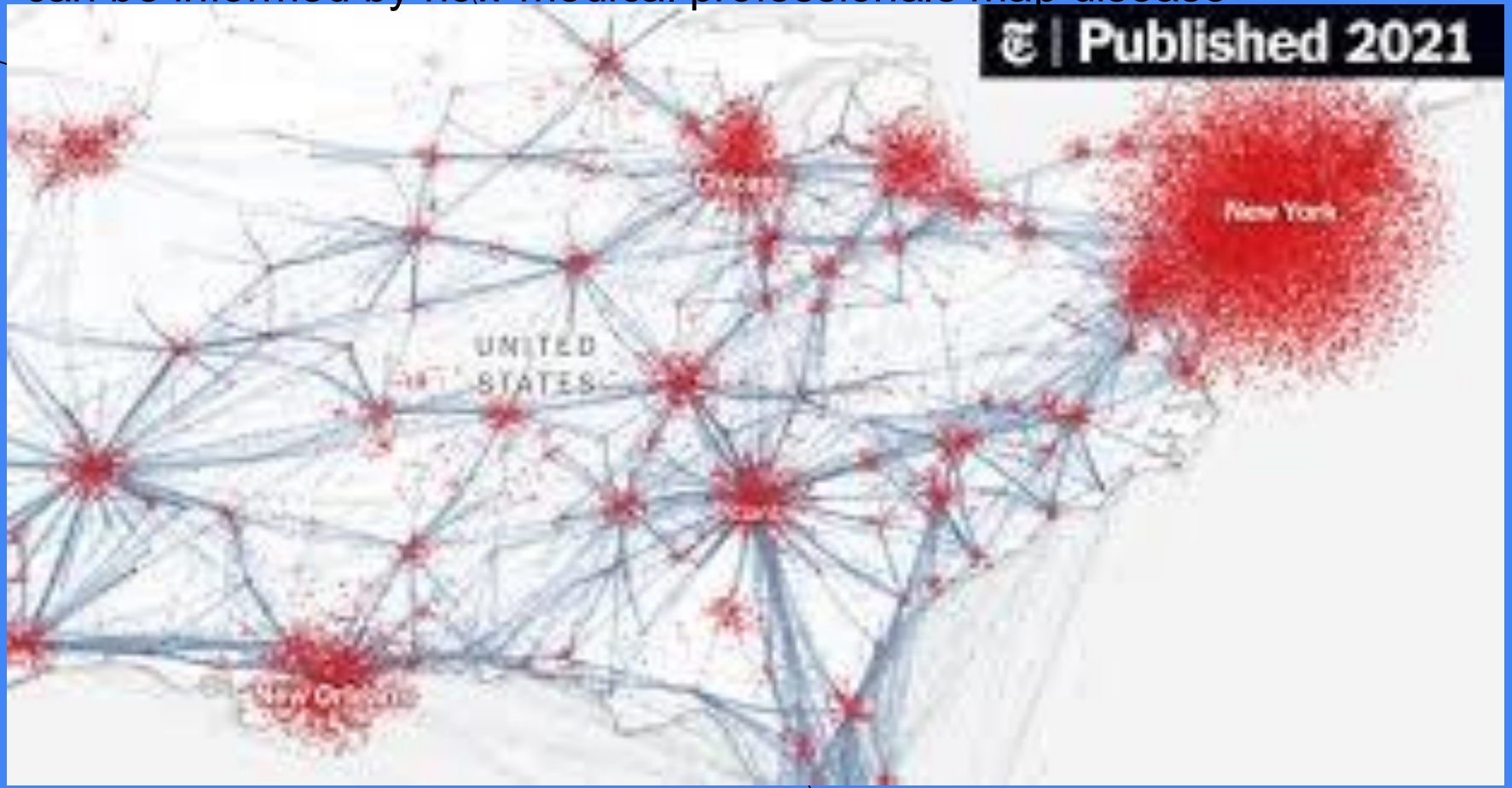


Four Contexts that Characterize States and Institutions:

- **Passed:** States where legislation has passed to limit DEI.
- **Impending:** States where legislation is impending or did not pass but will most likely pass in the future.
- **At Risk:** States where a flip in state legislatures is possible leading to anti-DEI legislation.
- **Secure:** States that are relatively safe from broad anti-DEI policies.

