INPUT
Please note: This handbook has been updated based on lessons learned from the 1st Wave pilot cohort.

NOTE: While some general awareness-raising guidance on policy and law is provided, and we hope you find it helpful, nothing in this handbook or the SEA Change program constitutes legal advice to any institution. Institutions should consult their own legal counsel for legal advice specific to their facts and circumstances. This is noted in some places but applies throughout.

We rely on, and need, your feedback about this document. Please send comments to seachange@aaas.org

All self-assessment materials are available at:
# INSTITUTIONAL BRONZE AWARD HANDBOOK

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OVERVIEW

This handbook is meant to provide an overview of SEA Change and its awards. We highly recommend referring back to it as you complete the self-assessment and action plan. The self-assessment process may look overwhelming; however, it is designed so that an institution need not duplicate efforts. Doing the work over an extended period of time, rather than trying to complete it in a short time period, is more likely to be manageable and result in a positive outcome. The handbook includes an overview of the SEA Change process and what has informed its development; guidance on the self-assessment process; exclusions from the SEA Change program of certain internal legal advice and legal evaluation areas; restrictions and some considerations for SEA Change applicants about confidential information; insight into the suggested “workflow” to include in applications; guidance on how to use and present quantitative data; and the application review process.

The handbook is intended to provide foundational knowledge about the SEA Change program and the application process. We expect that the handbook will illicit as many questions as it answers. The application process is designed to include multiple opportunities for applicants to consult with SEA Change staff, SEA Change awardees, and fellow applicants.

THE PROBLEM

The science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medical (STEM) communities have not fully welcomed and incorporated the diversity of talent available in our larger population of individuals who would be interested and have promise to succeed in STEM. The historical reasons for this are varied but include societal stereotyping of roles for women and people of color, and societal discrimination based on those stereotypes, leading to limited access to educational pathways, careers, and opportunity in STEM. This has undermined its excellence. Though there has been improvement over the past several decades, structural barriers persist in society and in STEM fields, which have a climate and culture that can be exclusionary.

For decades our educational institutions have relied on “intervention programs” to address issues of broadening participation in STEM. Programs have often focused on “fixing the students or faculty” and have been developed outside of the regular structures of the institution and its departments, supported by external grants and overly dependent on the effort and advocacy of STEM professionals from groups affected by exclusion.

SEA Change proposes to support a movement toward institutional and departmental transformation, beyond small-scale interventions, to focus institutions and their departments on identifying the systems, policies, processes, programs, and practices that perpetuate exclusion and create barriers to diversity and inclusion. SEA Change encourages and recognizes institutions and departments for finding and removing barriers “baked into the system” of education and research, and replacing them with systems providing opportunities for advisement, mentoring, research, and advancement via teaching practices, curriculum and inclusive conduct in STEM to promote the full participation of talent from all groups within society. The AAAS SEA Change Bronze application process addressed in this handbook concerns institutional level SEA Change self-assessments, action plans, and awards. We anticipate complementary processes at the departmental level, administered by collaborating disciplinary societies.
FIXING THE SYSTEM

Advancing true diversity, equity, and inclusion requires efforts towards systemic transformation necessary to ensure that, regardless of demographic and identity characteristics unrelated to capability and performance in STEM, all talented individuals can be recruited, retained, and advanced in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine. A commitment to adopt and implement inclusive policies and systems that are driven by institutional mission while also satisfying legal standards has the potential to lead to a range of benefits for an institution over time, including (but not limited to):

- Enhancing the quality of learning at, and work produced by, the institution
- Improving student and faculty progression along STEM pathways
- Removing structural and systemic barriers impeding individuals who have been the target of bias, marginalization, and exclusion which impedes advancement of quality research and education
- Enhancing teaching methods across the institution that have been demonstrated to be more effective for and inclusive of all students
- Increasing awareness of bias, marginalization, and inequity among all populations in the institution, creating a community which is attractive to potential students, new faculty and staff, and prospective employers of the institution’s degree-holders
- Attracting, engaging, retaining, and supporting the success of all talented individuals
- Signaling commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as important values, thus positively affecting reputation of the institution for those considering support and/or affiliation
- Promoting systematic, institutional assessment of factors related to legal compliance, as one aspect—not the driver—of effective and sustainable policies and practices
- Demonstrating an institutional environment that is striving to become healthy and supportive for all members of its community, thus promoting higher potential return on investment to donors and funders and maximizing contributions to society

STEM EQUITY ACHIEVEMENT – SEA CHANGE

SEA (STEM Equity Achievement) Change is a voluntary program that supports and recognizes institutions for actions that measurably—and progressively over time—advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in STEM. It is inspired by the history and accomplishments of the Athena SWAN gender equity initiative in the United Kingdom.

SEA Change, like Athena SWAN (U.K.), the Race Equality Charter (U.K.), and SAGE (Australia), uses the Equality Charters Process created by the Equality Challenge Unit (now part of Advance HE). This process has several key components:

- Voluntary commitment (institutional and departmental) to a set of principles supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Guided, evidence-based self-assessment exploring the entire institutional or departmental system;
  - Assessment of qualitative as well as quantitative data is a universal expectation;
- Award recognition structure (Bronze, Silver, or Gold) based on established criteria;
• Peer-review of self-assessment, action plans to advance the institution and its departments, and evidence of improvement; and
• Periodic self-assessment and review to monitor progress and action, leading to award renewal or progression of award level.

The Equality Charters Process promotes a simultaneous top-down, bottom-up approach necessary for systemic transformation. Institutional Awards set the foundation needed for advancement of individual departments. The advancement of multiple departments helps catalyze continuous improvement at the institutional level. (See Figure 1)

Each nation has its own challenges in higher education; as such, the Equality Charters Process is tailored for each country to fit those needs. In the United States, we are prioritizing self-assessment for diversity, equity, and inclusion with a focus on gender, race/ethnicity, and the intersection of these identities. As SEA Change continues to grow, we will begin to introduce other identities targeted by bias in STEM, such as disability status, identification with the LGBTQ+ community, socioeconomic status, and more.

SEA Change Institutional Awards will begin with a focus on faculty diversity-related systems, policies, procedures, and practices, along with a snapshot of the graduate and undergraduate student populations and key barriers. Over time, institutions will be expected to focus on a more thorough exploration of the student populations, as well as the postdoctoral and research staff communities.

Finally, U.S. institutions of higher education must advance diversity, equity, and inclusion while also navigating the federal and state legal landscape. These unique challenges have inspired AAAS to craft SEA Change with three distinct components (Figure 2).

**Institute**
The Institute will serve as the technical arm of the SEA Change initiative. We ask self-assessment teams to be evidence-based and thoughtful; thus, the Institute will feature a research repository (connected to partner resources as well as unique resources) that will help teams find the best available evidence. The Institute will also provide guidance on operational strategies and legal design parameters, offering a variety of resources, online and face-to-face trainings, from workshops to full courses.

Currently being developed – estimated full launch in 2020.
**Community**
The Community will include individuals from colleges and universities, funders, business and industry, disciplinary society partners, and other stakeholders committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. SEA Change will convene online and face-to-face meetings of the Community via the Institute as well as Awards events.

