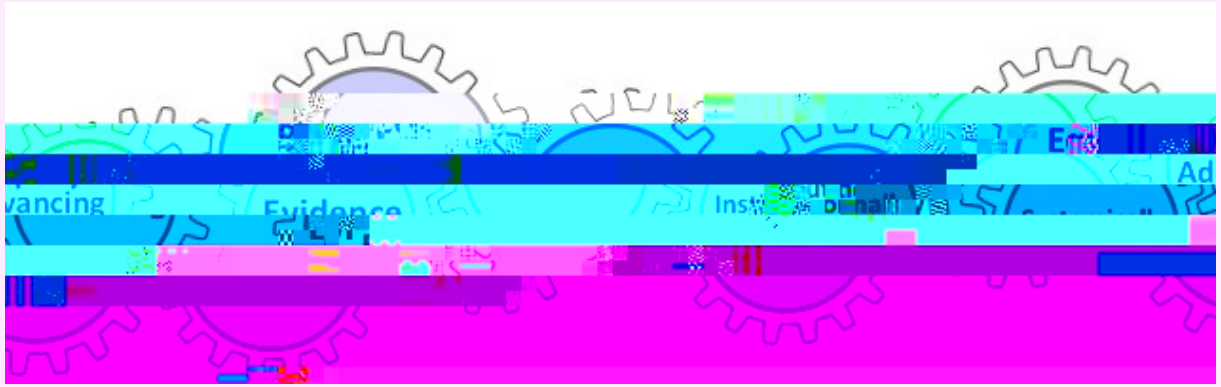
Best & Promising Practices for Equity in Higher Education

Resources

- **Laying the Groundwork: Concepts and Activities for Racial Equity Work.** Center for Urban Education, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, 2020.
- **Step Up & Lead for Equity: What Higher Education Can Do to Reverse Our Deepening Divides.** Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Washington, DC, 2016.
- **Structural Equity: Big-Picture Thinking & Partnerships That Improve Community College Student Outcomes**. The Aspen Institute, College Excellence Program, Aspen, CO, 2016.
- **Online Learning during COVID-19: 8 Ways Universities Can Improve Equity and Access.**
- **Anti-Racism in Higher Education: A Model for Change**. Race and Pedagogy Journal, vol. 4, no. 3

Concept of “Equity-mindedness”

- Equity-mindedness is a **“cognitive frame”** or mental map of attitudes and beliefs.
- Reflects an awareness of the sociohistorical context of exclusionary practices in higher education and **frames racial inequity as a dysfunction of higher education’s policies and practices**.
- Developing equity-mindedness requires **shifting beyond “diversity-mindedness”** and **“deficit-mindedness”.**