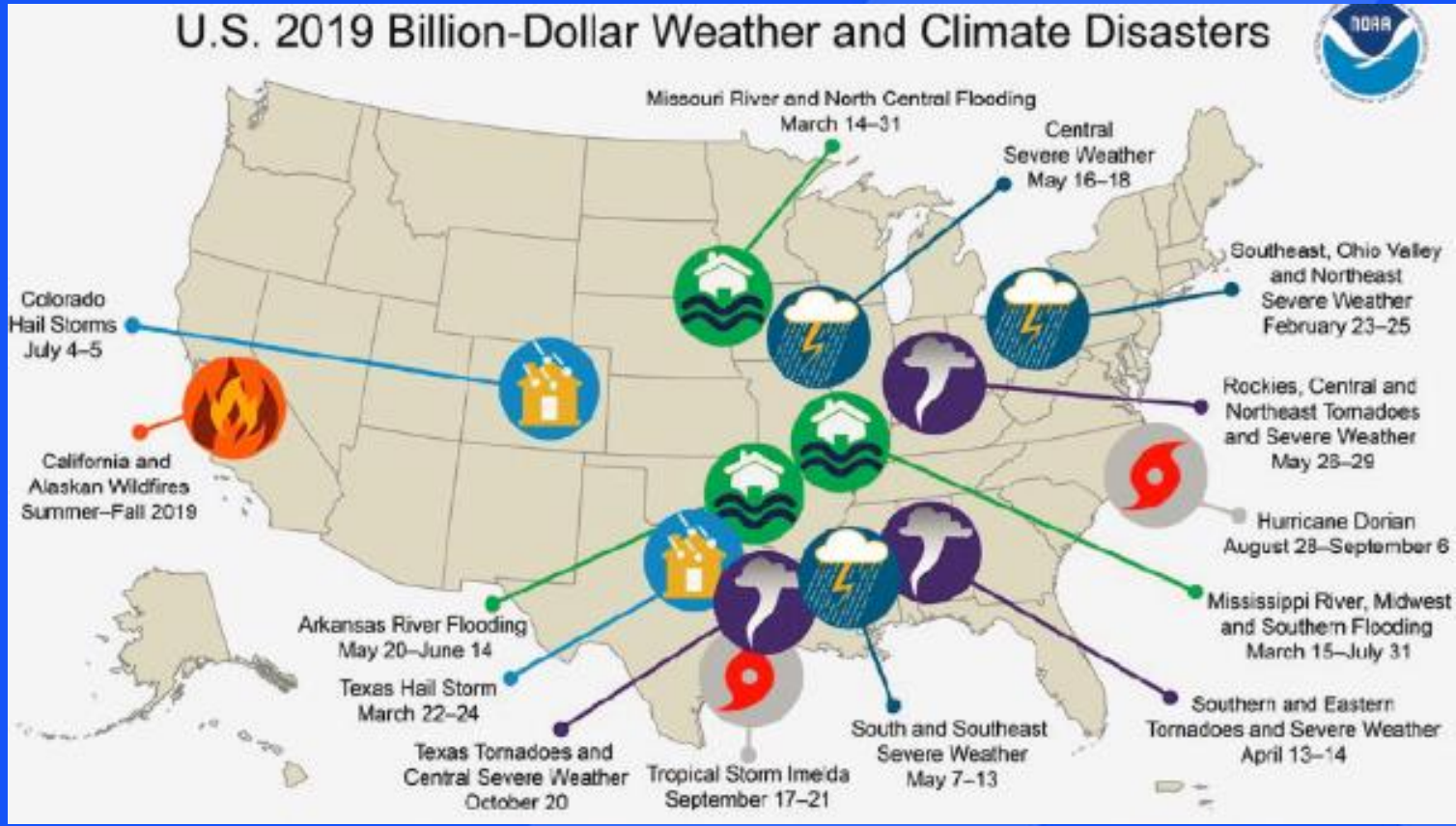
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Understanding the movement of gag orders and attacks on autonomy can be informed by how medical professionals map disease