The Community will serve as a space to share information, research, and best practices, as well as build partnerships and collaborations. We hope to launch a digital engagement platform for the Community by 2021.

**Awards**
The SEA Change Awards are a recognition system where colleges and universities, as well as their schools and departments, are acknowledged for their work on evidence-based self-assessment, development of specific, measurable, realistic, relevant and time-limited (SMART) action plans, and, ultimately, true institutional reform to support STEM diversity, equity, and inclusion. Award renewal or progression every five years promotes continued improvement via evolving goals and reflects a firm commitment from the award holder.

The April 2019 Institutional Bronze Handbook 2.0 (this document) and Criteria & Guidelines reflect the lessons learned from the awards process for the 1st cohort of pilot institutions. The 2nd cohort will participate in 2019 – 2020, with anticipated announcement of the 2nd set of Bronze awardees at the AAAS annual meeting in 2020.

**SEA CHANGE INSTITUTIONAL AWARDS**
SEA Change Institutional Awards are used to recognize various stages of self-assessment and effective actions towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. They are a recognition system for the “top-down” component of systemic change. Institutional Awards are focused on STEM programs, but also involve institution-wide systems, policies, programs, practices, and processes. Self-assessment in Institutional Awards asks the team to take a “30,000-foot view” of the combined qualitative and quantitative information collected using the SEA Change guidelines. For example, after collecting details needed for a thorough self-assessment, the team then looks at the overall picture and how policies, culture, and climate impact everyone at the institution. Only armed with this information (or gaps in needed information) does the institution develop its action plan to address any gaps in information and need for barrier removal, setting goals and specific actions to make progress.
Successful progression will likely take many years even when an institution has already started the work of institutional transformation. Addressing structural and systemic inequities affecting different populations and groups across STEM disciplines requires long-term commitment; actions need time to be implemented and the attention, support, and funding of these efforts need to be sustained over a realistic period. While it will be possible to see short-term improvements and they are encouraged as part of the action plan, they alone are not enough. Improvements and institutional transformation take time, commitment, and persistence to achieve.

To encourage and persuade busy faculty, administrators, staff, and students to take ownership of actions and commit to true equity they need to perceive it as high priority and central to the institutional mission. They are likely to be involved in difficult—and at times, uncomfortable—conversations, and the efforts of everyone involved should be acknowledged. The distinct burden on people of color and women (emotionally, as well as in effort shared with others) should be particularly recognized.

All awards must be renewed within five years of the initial award date, or they expire. At the time of renewal, Institutions may request to renew their current level, or apply to progress to the next level (for an overview, see Figure 3). If an institution has been able to advance its work quickly, it may also choose to apply for the next level award before the five-year mark, although this will likely be uncommon due to the challenge of making systemic change.

**Bronze Criteria**

**Bronze** Awards recognize institutions for their efforts towards the systemic transformation necessary to ensure that, regardless of demographic and identity characteristics unrelated to ability and performance in STEM, all talented individuals can be recruited, retained, and advanced in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine. Institutional recognitions are based on commitment and action to assess and remove structural and systemic barriers to the inclusion of all individuals of talent, which enhances quality of learning and work and supports STEM excellence.

These efforts include:

- in-depth, data-rich self-assessment of institutional makeup (STEM faculty and students), policies, culture, and climate using evidence-based analytical methods, in a disaggregated format whenever possible, that allow insights into gender, race/ethnicity, and other factors that have typically been the targets of bias, as well as their intersectionality;
- Identifying “data gaps” or other research/assessment gaps in institutional knowledge and describing methods that will be used to collect missing information;
- Identifying significant issues and barriers related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and

### Equality Charters Process: award criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time stamp</th>
<th>Bronze</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Gold</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies key issues</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions in place to address key issues and carry the institution forward</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates impact of previous activity and expands action plan to continue progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serves as a beacon in the sector and beyond</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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**Figure 3**
Developing a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-oriented) action plan with definitive steps to address these issues.

Applications will be evaluated by a review panel, which will make recommendations and offer findings for consideration by AAAS as it makes final award decisions or provides feedback to applicants concerning supplementary information needed for action on their applications.

Each institution entering the award process will do so while considering its own mission, conditions, challenges, and opportunities and thus the actions an institution proposes to undertake should be appropriate for its unique context. That means different Bronze-level institutions are not likely to be alike in gaps to address or best responsive actions. In addition, no two institutions are likely to be at the same level in progressing towards systemic change; but any institution that does a thorough self-assessment and identifies its own responsive SMART action plan can potentially receive a Bronze award.

For example, one institution may be based in a metropolitan area with a significant Hispanic population, where race and ethnicity have been discussed for some time, albeit without significant progress having been made or attention to the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity. The institution may have data identifying differences in outcome for recruitment, selection, promotion, and degree attainment and target actions in those areas that focus on addressing these issues.

Another institution may be based in a less diverse area with a fairly homogenous population of well-represented groups and a very limited history of discussing issues of ethnicity, race, or gender. The institution may decide to prioritize work on tackling the isolation felt by individuals from small population groups who are the targets of implicit and explicit bias, and resistance within the community to change, by seeking to put in place research-based strategies for raising awareness of inequity and isolation and building an inclusive community within the institution.

**NOTE:** Specific details about the Bronze criteria and application requirements are available in a separate document—AAAS SEA Change Institutional Bronze Criteria & Guidelines.

**Renewed Bronze** awards recognize the same thorough, guided self-assessment as first-time applications, but applicants should report progress and completion of items in the initial SMART action plan, as well as additional goals based on evolving circumstances. The institution should have a formal governance and process management system in place to monitor and support progress, be making demonstrable progress, and be developing new actions to address further issues, but there may be little demonstrable impact yet on diversity, equity, and inclusion within the institution because that may take additional time even after support systems are established. We expect intersectionality to be considered increasingly over the initial 5-year period and beyond, a demonstration of measurable actions having been put in place from prior action plans, and action plans becoming more complex as the institution progresses in its equity work.

**Silver Criteria**
Progression to a **Silver** award recognizes an institution for demonstrating measurable impact of actions taken, as well as completing all requirements for the Bronze and setting even higher goals. At least two departments within the
institution must have received Bronze Departmental Awards before an institution is eligible for a Silver institutional award. **Renewed Silver** awards recognize continuing impact and improvement.

**Gold Criteria**
Progression to a Gold award recognizes institutions for doing all the work of Bronze and Silver, demonstrating major transformation in structures and systems and associated advances in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and barrier removal, while also creating and disseminating lessons learned and otherwise actively helping other groups in academia with their efforts. These awardees are active champions of diversity, inclusion, and equity, and serve as innovators and models for others. In addition, an institution may only be eligible for a Gold award after two or more departments have received Gold Departmental Awards. Achieving a Gold Institutional Award will take time!