Racial Equity Imperative

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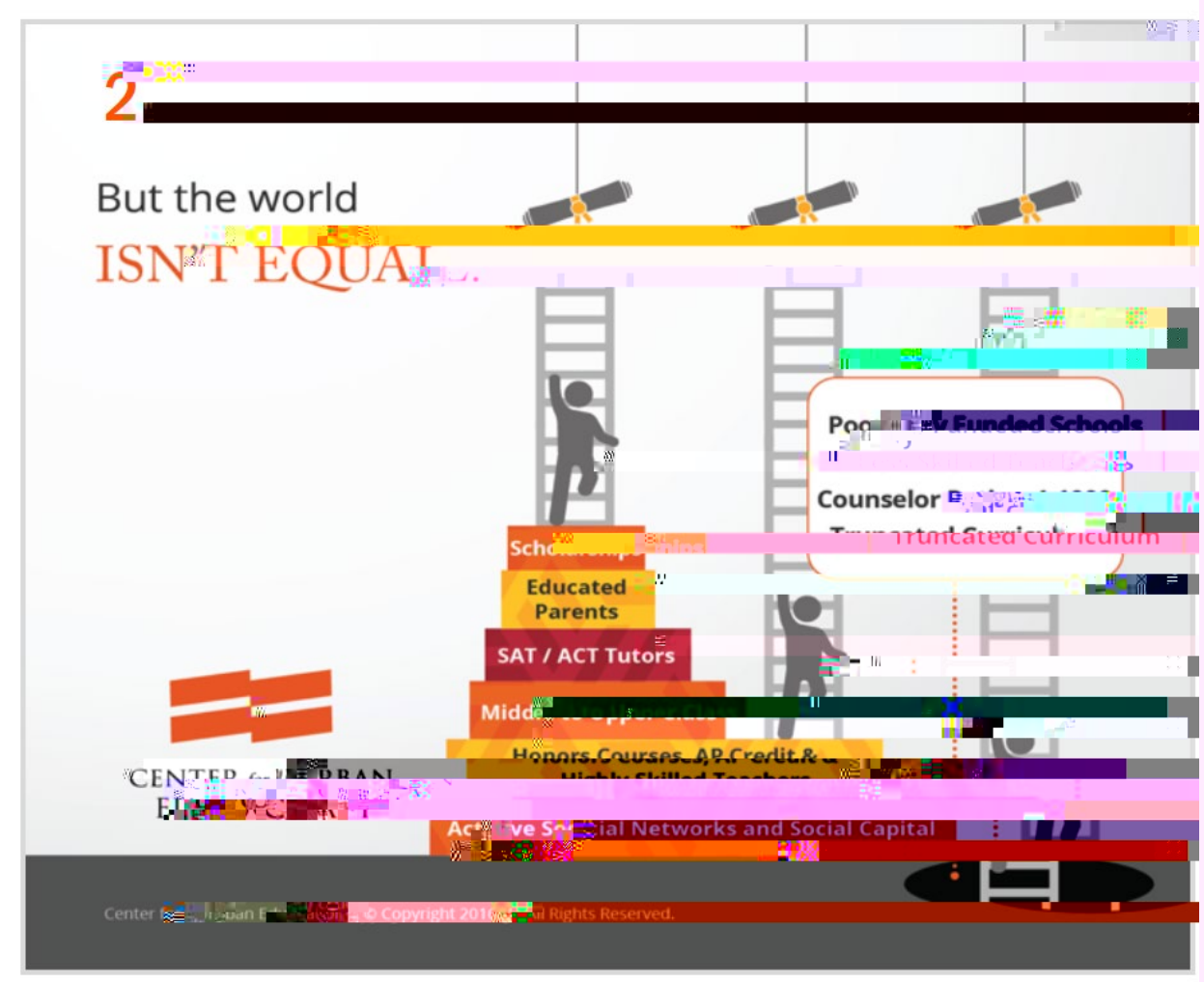