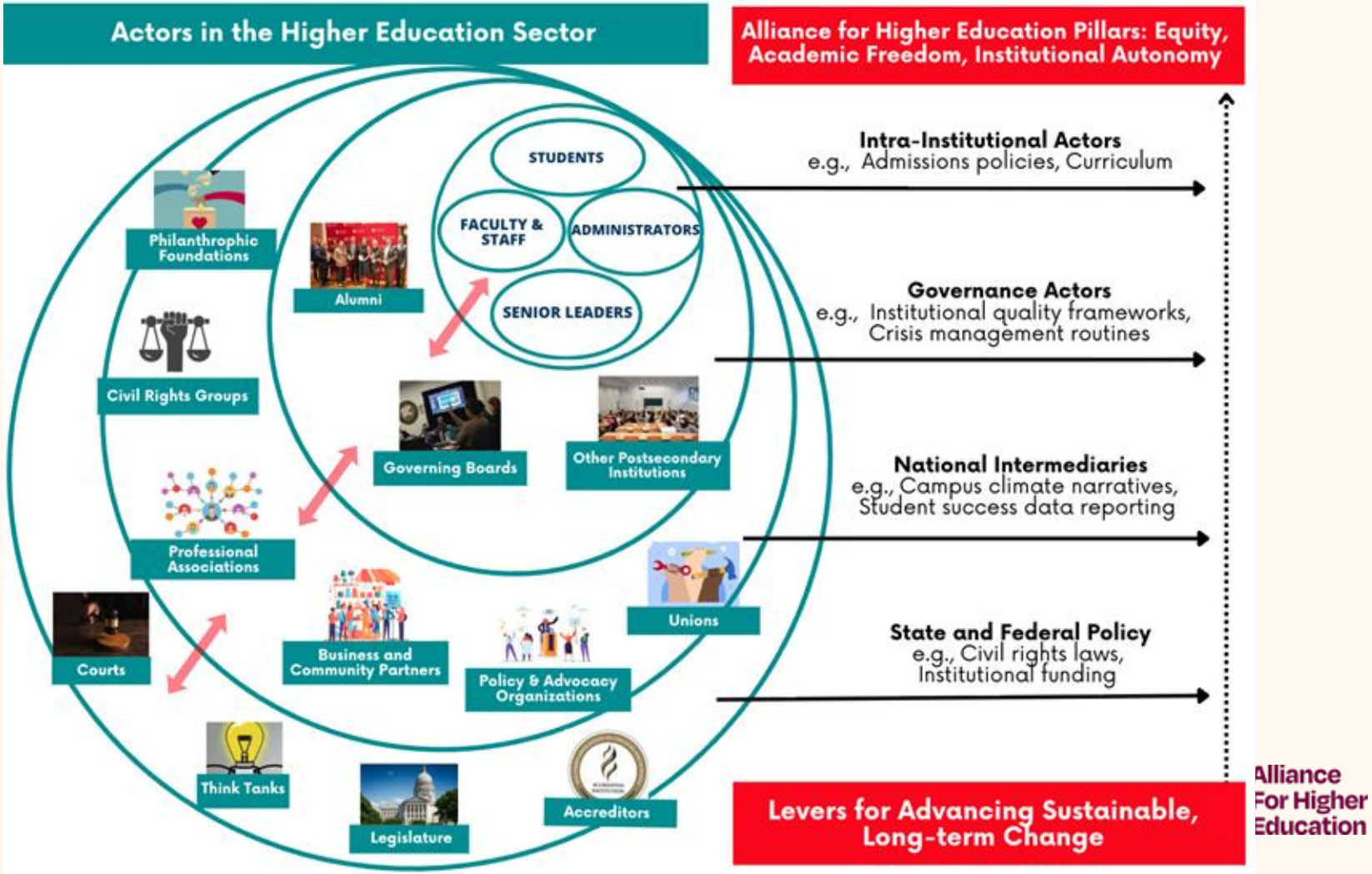


Like weather, it's essential to predict risk and opportunity across the country.