**EARLY TERMINATION:**
SEA Change will soon include a process and criteria through which an award may be terminated early in exceptional circumstances (e.g., where an institution’s governing board or leadership expressly or by its sanctioned actions disavows its commitment—as contrasted with the actions or statements of an individual associated with the institution that do not reflect the institution’s position, or issues of institutional systems and practices that require improvement and are the focus of an institution’s action plan over a period of years).

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**SEA CHANGE PRINCIPLES**

Participating in the SEA Change self-assessment process is a commitment to the SEA Change Principles. These are included here so that institutions may recognize what their SEA Change commitment means.

STEM Equity Achievement (SEA) Change supports institutional transformation, with an initial focus on colleges and universities, enabling success in high quality education and research missions by ensuring that the full range of individual talent can be recruited, retained, and advanced in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine.

By joining SEA Change, an institution commits to equity and full participation of each individual across gender (including gender, gender identity, and gender expression), race, ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, familial history of higher education, and any other factor that is unrelated to ability and has been the target of bias and unequal treatment. Bias, marginalization, and exclusion have prevented the full engagement of a broad range of individuals that is needed to maximize creativity and quality, as well as the full engagement of the promise of available talent, in STEM education and careers.

1. **We believe colleges and universities cannot reach their full potential to contribute to all students and the larger society unless they can include, engage, and benefit from the talents of broadly diverse groups of students, faculty, and others in their communities.**

2. **We believe the role of higher education systems is to serve all who are interested, committed, and have promise; we aspire to provide an inclusive culture of learning and respect, overcoming stereotypes and addressing biases.**
3. We believe that advancing equity requires dedication and action from all levels of the organization, including supportive central and local governance and accountability structures and active leadership from those in senior roles; institutional leaders commit themselves to take action to inspire and foster commitment of others across the institution, accordingly.

4. We recognize the long-term commitment and important contributions of institutions whose historical missions are to serve specific populations of students historically excluded from academic opportunities available to others.

5. We acknowledge that all individuals have multiple individual identities, and we commit to considering the intersection of those identities whenever possible.

6. We also acknowledge that every individual experiences identity differently and is unique; membership in a group does not mean acceptance of the idea of homogeneity within that group. Heterogeneous groups reinforce the need to build structures that affirm the support of person-centered policies and reject society’s stereotyping and structural inequity.

7. We aspire to remove the additional structural and systemic barriers and obstacles that compound the challenges inherent in higher education and are statistically more likely to be faced by individuals from groups that are affected by inequity at major points of educational, professional, and career development and progression.

8. We aspire to shift institutional culture and climate, ensuring that regardless of demographic and identity characteristics unrelated to potential and performance in STEM, individuals are respected and enabled to be productive and to contribute to the advancement and application of knowledge.

9. We aspire to develop solutions to inequity that build upon organizational governance and accountability structures and systems at the central and local level, including metrics and evidence-based evaluation, standards, policies, processes, and roles and responsibilities transcending individuals employed at a particular time.

10. We aspire for solutions to inequity to involve collaboration of those who are targets of inequity and those who are not, knowing that the burden of change should not rest on individuals experiencing barriers that stem from those inequities. The cost of participation by those with identities targeted by bias should be recognized and addressed equitably.

11. We commit to embracing equity, diversity, and inclusion as central elements of excellence in academia, business, and industry; we recognize that high performance results from the inclusion of all committed individuals of promise, and that STEM excellence requires programs, policies, and practices that support a welcoming and professional climate and culture for inclusion of all.
12. We commit to addressing the current structural and systemic inequities affecting different populations and groups across STEM disciplines, particularly barriers that result in the absence or near-absence of diversity within student bodies and senior academic and professional roles, as well as in business and industry.

13. We commit to identifying and aspire to addressing both explicit and implicit biases that lead to exclusionary conduct and perpetuate structures and systems of inequity across our institution, and we understand that such conduct is a barrier to enhancing excellence.

14. We commit to building a community that is actively intolerant of exclusionary conduct and that establishes standards of excellence requiring both high quality work and professional conduct (which by definition is intolerant of exclusionary practices).

15. We commit to using organizational structures and systems, including related resource allocation, to support better design, evaluation, and continuous improvement of those structures and systems—as well as of transactional strategies (individual programs and projects) aimed at enhancing diversity and inclusion—to make the structures, systems, and strategies more effective and sustainable.

Note: The clause “inequities affecting or targeting some populations” is used across the principles to denote that often, even if certain groups are well-represented, they are still not being equitably served or fully included due to bias, stereotype, and marginalization.

OUR PLEDGE TO MEMBERS

AAAS & SEA Change will:
~ assist institutions in their efforts to conduct a thorough self-assessment by providing guidance, feedback on general ideas, and answering questions
~ set up a peer-review system to assess the scope and quality of efforts to address equity and inclusion, informing AAAS’ decision-making
~ provide feedback to the institution regarding its application, including suggestions for improvement
~ establish a reasonable data confidentiality protocol to be provided to and acknowledged by participating institutions

AAAS & SEA Change will NOT
~ rank institutions, or intentionally assist others in ranking institutions
~ intentionally collect individual data records
~ share institution-level data (unless the institution consents, the data are already public, or, in rare circumstance, if required by law or an authority)
~ read and comment on applications before they are submitted
~ give institutions legal advice (they should work with their own counsel)
GETTING STARTED

USE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

Leverage the work the institution is already doing. If faculty data are collected for the institution’s Affirmative Action plan, use those data in the SEA Change application. If the institution already conducts systematic assessments of exit interviews, climate surveys, course or program evaluations by students, review those analyses. Self-assessment teams do not need to start from scratch. However, they do need to document the workflow used to address each SEA Change criterion and provide a thoughtful action plan to address areas that warrant advancement, as determined in the self-assessment process.

Do not reinvent the wheel. SEA Change is intended to recognize efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion at your institution. If you already have processes and structures in place for gathering information, making change, or taking action: USE IT. If you are not sure if your institution has done any similar work, create an inventory through outreach to the faculty and administrators as a first step in self-assessment. Institutions with Institutional Research offices may find valuable assistance there.

- Check the appendices with data source suggestions and see if your institution is already participating in one or more of those initiatives. Use what you already have, or modify it as-needed, in order to assess your institution.
- SEA Change is purposefully aligned with the APLU Aspire Alliance IChange program for assessing faculty diversity. If you are an IChange institution, use the work you did in that self-assessment for your SEA Change application.
- Create inventories of existing data sources and diversity-, equity-, and inclusion-focused strategies by consulting with the task forces across your campus and determine if any are working on diversity, equity, or inclusion initiatives. If some of this work has already been done or is in progress, include it in your self-assessment.

GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA

The SEA Change Institutional Bronze Criteria & Guidelines are provided in a separate document. This serves as a scaffolding for self-assessment and guidance for the development of an action plan in response to the findings of the self-assessment.

Bronze award criteria are reflective of the “30,000-foot view” that the peer reviewers will be considering as they read your application. To meet those criteria, your self-assessment team will need to use the detailed self-assessment guidelines; however, most of the detailed information gathered for the self-assessment will be retained by the institution as part of its internal process and will not be disclosed to SEA Change. The application should summarize the findings of the assessment, tie conclusions to actions as appropriate, and provide a detailed action plan that will move the institution forward over the award period.