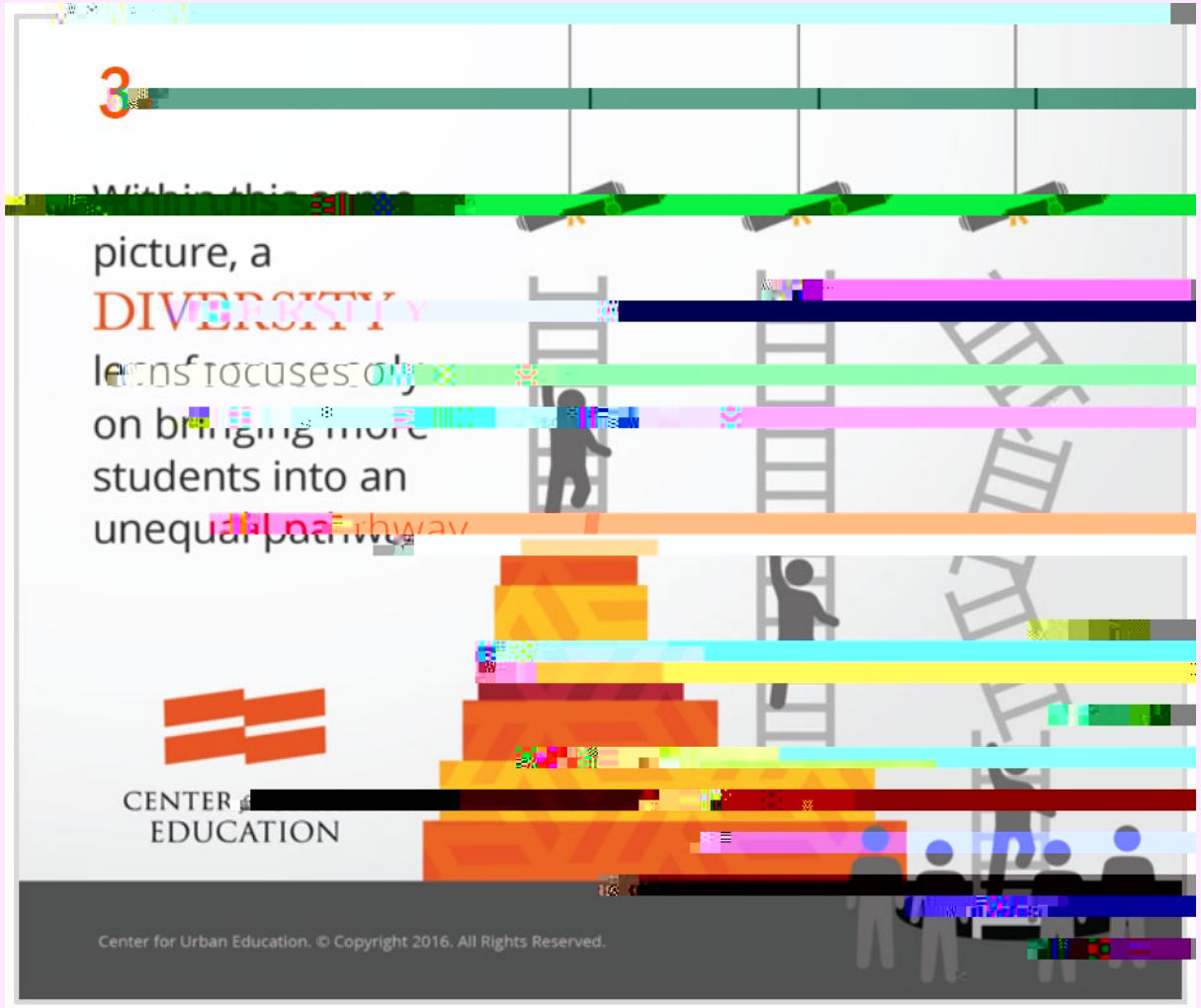

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