Nothing occurs in a vacuum



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Actors in the Higher Education Sector
Alliance for Higher Education Pillars: Equity, Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy
STUDENTS
FACULTY & STAFF
ADMINISTRATORS
SENIOR LEADERS
Philanthrophic Foundations
Alumni
Civil Rights Groups
Governing Boards
Other Postsecondary Institutions
Professional Associations
Courts
Business and Community Partners
Policy & Advocacy Organizations
Unions
Think Tanks
Legislature
Accreditors
Intra-Institutional Actors
e.g., Admissions policies, Curriculum
Governance Actors
e.g., Institutional quality frameworks, Crisis management routines
National Intermediaries
e.g., Campus climate narratives, Student success data reporting
State and Federal Policy
e.g., Civil rights laws, Institutional funding
Levers for Advancing Sustainable, Long-term Change
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Affronts to students' access to higher education and the freedom to teach, learn, and research legislation

- Proposed accreditation rules,
- Recent Call to Action
- OMB and EDGAR proposed rules
- State-level restrictions on race, gender, and sexuality studies, and the
- IRS proposed rules

Using DEI as a dog whistle to keep working class Americans and people of color from accessing higher education and a better life.

What does this have to do with me?

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A Crisis of Student Belonging

Exodus	Safety Concerns	Public College Drain
52% of students considered leaving their college or university in Texas.[1] 78% considered leaving Texas entirely.[1]	LGBTQIA+ students report feeling more unsafe at Texas institutions than their peers. [2]	In Florida, 1 in 8 high school seniors say they won't attend a public college in-state due to DeSantis-era education policies.[3]

When students feel their identities are being de-legitimized, their commitment to their university, state, and nation dissolves.

The Impact of Legislation



-9.3%



1 — Bill Introduced

2 — Drop in Under-represented Minorities

3 — Bill Signed

The **introduction** of restrictive legislation creates an immediate **chilling effect**, **deterring prospective student**s from under-represented backgrounds well before any bill is signed into law

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IRS Rule is not an isolated move

The Accreditation rule is one of many these proposals that uses diversity, equity, and inclusion as a dog whistle to divide rather than unite America. Collectively, our work must be to include, not exclude, all groups in our democracy.

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Don’t Think Outside of the Box, Question How it was Built

- Building on top of broken systems leads to a bigger broken system
- Innovation is disruptive to systems
- You work on the institution, not in it
- Get into the weeds to get out of them

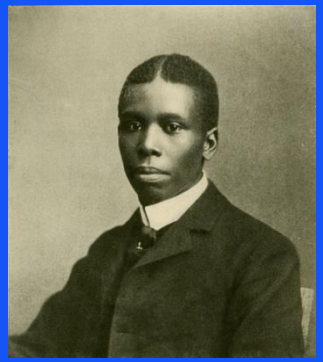
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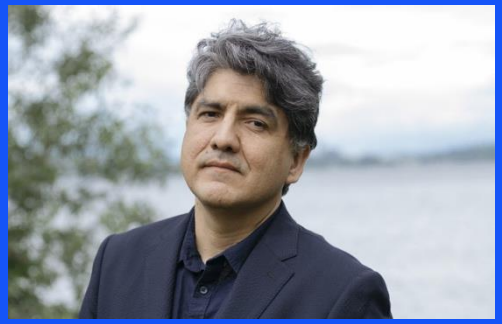
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Read the Right Books–Understand Race is at the Center of Equity Work