In other words: the reviewers want to see the institution demonstrate an understanding of the relevance, meaning, and impact of information they have gathered and assessed, as it relates to revealing and removing barriers to equity, diversity and inclusion—not a regurgitation of data.
Using STEM faculty mentoring as an example: the self-assessment team might choose to provide 1) a figure or two depicting the participants across all STEM faculty mentoring programs, disaggregated by gender x race/ethnicity; 2) an assessment of participation in these programs (both mentor and mentee) compared to the disaggregated STEM faculty profile of the institution; 3) identification of any faculty groups not being included in or benefiting from these programs or faculty groups with disproportionate mentoring responsibilities; and 4) action(s) in place to address why there may be inequitable participation across gender and/or race/ethnic groups for both mentees and mentors. In addition, if the self-assessment identified a specific mentoring program that had more success with diversity, equity, and inclusion, the application might provide a brief explanation of that fact. The institution should also either (based on its evaluation of the program) identify the reasons why the program has been particularly successful or outline what the institution plans to do to ascertain why the program is more effective — and how it may choose to scale up the program so that it can become a model for other STEM faculty mentoring programs.

REQUIREMENTS & FLEXIBILITY

Requirements

An “Institution” for the SEA Change Institutional Awards includes all colleges, departments, and programs that fall under the same Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) ID number. Full university “systems” cannot receive one SEA Change Award; rather, each institution within the system must prepare its own application.

Some Health Science Centers/Medical Schools may qualify as institutions. Recognizing that each institution is unique, some have a health science center (HSC) or medical school that is largely autonomous—or is a uniquely large and self-supporting component of an institution, constituting about half or more of the institution’s budget or research volume, having the use of substantial faculty practice plan revenues, and meeting the institution’s policy requirements but with the ability to set higher standards and create consistent, tailored processes. If such an HSC or medical school wishes to apply for an Institutional Award, SEA Change will consider that request. The structure of SEA Change will be evolving, iteratively, based on the needs of the higher education sector and lessons learned from our pilots.

STEM includes: agricultural sciences, chemistry, computer and information technology science, engineering, Earth sciences, life sciences, mathematical sciences, physics and astronomy, social, behavioral, and economic sciences, and STEM education & learning. It may also include medicine and the health sciences if the institution prefers. (To progress above the Bronze award level, an institution that excludes these fields should at least demonstrate a plan for how, and in what sequence, it will expand its SEA Change efforts to include medicine and the health sciences if they are a part of the institution’s education, research, and/or practice program.)

The primary focal populations for SEA Change Institutional Bronze Awards include STEM faculty and administrators/leadership. However, STEM pathways are critical to success of SEA Change efforts and a holistic assessment of the institution is impossible to achieve without providing a snapshot of the student population; thus, the Bronze Awards ask for an overview of graduate students and undergraduates in STEM departments.

Institutional applications must include several common, disaggregated data elements: gender, race, ethnicity, and the intersection of these—hereafter referred to as Intersectionality. Disaggregated data relating to these common elements...
should be collected and evaluated to form the foundation of the action plan whenever possible; \textit{if data aren’t available}, describe the reason for this and describe a plan to ensure collection of these data going forward. \textbf{The intersection of race and gender is important to address, as women of color are impacted by both racial and gender bias in STEM.}

Pay close attention to your responsibilities to protect \textit{personally identifiable information} (PII) and be careful not to submit PII to SEA Change. The low numbers in some intersectional categories may be challenging for protection of personally identifiable information; however, reviewers are looking for the “30,000-foot view” of self-assessment, which means that you can identify trends in intersectionality and include actions to address observed inequities.

Also note that an institution’s internal legal advice (from its internal and external attorneys) and associated legal evaluation areas are not within the scope of the SEA Change initiative. See \textit{Retaining Confidentiality: Internal legal advice and legal evaluation areas} below. \textbf{If your institution wants to maintain to the extent possible its related attorney-client privilege, consult your institution’s lawyers at the start to get legal advice.}

\textbf{Suggestions}

Use of institution’s \textit{historical data} (trends over time) is \textit{highly encouraged} as a baseline for the application. If no historical data are available, please examine the various data resources available that could provide a baseline for comparison.

If there is \textbf{another personal identity factor} in addition to gender and race/ethnicity that is particularly important for an institution to address to better fulfill its mission, self-assessment teams may wish to choose to explore such factor. These can include: \textit{disability (different ability) status, socioeconomic background, familial history of higher education (ex: first-generation students), identification with the LGBTQ+ community, veteran status, age, nationality}, or any other such factors that have been associated with bias in STEM. We would expect any consideration of one of these factors to also include an exploration of intersectionality with gender and race/ethnicity as well.

\textbf{Provide as much information as possible from the 30,000-foot perspective}, as reviewers will be assessing applications based on whether it reflects an understanding of the meaning, impact, and issues derived from a serious, deep, and complete self-assessment process. Remember, for the Bronze, a complete answer can be “we do not have access to these data,” “we do not have a policy in place to address this,” etc., \textit{as long as the application states why these missing data are important, how they would be used (e.g., to evaluate what gap or barrier—or to determine which action would have impact) and a SMART action is proposed that addresses the data gap and states why (for what purpose) the data are needed.}
SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

A first-time self-assessment and application will likely take longer than 12 months to complete. The following timeline is likely the very minimum amount of time needed for the work of the self-assessment team:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+/- Submission Deadline</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-13 months</td>
<td>Form self-assessment team, confer with legal counsel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-12 months</td>
<td>Begin working with Institutional Review Board on plans for any new or modified survey data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-11 months</td>
<td>Begin policy review; all individuals with institutional data access should begin to meet regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-9 months</td>
<td>Determine specifics of what self-assessment team should explore to determine issues and barriers to equity &amp; inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6 months</td>
<td>Complete collection of raw quantitative and qualitative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-4 months</td>
<td>Climate assessments completed and analyzed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3 months</td>
<td>“30,000-foot view” analysis of data completed, decisions made about how to present findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 months</td>
<td>SMART action plan draft one complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1 months</td>
<td>Completed application and action plan reviewed by “critical friends” and suggestions incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 weeks</td>
<td>Gather completed materials for application (i.e. Letter from head of institution; President/Chief Executive Application Submission Form; etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for submission</td>
<td>Upload completed application per instructions from SEA Change staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1 months</td>
<td>Begin action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥3 months</td>
<td>Receive results and feedback from application peer-review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROTECTING PRIVILEGE — INTERNAL LEGAL ADVICE

Each institution that decides to submit an application must do an in-depth self-assessment of all topics of the SEA Change program (from a good policy perspective) and then must develop a forward-looking action plan (that reflects both good policy and legal sustainability) for those topics that the institution decides are its priorities.

