



2019 SBCTC SYSTEM VISION STATEMENT

September 25, 2019

On June 27, 2019, the governor-appointed Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges unanimously approved the following vision statement:

“Leading with racial equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.”

The vision statement is meant to inspire us, to challenge us, and to capture the heart of our mission so well that we are restless to improve. It also answers a fundamental question: What do we hope to achieve for our students and the world they create?

Statement of Intent

From 2006 to 2019: An Evolving Vision

Our college system’s last vision statement dates back to 2006, a time when our nation was on the brink of the Great Recession. The statement focused on raising the prosperity of individuals, communities and our economy. However, it was silent in recognizing that we can only achieve those goals by improving outcomes for our diverse student population.

This 2019 vision statement grew from months of data analysis and facilitated conversations among State Board members and with a system-wide Equity Vision Work Group. The work group was made up of representatives from the State Board, trustees, presidents, students, faculty and college diversity and equity officers. Also participating on the work group were State Board staff who serve on the agency’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

This document records the thought process behind the wording of the 2019 vision statement so the intent remains clear as leaders change and colleges create local plans to support the state-wide vision.

Words Matter: A Phrase-by-Phrase Analysis of This Vision Statement

Leading with racial equity...

This vision statement immediately focuses on racial equity, which raises an important question: Why start with race? The answer: To provide an excellent education for all our students, we must remove the institutional barriers that weigh down students of color, who make up 45 percent of our student population.

SBCTC research shows students of color are less likely to be retained through completion. This is not because of a lack of talent, ambition or work ethic on the part of students, but because of racist and discriminatory practices that have funneled away opportunity and income over generations.

Throughout our history, institutional racism blocked people of color from getting well-paying jobs, buying houses and pursuing education. Families of color have been less able to save, become economically stable, and accumulate wealth to pass onto future generations. Students of color are living with disadvantages that are deeply rooted in discriminatory practices, many intentional and others created through privilege or unconscious bias.

Any system produces what it is designed to produce. Our community and technical colleges are producing white graduates at a higher rate than graduates of color. The answer lies not in “fixing” students, but changing our institutions to better serve students of color.

While history may have created inequalities in systems long before we were born, we are all part of the system now and it’s our job to change it.

The destiny of our students is linked. The strategies that produce racial equity for students of color also work for other students, creating an invigorated campus community and better educational outcomes overall.

“Leading with race is very intentional in this statement. Other things will follow, but if we don’t start here, everything else will be watered down.” — Work group member

“Many of us were raised not to see race, but when we do that, we actually do more harm to students of color.” — Work group member

...our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives...

“Potential” means several things: students’ earning potential, potential to participate in communities and our nation’s democracy, and potential to see their own vast capabilities. This phrase also recognizes that our colleges transform lives with students, family members, community members, and employers alike.

...within a culture of belonging...

Students thrive where they feel they belong. This section challenges colleges to create a culture where all students and educators feel welcomed, valued and acknowledged. Colleges should hire more employees of color so students see themselves reflected in those around them. Staff of all races should understand racial equity and translate it into effective practice.

“We need to change the culture of our organizations, so our responsibility is beyond shedding light on the students and instead look at their entire experience, like an ecosystem.” — Work group member

...that advances racial, social and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.

This final phrase answers one of the work group’s biggest questions: To what end are we helping students achieve their maximum potential? Certainly, it’s to elevate students, communities and our economy, but it’s also to turn all students into standard-bearers for racial, social and economic justice within their own diverse communities, leading the way for others.

“We aspire to create not just a skilled nurse, but a socially just and socially responsible nurse.” — Work group member