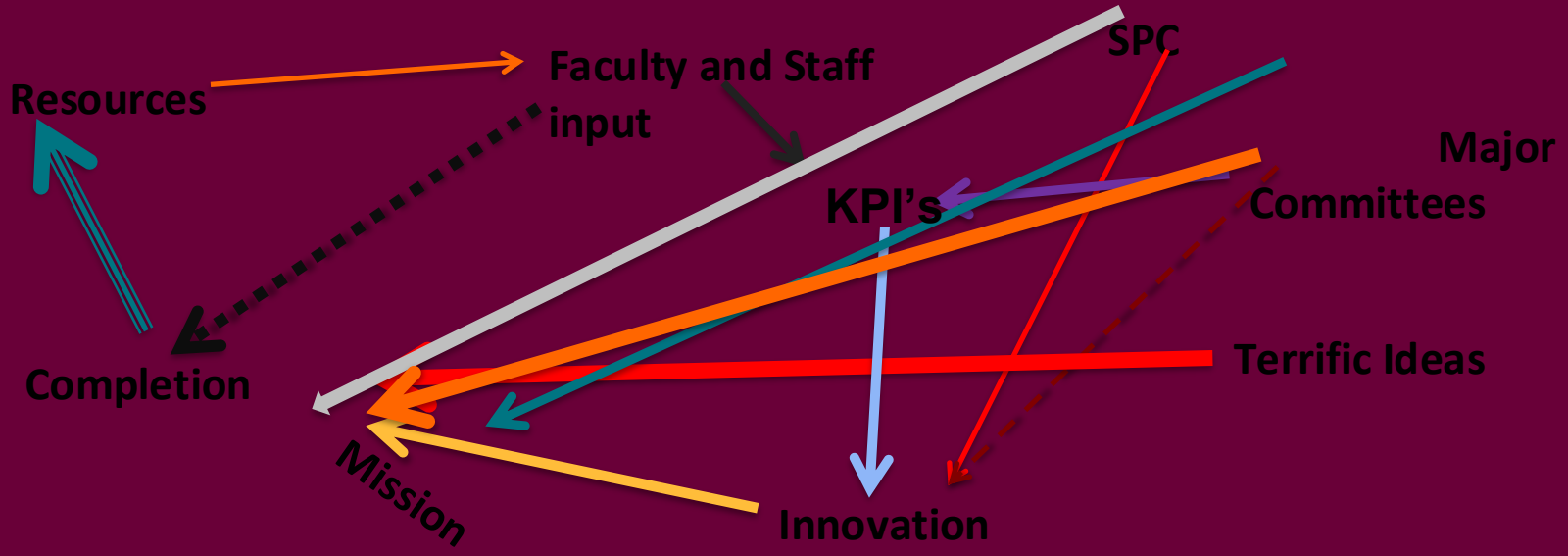








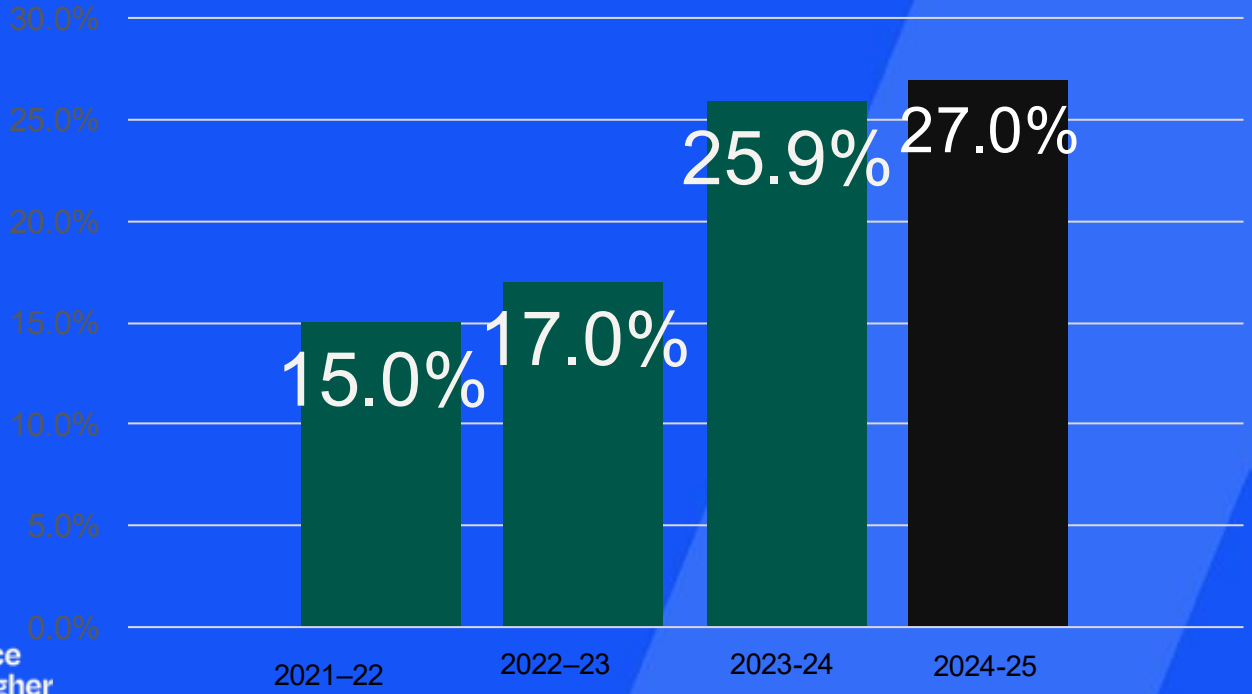
Strategic Planning



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Completion

3-year graduation rate

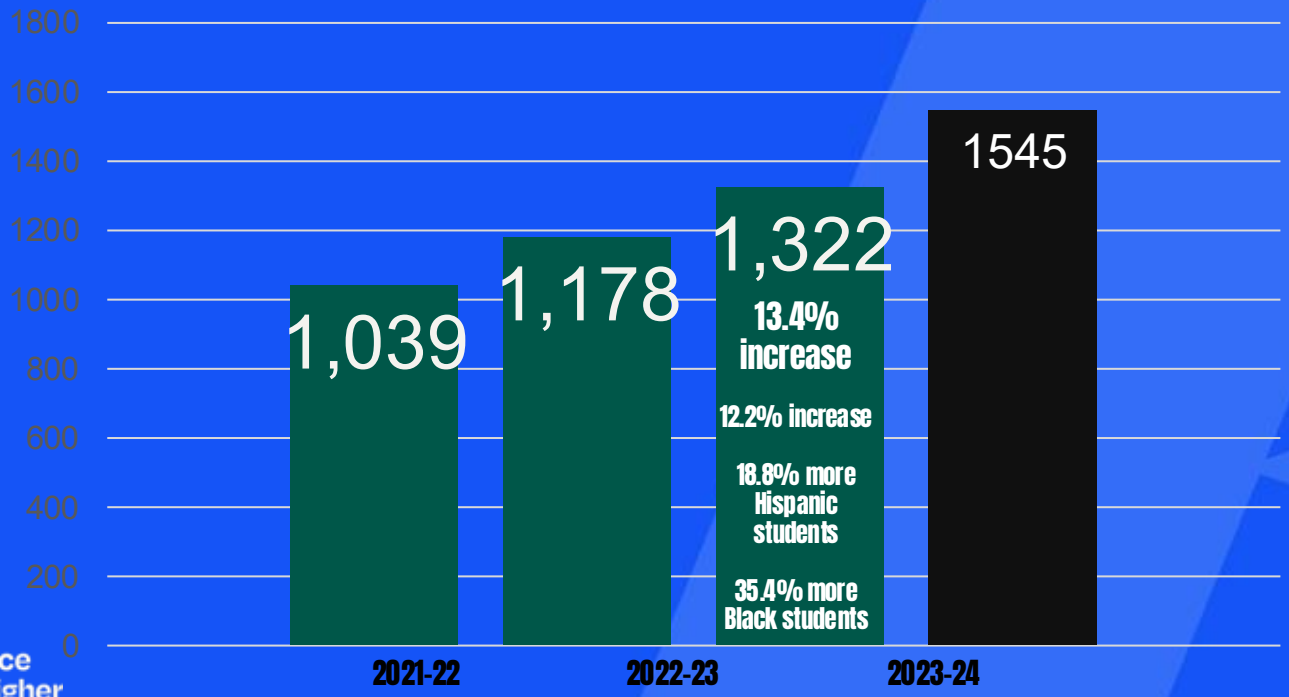


*24-25 grad rate still in progress.

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Completion

Year-over-year



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Who are Your Allies

- Non-profits
  - Hardest part of college should be in the classroom, not outside of it
- Political leaders
  - Higher ed requires a reimagination, not a tearing down
- Cultural leaders with capital
  - Who can you get to help you in the community reach goals of equitable student success
- Narratives
  - Credentials of value are necessary, but the premise some use for them are not genuine–that focus on arts and humanities, race and gender is why degrees are expensive
- You have to be in the community
- Faculty and staff need to be on board

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Thank you!
Questions?

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