The in-depth self-assessments undertaken in the SEA Change program cover a broad range of distinct policies, procedures, practices, and undertakings of an institution and it is understandable that an institution would seek confidential and privileged legal advice from its internal and external attorneys on distinct topics within that broad range, whether or not the institution was participating in SEA Change. Each institution may decide in its discretion to seek legal advice on a confidential and privileged basis from its internal or external legal counsel on:

- any distinct topics referenced, in broad terms, by the SEA Change application Criteria & Guidelines and handbook for the purpose of determining the institution’s current and prior legal status and legal strategies regarding such distinct topics;
- the institution’s overall readiness to submit a SEA Change application or to include forward-looking actions respecting topics referenced, in broad terms, by the application Criteria & Guidelines and handbook; and
- how to retain privileges and confidentiality of legal advice to the extent possible.

All such legal advice sought by the institution from, and legal advice provided to it by, its attorneys—including the substance and findings, and related data compilation and analysis—are “internal legal advice.”

When a distinct topic within those broadly referenced in the SEA Change application Criteria & Guidelines and Handbook is the focus of or within the scope of internal legal advice, it becomes a “legal evaluation area” with respect to: its current and prior legal status and the institution’s associated legal strategies; the institution’s readiness to submit an application at all and readiness to submit an application that includes the particular topic; and how to retain privileges and confidentiality. Internal legal advice and legal evaluation areas are not within the scope of the SEA Change program and are not required to be included in a SEA Change application or to be disclosed to SEA Change.

In contrast, forward-looking action, with metrics to monitor progress, respecting any topics that an institution includes in a SEA Change application (as the institution develops metrics for that distinct forward-looking purpose), must be included in the action plan and are within the scope of the SEA Change program.

This section of the Handbook supersedes (replacing and/or governing the interpretation of) any other section of the Handbook, the Criteria & Guidelines, and all other materials of the SEA Change program that may be inconsistent or ambiguous.

DEMONSTRATING DEPTH OF SELF-ASSESSMENT WHILE RETAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

Applications should be specific about the fact that an institution has self-assessed (from a good policy perspective) all of the general topics broadly references in the SEA Change Institutional Bronze Handbook as well as the Criteria &
Guidelines, describing the robustness of the process it conducted to do so (without including or disclosing internal legal advice, its substance, findings, or data compilation and analyses). The forward-looking action plan should cover the topics that the institution determines are its Bronze level priorities and demonstrate substantial (forward-facing) action that reflects good policy, is legally sustainable, and can be measured on a going-forward basis. The action plan should not disclose any substance or data involved in the internal legal advice; they are outside of the scope of SEA Change. The reviewers will note whether each general topic that an institution has determined is a priority and has included in the application was evaluated (from a good policy perspective) and is addressed in the action plan with significant and measurable forward-looking steps.

It is important to note that applications for first-time Bronze Awards will not be viewed negatively by the peer review panel or AAAS for not disclosing substance, findings, or data compilation within internal legal advice, including such legal advice on current and prior legal status and strategies for legal evaluation areas. However, in order for the institution to experience truly systemic reform, future applications for Bronze renewal or advancement to higher award levels will need to demonstrate advancement under the action plan and additional goals unique to the institution’s status, including supporting data under the metrics system designed by the institution and described in its application. Institutions will have at least five years after initial receipt of a Bronze award to address any legal concerns outside of the SEA Change process.

CONFIDENTIALITY: PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

SEA Change applicants are prohibited from providing personally identifiable information (“PII”) to AAAS/SEA Change. While members of the self-assessment team may need to work with PII in undertaking the self-assessment, the applicant institution may not (directly or indirectly) provide PII to AAAS/SEA Change. Neither AAAS nor any AAAS board member, officer, employee, agent, contractor, representative, volunteer or SEA Change reviewer (“AAAS/SEA Change”) is a contractor or agent of the applicant institution for receipt of PII.

Also, as an overarching matter (not limited to PII), AAAS/SEA Change intends to assess an applicant institution for a SEA Change award on the basis of information contained in the application. AAAS/SEA Change will not investigate any aspect of an application or any allegation against an applicant institution, or any person or entity acting on behalf of the applicant institution or in the scope of any of its endeavors (“Investigation”).

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The following applies to each area of self-assessment, although it is not repeated in the instructions for each area:

- SEA Change intends institutions’ SMART action plans to reflect both good and legally sustainable forward-looking policies and procedures for all topics that an institution includes in its application; will evaluate action plans from both perspectives; and expects institutions to work with their legal counsel on the legal sustainability of their forward-looking action plans. That is why this handbook raises issues of legal compliance as well as good policy for self-assessment and provides some guidance (but not legal advice to an institution) on legal sustainability. Institutions should demonstrate in their action plans that they are setting important, challenging but achievable goals and taking significant forward-looking actions that address key issues (including enhancing data collection and evaluation as needed) for measurable advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all
• SEA Change expects institutions to self-assess their policies and procedures for mission-driven diversity, equity, and inclusion, including whether their policies are effective/beneficial and why.

• SEA Change expects institutions to be aware of, and to have a process in place, to continually address legal sustainability of their action plans’ forward-looking policies and procedures in all topic areas.

• Institutions need not disclose any involvement of their lawyers or internal legal advice (including without limitation on legal evaluation areas); failure to do so does not mean lawyers were not directing the analysis. Also, the fact that an institution seeks to protect privileges and confidentiality of internal legal advice, or that an action plan addresses future actions in any area, is not an indication of any wrongdoing. Responsible institutional action for continuous improvement often requires these kinds of analyses and actions. The application should reflect that appropriate HR, legal, and/or other experts are involved in the development of the action plan (which includes forward-looking actions that are both good policy and legally sustainable).
DOCUMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED WORKFLOW

A critical part of self-assessment, particularly for the Bronze application, is documenting the rationale behind mechanisms of assessment, interpretation of findings, and prioritization of topics for action. We will borrow the term “workflow” from the data analytics field to refer to this documentation.

The SEA Change self-assessment is based on the Equality Charters Process from Advance HE in the U.K. It is a tool that can be used by an institution for several purposes (those that are within the scope of SEA Change and those that are not). Self-assessment is based on the following general process:

Awareness → Understanding → Action → Reflection

AWARENESS

Awareness begins with convening the right people on the self-assessment team—many institutions have participated in prior assessments, internal or external audits, or surveys, and it’s important to leverage work that’s already been done. Often, institutions convene multiple working groups on complementary efforts, but the groups don’t always communicate efforts to the rest of their community (e.g.: one task force may conduct an assessment of climate and culture within the faculty, and another may have done an assessment with faculty in a specific department—yet, awareness of these efforts or their findings may not extend beyond the group conducting each assessment). Engaging people working on these complementary efforts will make preparation of the SEA Change application more comprehensive, accurate, and simpler. It may also seed ongoing collaboration, which will support more effective action.

Due to their awareness of institution-wide endeavors, to provide the institution with the opportunity to seek internal legal advice, and because there will likely be institutional policy and legal standards applicable to some of the SEA Change criteria, self-assessment, and forward-looking action, it’s best to begin working early with legal counsel, an HR representative, and someone who sits on the institutional review board. Consider inviting them to become part of or to advise the self-assessment team.