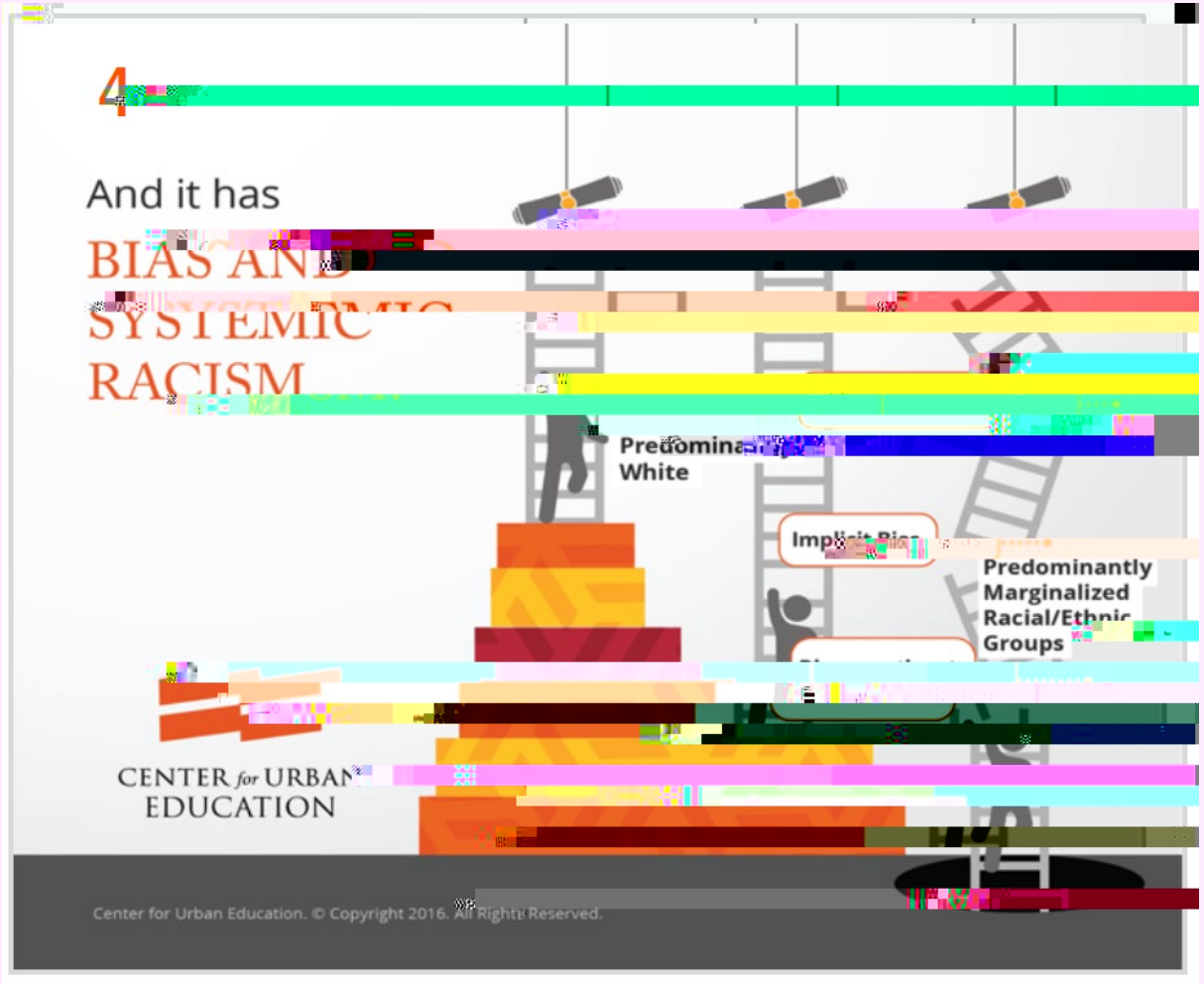
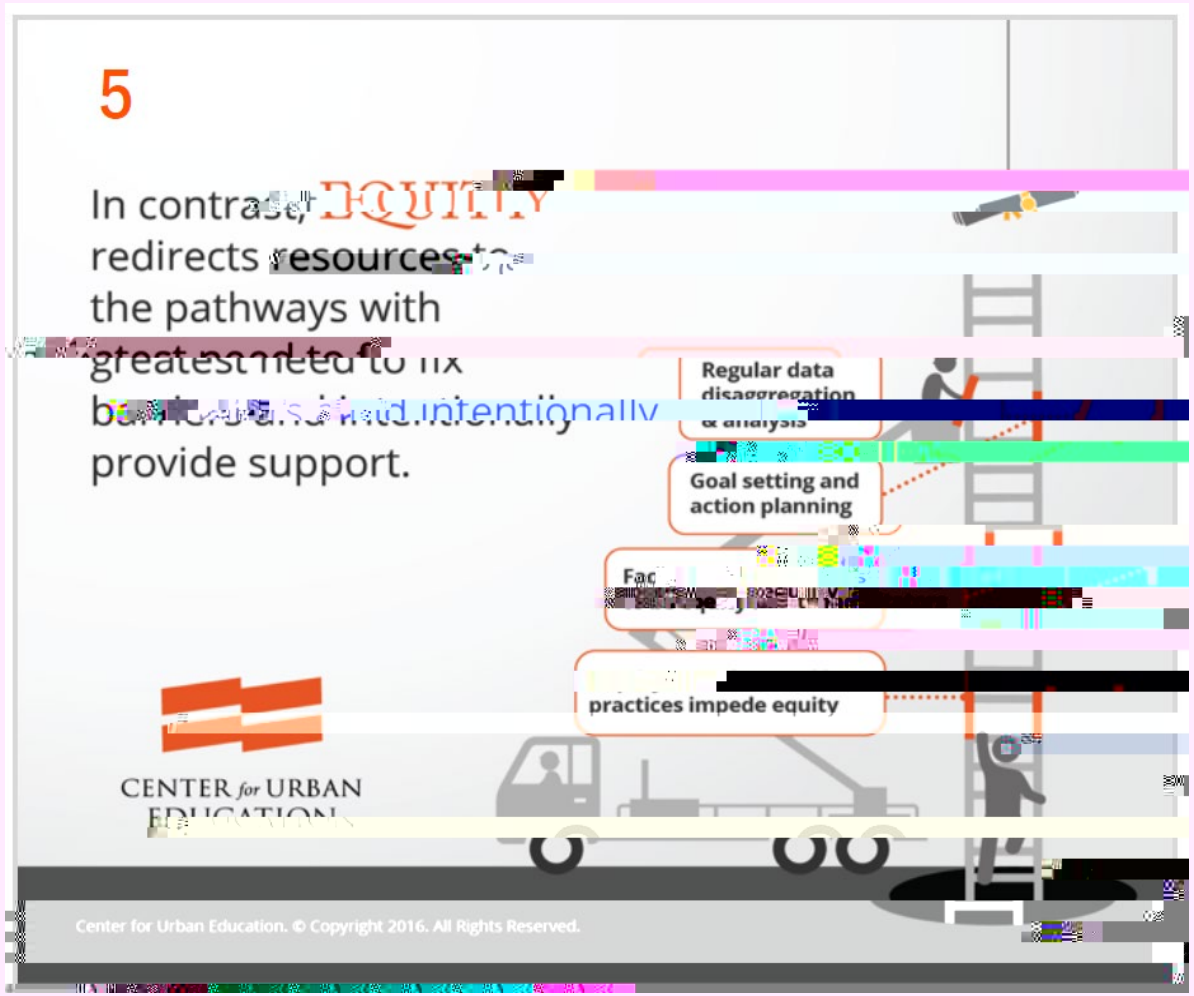




