ON-CAMPUS ADVOCACY STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS AND STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

On-campus advocacy is essential for addressing issues of racial equity and inclusion within higher education institutions. Students and student organizations play a pivotal role in driving change, raising awareness, and fostering an inclusive campus environment. Effective advocacy requires strategic planning, collaboration, and engagement with multiple stakeholders. This document outlines key strategies for students and organizations to effectively advocate for racial equity on campus, along with actionable steps and references to support these initiatives.

1. Build Coalitions and Collaborate

Creating coalitions among various student organizations amplifies voices and increases the effectiveness of advocacy efforts. Collaborative efforts allow students to unite diverse perspectives and resources to address shared goals related to racial equity.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

➤ **Host Coalition-Building Events:** Organize events where representatives from different student groups, including allied organizations, can meet, share experiences, and discuss common goals.

➤ **Create Joint Action Plans:** Collaboratively develop strategies to tackle racial equity issues, setting clear objectives and responsibilities.

➤ **Celebrate Diversity:** Host multicultural events that highlight different backgrounds, fostering mutual respect and understanding among student groups.

➤ **Build Coalitions Across Campuses:** When appropriate, establish connections with student organizations at regional campuses, university

systems, and across the state to broaden advocacy efforts.

2. Identify Allies and Champions Inside and Outside the Campus

Building relationships with allies and champions—both within the campus community and beyond—can enhance the effectiveness of advocacy efforts. These individuals can provide support, resources, and amplify the message of equity initiatives.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

➤ **Network with Faculty and Staff:** Identify faculty members, staff, and administrators who are supportive of racial equity efforts and enlist their help in advocating for change.

➤ **Connect with Alumni:** Engage alumni who are passionate about racial equity to leverage their experiences and networks in supporting current advocacy initiatives.

➤ **Engage Community Leaders:** Build partnerships with local community leaders and organizations that focus on racial equity and social justice to strengthen advocacy efforts.

3. Engage in Dialogue with University Administration

Open and honest dialogue with university administrators is critical for advocating for change. Students should feel empowered to voice their concerns and propose solutions regarding racial equity issues on campus. For advocacy efforts to be sustained, there needs to be a strong institutional commitment to diversity and equity. Students can also push for university policies that

prioritize these values in hiring, curriculum development, and campus culture.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

➤ **Prepare for Meetings:** Develop an agenda with specific points of discussion, including current data and statistics illustrating the need for change.

➤ **Create a Student Advisory Board:** Propose the establishment of a board where students can provide ongoing input to administration on matters of racial equity.

➤ **Request Transparency:** Advocate for the university to publicly share data regarding enrollment, retention, and graduation rates by race and ethnicity, fostering accountability.

➤ **Request Regular Diversity Reports:** Advocate for the university to publish regular reports on diversity and equity efforts, including data on faculty diversity and student demographics.

➤ **Push for Inclusive Curriculum:** Work with faculty to integrate diverse perspectives and materials into the curriculum across all disciplines.

➤ **Establish Diversity Councils:** Propose the formation of councils that include student representatives to oversee and advise on diversity initiatives.

4. Clearly Identify Advocacy Asks and Gather Buy-In from Other Students

A crucial step in effective advocacy is clearly defining what changes or actions are being requested from the administration or other stakeholders. This clarity helps to mobilize support among the student body.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

➤ **Draft Clear Proposals:** Outline specific advocacy asks, such as policy changes, funding requests, or new programs, in a concise manner.

➤ **Host Information Sessions:** Organize sessions to explain the advocacy asks to the student body, detailing the rationale and expected outcomes.

➤ **Gather Support:** Use petitions, surveys, or informal discussions to gauge interest and gather signatures from students who support the advocacy efforts.

➤ **Create a Communication Strategy:** Use social media, emails, and flyers to inform students about the advocacy asks and how they can get involved.

5. Utilize Social Media and Other Media for Awareness Campaigns

Social media platforms are powerful tools for raising awareness about racial equity issues on campus. Students can leverage these platforms to engage peers, share resources, and amplify their messages. Additionally, engaging traditional media, such as the student newspaper and local news outlets, can further enhance the visibility of advocacy efforts. Similarly, petitions and campaigns can be effective tools for enacting policy changes related to racial equity. Students can mobilize their peers to support specific initiatives or changes in university policies.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

➤ **Identify Key Issues:** Research and identify specific policies that disproportionately affect students of color and develop proposals for change.

➤ **Launch Hashtag Campaigns:** Create a unique hashtag that encapsulates the advocacy issue and encourage students to share their stories and experiences.