Awareness also refers to the careful examination of each criterion within the SEA Change application. After a careful and thorough review of which individuals should be included on the self-assessment team, thoughtful examination of qualitative and quantitative data can begin, resulting in a holistic, institution-level awareness of gaps in information, discrepancies and biases, and problem areas. This should begin by assessing which data are already collected and available, and what else is needed for thorough institutional self-evaluation.

UNDERSTANDING

Once data and information are collected, the self-assessment team must explore what they mean and how they impact the institution’s ability to identify barriers and determine high impact actions in response, which includes an inventory of what additional information might be needed to aid in that understanding.

Understanding the results of self-assessment is an involved process that requires an exploration of research and evidence (or lack thereof) and a comparison of these results to mission-based institutional policies. For example, perhaps accessibility and resources for people with disabilities is of particular importance to your institution, and the
The self-assessment team has discovered the institution has very little understanding of the disability status of its focal populations or the extent or character of actions taken to fully include and welcome persons with disabilities. Care should be taken to examine available research supporting why knowing this information is helpful to an institution of higher education; in addition, examine available research about how to assess accessibility, and/or collect disability status data and include persons with disabilities in a welcoming, appropriate, and useful way. If the self-assessment team decides that information should be collected, a description of this gap in information, the rationale for why having a better understanding of it is important to the institution’s barrier removal aims, and then a detailed 5-year action that incorporates the findings of the deep-dive into available evidence should be described within the action plan.

It’s also important to go beyond the surface for each of the SEA Change criteria. It’s not enough to inventory faculty demographics, survey & focus group results, or policies—it’s important to understand what that information reveals about barriers, challenges and opportunities. The self-assessment team may consider engaging a statistician and other experts (internal to the institution or external) to truly understand what both quantitative and qualitative data are demonstrating about the dimensions and status of a particular issue and what needs to be done to address it.

**ACTION**

In light of the information at hand, what should the institution plan to do? Using the new awareness and understanding gained by self-assessment, a forward-looking SMART action plan should be put into place to address gaps in information and problem points. These actions should be informed by the evidence discovered in the “understanding” phase. Each action should be SMART:

- **Specific** - Be clear and precise when defining the action you will undertake; avoid generalities, anything vague or difficult to interpret.

- **Measurable** - To progress in SEA Change, the institution will need to demonstrate progress. What would progress look like in addressing a particular issue? How would you measure that and are the structures in place to capture and report those progress indicators?

- **Achievable** - Don’t overpromise; reviewers will likely recognize an overly ambitious action item. A reasonable approach to your action plan will be more likely accomplished within the time-frame you’ve proposed with workloads adjusted for those assigned to the action, and resources directed appropriately.

- **Relevant** - Actions should appropriately address the challenges identified in the self-assessment but also should be reasonable, given system constraints (e.g., not “we will double female faculty by 2020”—unless, of course, you only have one!)

- **Time-oriented** - Each action should have its own timeline for implementation. There should be target dates for completing each step within the implementation plan, there should be ways to benchmark progress, and there should be mechanisms in place to ensure the institution is holding itself accountable for meeting those targets.
REFLECTION

Once an institutional action plan has been put in place with approval and institutional buy-in, and the self-assessment team begins to make progress on accomplishing their goals, the institution will need to track and document progress along the way. If, for example, research indicated that a specific intervention would help begin to address an issue the self-assessment team identified for the institution, take note of what’s happening after it’s been introduced to the institution. If an action isn’t working as the self-assessment team hoped it would, reflect on what the benchmarking and progress monitoring are telling you. Then, make mid-course adjustments as needed and document what you did, why you did it, and whether the adjustment had a positive impact for inclusion in later SEA Change applications.

REPEAT

This process is repeated, continually, whether the institution is applying for a renewal of its current Award level, or whether it is applying for a progression to the next level. Truly sustainable change, change that sees diversity, equity, and inclusion becoming the cultural norm in an institution, needs constant care. This will take time but will be well worth the effort. An internal governance structure and process management plan, through which the self-assessment team and relevant institutional and departmental functions will actively collaborate to align goals, strategies, and actions, and track progress—with internal reporting, evaluation, and mid-course adjustments to ensure effectiveness and good investment of resources—are critical. The action plan should reflect what those governance structure and process management plan are and what positions will be involved in overseeing and executing them.
While this section discusses quantitative data, it is important to note that this is only one component of self-assessment. The SEA Change self-assessment process is designed as a tool that can be used (among other purposes) to help institutions go through a structured review of their policies, practices, and focal populations, examining patterns of institutional support (or lack thereof) related to SEA Change criteria. This is not a numbers game—numbers are useful indicators, but they do not necessarily describe or address the nature or extent of the barriers preventing systemic, cultural change to support equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Self-assessment teams will be conducting a thorough internal review of quantitative data as well as qualitative findings about policies, procedures, and the experience of individual members of the institution’s community. Compositional diversity should be evaluated in correlation with experience of individuals—because it is the experience, not the numbers per se—that will determine whether an inclusive climate and culture where all talent can thrive is being created. Review panels will be examining how thoughtfully an institution has used qualitative and quantitative data to draw conclusions and develop action plans. Review panels will examine whether experience, not only numbers, is driving actions. To help provide aspirational guidance for how to conduct an internal review of disaggregated data, SEA Change has created an institutional self-assessment template for addressing faculty- and administrative-related issues, and another for a snapshot of the students. These templates are meant only as an aspirational guide, designed to help self-assessment teams think about intersectionality, about availability of data, and to make things easier for assessing differences between groups. These templates are for an institution’s internal use (or adaptation for use) only, if desired—these should not be submitted in an application and SEA Change staff and reviewers will not be collecting them at any time. Instead, self-assessment teams must choose how to present relevant findings (tables? figures? statistical analyses?), as well as determine which data are important for the reviewers to assess the institution’s understanding of its barriers, challenges, and opportunities, along with more qualitative analyses. We reiterate that the application is meant to reflect the 30,000-foot view of the findings from the self-assessment.

Please see the section on intersectionality to understand why SEA Change asks for disaggregated data (e.g. gender x race).

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

Some institutions’ internal policies may require involvement of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or its staff in determining whether collection of data for internal analysis relating to policy-setting must be reviewed and may be subject to conditions (or not). We recommend engaging the senior staff or chair of the IRB early, before collecting data, in the self-assessment process.

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION (PII)

It may not be necessary to take steps, beyond the institution’s regular protocols, to protect personally identifiable information (PII) during the internal self-assessment process if the review is entirely internal (i.e., external consultants are not involved) and those with access to the information require the access to perform an institutional responsibility. However, it is important to adhere to your institution’s policies for who (even internally) may access such data and how they are collected and used for new purposes. Consider how to appropriately collect and maintain protection of PII...
when collecting data for internal self-assessment in connection with the SEA Change program, and how to prevent disclosure of PII when providing information in the SEA Change application. **AAAS does not intend to receive any PII, applicant institutions are prohibited from providing PII to AAAS/SEA Change, and neither AAAS nor any past, present, or future AAAS board member, officer, employee, agent, contractor, representative, volunteer, or SEA Change reviewer (collectively “AAAS/SEA Change”) is a contractor or agent of an applicant institution for receipt of PII.** Consult with your own internal or external legal counsel or privacy officer before creating or collecting data and before sharing it. While not legal advice, some considerations include:

1) **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** Consider and comply with FERPA restrictions on student education records and protect student PII.