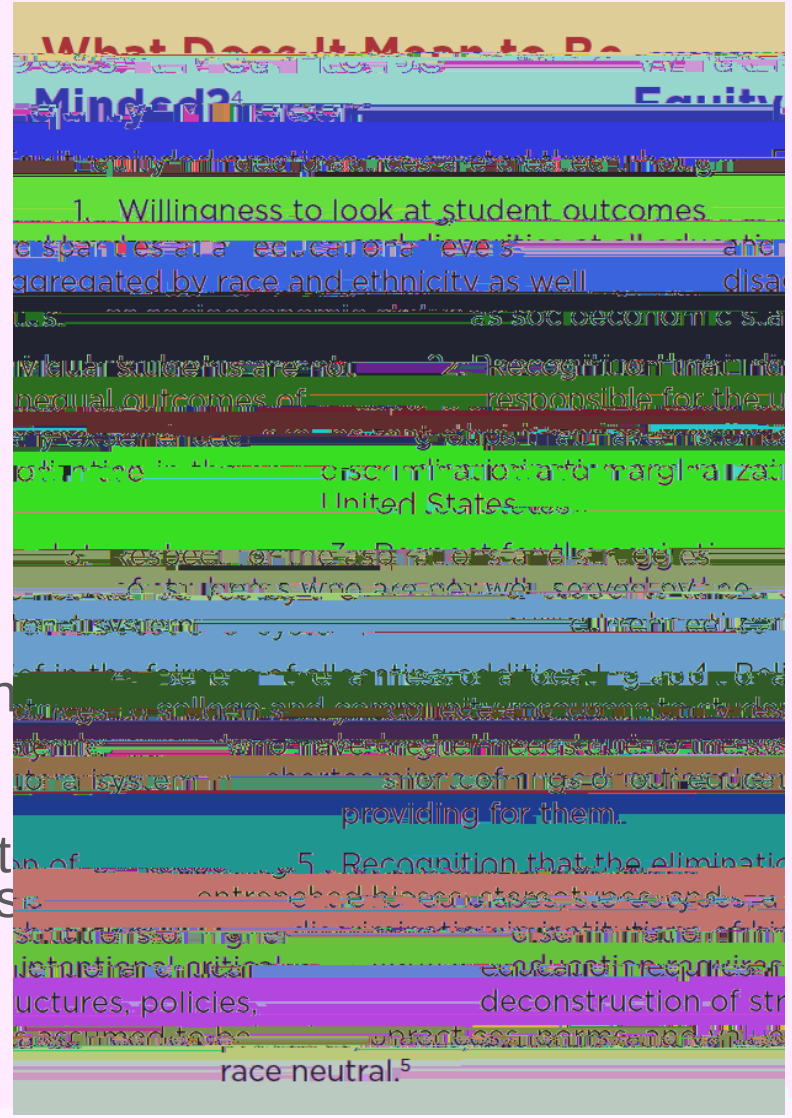
Step Up and Lead for Equity: What Higher Education Can Do to Reverse Our Deepening Divides