➤ **Use Visual Content:** Develop infographics and videos that present statistics and personal narratives related to racial equity, making the information accessible and engaging.

➤ **Host Virtual Events:** Organize webinars or live discussions featuring activists, scholars, or community leaders to educate students on racial equity issues.

➤ **Engage Traditional Media:** Write op-eds or articles for the student newspaper or local media outlets to inform the wider community about racial equity issues and the efforts being made on campus. This can help garner additional support and awareness.

➤ **Draft Clear Petitions:** Ensure that petitions are well-written, clearly articulating the desired changes and the rationale behind them.

➤ **Leverage Student Power:** Organize signature drives in high-traffic areas on campus to gain visibility and show widespread support for the initiative.

6. Organize Educational Workshops and Events

Hosting educational workshops and events can help raise awareness and provide students with tools to advocate effectively for racial equity. These initiatives can foster dialogue and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

- ➤ **Develop Curriculum:** Create workshops that include topics discussing student experiences on campus such as implicit bias, microaggressions, and intersectionality, tailored to the student body's needs.

- ➤ **Invite Diverse Speakers:** Bring in speakers from various backgrounds to share their experiences and provide perspectives on the importance of racial equity in institutions of higher education.

- ➤ **Evaluate Impact:** After events, gather feedback from attendees to assess effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

8. Establish Support Systems for Affected Students

Creating support systems for students affected by racial inequities is essential. These systems can provide resources, counseling, and advocacy support to help navigate challenges related to race and identity.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

- ➤ **Advocate for Enhanced Mental Health Services:** Call on counseling centers to ensure that staff are trained to handle mental health issues specifically related to race, racism, discrimination, and cultural identity.

- ➤ **Create Safe Spaces:** Designate areas on campus where students can gather to share experiences and discuss issues related to racial equity in a supportive environment.

- ➤ **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship initiatives that connect students from underrepresented backgrounds with faculty or staff who can provide guidance and support.

10. Ensure Preservation of Institutional Knowledge

To sustain advocacy efforts, it is vital to preserve institutional knowledge and ensure that incoming student leaders are equipped with the insights, strategies, and momentum built by their predecessors.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

- ➤ **Create Documentation:** Develop comprehensive guides outlining past advocacy efforts, key contacts, and successful strategies to share with new leaders.

- ➤ **Conduct Leadership Transition Workshops:** Organize workshops where outgoing leaders can share their experiences, insights, and strategies with incoming leaders.

- ➤ **Maintain an Archive:** Establish an archive of relevant documents, meeting minutes, and advocacy materials that incoming student leaders can reference.

11. Ensure Preservation of Funding for Equity Initiatives

Securing and maintaining funding for initiatives aimed at promoting racial equity is crucial for the sustainability of advocacy efforts. Students should actively seek to protect and expand financial resources dedicated to equity programs on campus.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

- ➤ **Advocate for Budget Allocations:** Engage with university administration and student government to advocate for dedicated budget lines for racial equity initiatives and programs.

- ➤ **Advocate for Additional Funding Sources:** Advocate for the university to identify and create additional sources of funding, such as grants, targeted donor contributions for racial equity initiatives and programs.

- ➤ **Develop Funding Proposals:** Collaborate with student organizations to draft proposals that outline the need for funding, the intended use of resources, and the expected outcomes.

12. Seek Support from Local, State, and National Organizations

Engaging with local, state, and national organizations can provide additional resources, expertise, and support for advocacy efforts on campus. These organizations often have established networks and knowledge that can bolster student initiatives.

ACTIONABLE STEPS:

- ➤ **Research Relevant Organizations:** Identify organizations focused on racial equity, social justice, or education advocacy at various levels.

- ➤ **Request Collaboration:** Reach out to these organizations to explore opportunities for collaboration, workshops, or resources that can enhance advocacy efforts.

- ➤ **Participate in Broader Campaigns:** Join forces with local and national initiatives to amplify the impact of advocacy work and foster a sense of solidarity among various movements.

Conclusion

On-campus advocacy is a crucial element of promoting racial equity in higher education. By implementing these strategies, students and student organizations can work collaboratively to create a more inclusive and equitable campus environment. Engaging in dialogue, building coalitions, clearly identifying advocacy asks, utilizing social media and other media, ensuring the preservation of institutional knowledge and funding, identifying allies and champions, seeking support from external organizations, and advocating for sustained funding will enhance their efforts and foster meaningful change within their institutions.

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