2) **International privacy laws:** If self-assessment involves international students or faculty, determine appropriate measures in response to these requirements as well (which may include, e.g., different definitions of PII and different or additional requirements to protect it).

3) **State laws:** Depending on where your institution is located, where it conducts activities, and where it collects individually identifiable information, state privacy laws may also be applicable to, e.g., the definition of PII and may impose different or additional requirements.

4) **Institutional privacy policies:** Be sure to pay due attention to your own institution’s policies.

5) **Suggested best practices when presenting data:**

   a. The National Center for Education Statistics provides recommendations for best practices to protect personally identifiable information (PII) from disclosure in statewide elementary and secondary school longitudinal data systems: [https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011603.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011603.pdf). These do not necessarily provide definitive answers but are a good reference point for consideration.

   b. While NCES sets a limit of 10 individuals within a group or subgroup to protect PII, particular data may still point to individuals and make that limit inadequate, and FERPA or other privacy laws and policies or institutional policy overall may set a higher threshold.

   c. Thresholds should be determined for each data set by the self-assessment team and appropriate experts for the institution. Experts should be well-informed of the relevant information, including data to be collected, and how or by whom it will be used, and how or to whom it will be reported.

   d. As more specifically provided in the NCES recommendations, when presenting any data, adhere to at least one of the following when the number of individuals in disaggregated categories falls below the applicable threshold:
i. **No counts published**
   1. Only provide % distributions
   2. Report % as whole numbers
   3. If there are fewer individuals than the applicable threshold in a subgroup, suppress the data in that subgroup, and make a note of why (ex: replace the % with a *, and note somewhere what the * indicates)

ii. **Collapsing across outcome categories**
   1. If there are fewer individuals than the applicable threshold in a subgroup, suppress the data in that subgroup and the self-assessment team wishes to collapse outcome categories, NCES recommends first trying to collapse fields into larger categories instead of collapsing disaggregated race/ethnicity x gender categories.
   
   2. For example, combine departments suggested for each STEM field in the Bronze Handbook such that there are three or four collapsed categories: Physical & Natural Sciences; Engineering, Mathematics, & Computer Sciences; and Social, Behavioral, & Economic Sciences.
   
   3. If the number of faculty employed by an institution is very small, it may make sense to restrict comparisons to all STEM vs. non-STEM faculty.
   
   4. If the above suggestions still do not prevent PII disclosure, consider reporting race/ethnicity "representation" x gender; in other words, group individuals who fall into race/ethnic groups that are typically the target of bias into a category such as "underrepresented race/ethnic groups" (typically reported as “URG”) and group others into "well-represented race/ethnic groups (WRG)," and disaggregate those two categories by gender. In this case, make sure the application defines the specific race/ethnic categories included in each group.

iii. **Counts published with additional suppression**
   1. Counts of individuals are provided in this approach, but any subgroup that doesn't meet the minimum reporting size is suppressed (ex: replace the count with a *, and note somewhere what the * indicates).
   
   2. Any other subgroups related to the suppressed groups are also suppressed in "complementary suppression."

iv. **Also note that overlapping data may, in the aggregate, reveal personal identity.**
GAPS IN AVAILABLE DATA

It is a good practice for institutions to continuously improve data collection and analysis. Proactive self-assessment can identify these opportunities and forward-looking actions to collect more meaningful or additional data may be included in action plans and will be expected by reviewers.

Within the application, note any areas where the self-assessment team believes it is important to develop more data before applying for Award renewal or (eventually) progression. Ensure that the focus on gathering additional or different data will advance the diversity-, equity-, and inclusion-associated institutional policies, mission, and long-term goals.

For each topic included in an action plan that the self-assessment team determines would benefit from additional or different data in order to advance institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion aims, there should be an action item specifically detailing plans to collect those data.
REVIEW PANELS

Review panels will be comprised of at least 5 expert reviewers selected by AAAS, along with a SEA Change staff member and a legal/policy expert (who will attend the panel sessions or engage in a different manner) to advise on the action plan’s legal sustainability and other relevant legal context (e.g., the effect of legal parameters on action plans). Only the expert reviewers will be able to recommend outcomes for applications. Reviewers will be drawn from a pool of experts with backgrounds in STEM, higher education, equity & diversity, and/or reform efforts. Reviewers will make recommendations and provide feedback to AAAS, which will make the final determinations.

What will reviewers be looking for? They will be using this handbook, the Criteria & Guidelines, reviewer instructions, and any other SEA Change resources that may be provided as a guide, just as self-assessment teams do when preparing their application. Using the Institutional Bronze Criteria & Guidelines, reviewers will determine if the self-assessment team is collecting the right information (did they simply take an inventory of people and policies, or are they being thoughtful in their assessment of what data mean and how data inform identification of specific actions that will advance diversity, equity, and inclusion aims?), if they’ve put plans in place for improvement (is the action plan SMART and does it address data gaps or problem areas appropriately?), and if the goals of improvement are challenging enough to lay the groundwork to effect real change. For more detailed information about peer-review, please be sure to consult the “SEA Change Institutional Bronze Criteria & Guidelines” and “SEA Change Institutional Bronze Award Reviewer Feedback Form.”

SEA Change applications are not prescriptive—self-assessment teams should determine what information needs to be examined for true institutional transformation, how the information should be assessed and presented, and how current research helped inform these decisions. Institutions are not required to address all issues at once; part of an effective application is demonstrating that the institution has surveyed the full range of issues and identified those of high priority to the institution that will have a significant impact on advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Being realistic about what can be achieved in five years—while including efforts that will address challenging barrier removal—is important. Reviewers will be looking for documentation of the rationale of the self-assessment team (including on why they prioritized the actions in the institution’s action plan) as well as their findings. Please see DOCUMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED WORKFLOW for a description of this process.

Reviewers, any reviewers-in-training, advisors, and observers will all sign non-disclosure agreements under the SEA Change confidentiality protocol, before reviewing any SEA Change applications or participating in a review discussion. SEA Change will provide a copy of the protocol to applicants, who will be expected to acknowledge it, before providing confidential information to AAAS. Reviewers will also be asked to disclose conflicts of interest under the SEA Change conflicts of interest policy, which may be found at LINK. Please do not provide PII to AAAS in any event; applicant institutions are prohibited from providing PII to AAAS/SEA Change.
APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

STEM
Science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine. These include the disciplines of: agricultural sciences, chemistry, computer and information technology sciences, engineering, Earth sciences, life sciences, mathematical sciences, physics and astronomy, social, behavioral, and economic sciences, medical and health science disciplines, and STEM education & learning.

Field
While field can mean a great many things, for SEA Change Institutional Awards we consider “fields” to denote the broad fields such as: 1) physical sciences; 2) life sciences; 3) agricultural sciences; 4) social, behavioral, and economic sciences; 6) mathematics; 6) engineering; and 7) STEM education. 8) medicine and health sciences can also be included if the institution desires and is expected ultimately to be included in subsequent applications (if applicable).