- **Equality** is about sameness; it focuses on making sure everyone gets the same thing.
- **Equity** is about fairness; it ensures

Step Up and Lead for Equity: What Higher Education Can Do to Reverse Our Deepening Divides

Does Your Institution Do the Following?

1. Know who your students are and will be.
2. Have frank, hard dialogues about the **climate for underserved students** with a goal of effecting a paradigm shift in language and actions.
3. Invest in **culturally relevant practices** that lead to success of underserved students and of all students.
4. Set and monitor **equity-minded goals**—and allocate aligned resources to achieve them.
5. Develop and actively pursue a **clear vision and goals** for achieving the high-quality learning necessary for careers and citizenship, and therefore essential for a bachelor's degree.
6. Expect and prepare all students to produce culminating or **Signature Work** at the associate (or sophomore) and baccalaureate levels to show their achievement of Essential Learning Outcomes.



Structural Equity: Big-Picture Thinking & Partnerships that Improve Community College Student Outcomes

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Strategy 1: Think Big Picture to Redefine Student Success and Set Equity Goals

- Understand **who your students are** and

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Strategy 2: Work Externally to Change the Student Experience,

- Identify vital external partners
- Devise strategies that speak to both partners' needs and goals
- Establish **common metrics** for progress and success
- Create structures for communication about **curriculum alignment and skills expectations**
- Establish conditions in which all partners are **accountable** for success

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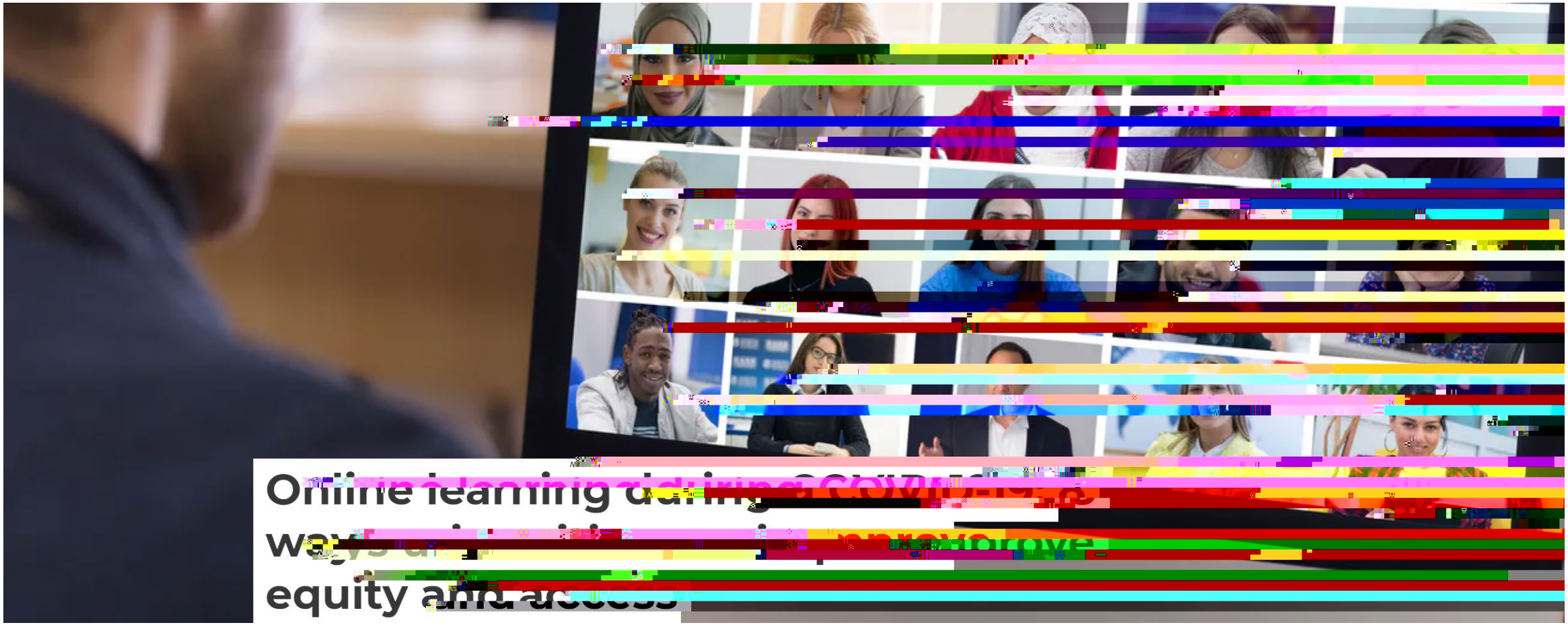
Strategy 3: Work Internally to Build Urgency and Commitment to Equity Goals

- Create systems for regularly analyzing and discussing data
- Celebrate wins to build success upon success
- Continue to evaluate success and revise goals and strategies accordingly



Challenges with Online Learning

- Lack of bandwidth and/or equipment
- Unstable housing or homelessness
- Lack of technological skills and digital literacy
- Language and cultural barriers
- Personalized accommodation and support

Online Learning during COVID-19: 8 Ways Universities Can Improve Equity and Access

1. **Create accessible materials**
   - Share documents and materials that are compatible with assistive technologies; provide descriptions in hyperlinks and images for students with **visual impairments** using screen readers; format text in **easily readable colors and fonts**; provide course content materials in **multiple formats**.

2. **Choose adequate digital technologies**
   - Choose tools that include accessibility features, such as text-to-speech, high-contrast themes, enlarged cursors, **closed-captioning**, keyboard shortcuts and alternative text.

3. **Record lectures, and caption videos and audio content**

4. **Adopt inclusive culturally responsive teaching**
   - Instill equity as a value in designing learning experiences; **avoid one-size-fits-all** instructional designs; be aware of the **risks of a "color blind"** approach as claiming not to see race may mean ignoring racism or discrimination; design courses to activate students' **cultural capital.**

Online Learning during COVID-19: 8 Ways Universities Can Improve Equity and Access

5. **Adopt a flexible approach to student participation**
   - Discontinue traditional 3-hour lectures; give priority to project-based assignments to promote asynchronous participation; provide additional time for completing exams.
6. **Ensure financial support and equipment**
7. **Understand student needs**
   - Host panels with student organizations to learn about their new reality, their needs and what they want faculty to know; administer ongoing surveys to monitor students' situations
8. **Address systemic racism**
   - Staff noted that there is more work to be done in providing

Anti-Racism in Higher Education

- Presents a model for change that **distributes leadership and institutional power** across racial lines
- Diversity initiatives have failed to educate about the reality and prevalence of white **dominance** and supremacy on campuses
  - The focus has been on merely changing individuals rather than dismantling structural inequalities that perpetuate systemic racism
- This removes **blame of academic failure** from the education system and places it on the individual and/or subgroup.

Anti-Racism in Higher Education

Sharing Power

- Increasing the percentage of people of color holding leadership positions
- Current leadership must very intentionally create an ecosystem in which emerging leaders' identities are recognized and celebrated

Best & Promising Practices for Equity in Higher Education

Group Discussion

Discussion Questions

1. Which of these equity best and promising practices resonate most strongly with you? And why?

2. How can you integrate these practices in the development of your work group's recommendations?