Department
Designation of individual departments can be difficult; for this application, we recommend that institutions collapse departments into their appropriate Broad STEM fields, as described in the guidelines above. Self-assessment teams can choose to represent their institution in whichever way helps them disaggregate their information so that they can make informed decisions. Umbrella programs/interdisciplinary programs may also be included. In the application, be clear about what has been included, in which grouping, and why the self-assessment team made those decisions. Do not include individuals multiple times even if involved in multiple programs—this inflates your numbers.

Gender identity
Refers to a person’s basic sense of being male, female, or of indeterminate sex. (See American Psychological Association, https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy/gender-identity-report.pdf)

Gender expression
Refers to the way in which a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture; for example, in terms of clothing, communication patterns, and interests. A person’s gender expression may or may not be consistent with socially prescribed gender roles and may or may not reflect his or her gender identity. (See American Psychological Association, https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy/gender-identity-report.pdf)

LGBTQ+
This community includes individuals who identify as: queer/questioning, undecided, intersex, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, asexual, and gay.

Advance HE
Home of U.K. equality charters including Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter. Originally run by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), which joined with several other groups to form Advance HE.

AAAS
American Association for the Advancement of Science

AACC
American Association of Community Colleges
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAC&amp;U</td>
<td>American Association of Colleges &amp; Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>Association of American Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>The American Council on Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APLU</td>
<td>Association of Public and Land-grant Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>EducationCounsel (legal/policy advisor to SEA Change)</td>
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While STEM fields can mean a great many things, for SEA Change Institutional Awards we would like the institution to use the following guidance. Any department falling under the recommended 2-digit CIP codes should be included; 4-digit CIP codes are provided when appropriate:

- **Physical sciences**
  - Astronomy and Astrophysics
    - CIP Code: 40.02
  - Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology
    - CIP Code: 40.04
  - Chemistry
    - CIP Code: 40.05
  - Geological and Earth Sciences/Geosciences
    - CIP Code: 40.06
  - Material Sciences
    - CIP Code: 40.10
  - Physical Sciences
    - CIP Codes: 40.01, 40.99
  - Physics
    - CIP Code: 40.08

- **Life sciences**
  - Biological Sciences
    - CIP Code: 26
  - Natural resources and conservation
    - CIP Code: 03

- **Agricultural sciences**
  - Agriculture, agricultural operations, related sciences
    - CIP Code: 01

- **Social, behavioral, and economic sciences**
  - Psychology
    - CIP Code: 42
  - Social Sciences
    - CIP Code: 45
    - *Includes*: anthropology, archeology, criminology, demography and population studies, economics, geography and cartography, international relations and national security studies, political science and government, rural sociology, social sciences (general & other), sociology and anthropology, sociology, and urban studies/affairs.
• Mathematics
  o Computer and information sciences and support services*
    ▪ CIP Code: 11
  o Mathematics and statistics
    ▪ CIP Code: 27

• Engineering
  o Computer and information sciences and support services*
    ▪ CIP Code: 11
  o Engineering
    ▪ CIP Code: 14
  o Engineering technologies and engineering-related fields
    ▪ CIP Code: 15

• STEM education
  o Education
    ▪ CIP Code: 13.13
    ▪ Includes teacher education in: agricultural, health, mathematics, science/general science, social science, computer, biology, chemistry, health occupations, physics, geography, psychology, and Earth science, as well as environmental education.

• Medicine and health sciences#
  o (optional; if the institution includes any of these departments, they should be included in the SEA Change action plan)
  o CIP Code: 51
  o CIP Code: 26 (as pertains to medicine/health science)

* We realize that each institution is unique in its history and composition. There are several departments that could belong in multiple provided larger categories. Please select what makes the most sense for your institution and indicate which departments you have included in each STEM field in your SEA Change application.

# If the self-assessment team decides to examine medicine and health sciences, some of the departments listed under Biological Sciences may be more appropriate for medicine/health sciences. Select what makes the most sense for your institution.
APPENDIX C: INTERSECTIONALITY

In 1975 AAAS organized and held a conference on minority women in science. The report of that conference, The Double Bind: The Price of Being a Minority Woman in Science, was published in 1976. The data, survey of experiences, conversations with the participants as well as subsequent research, revealed that the opportunity structures of these women were affected by both their gender and their racial/ethnic group membership. Their different identities, as women, as women of color, as scientists or engineers, often marginalized them within their education and careers. The incidents and experiences might have occurred at different times in their lives (including in their professional lives and careers), but the impacts appeared to accumulate and disadvantage them in ways that could not be predicted from the metric of any single identity factor. Data suggested that women of color in STEM were less likely to be hired than either white women or men of color, more likely than these other groups to be unemployed, to receive lower salaries and more—the differences they experienced were magnified by multiple drivers of inequity. Years later, law professor and critical race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw\(^1\) provided us with a term and construct that described what had been observed—intersectionality.

This term does not refer only to women of color but instead to any combination of different demographic or identity groupings (gender identity, race, ethnicity, social class, LGBTQ status, citizenship status, disability status, and more), such that there are overlapping systems of societal (and STEM field) exclusion (withholding of privilege), discrimination, and bias. Often, people who have a combination of these identities have a very different experience than people who have one or who are members of privileged groups. While we all have multiple identities, where those identities may confer the burden of exclusion and lack of privilege others enjoy, it is important for self-assessments to be mindful of intersectionality and look at the data and climate associated with the full bundle of those societally- (and STEM field-) imposed burdens. Since SEA Change will be focusing initially only on gender and race/ethnic group membership, data that will document the experience for women of color or men of color are those that should be separately called out. Over time, as institutions develop structures to capture data related to other demographic identities associated with education and career burden and exclusion, other aspects of intersectionality should be considered and documented. These may include looking at disability (different ability), gender identity and expression, religion and belief, sexual orientation, citizenship status, and experience of a low socioeconomic background.

Within self-assessment, intersectionality should be considered increasingly as the institution progresses in its work. For first-time Bronze applicants, this consideration might be aspirational (for example, SMART action plans can include building mechanisms to understand, identify, and explore intersectionality where that ability isn’t currently possible).

As institutions apply to renew their Bronze award and/or move on to a Silver award, this thinking should be respectively more advanced; strategies and actions should be more nuanced and focused on impacting barrier removal, reflecting the complexity of multiple identities.

---

APPENDIX D: DATA RESOURCES

When possible, use institutional data already available. This includes information gathered for any of the following databases/programs/systems. In addition, many of these can be used as baseline datasets. This appendix is not exhaustive, and we welcome suggestions for additions and updates. Please make suggestions via email to Michael Feder (mfeder@aaas.org).

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

One of the most comprehensive reports about undergraduate students in the U.S. and how to measure their success in STEM is *Indicators for Monitoring Undergraduate STEM Education*, a 2018 consensus report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Chapter 6, “Existing Data Sources and Monitoring Systems,” provides an overview of data sources; the self-assessment team should take note of what the institution is already collecting and leverage that work for the SEA Change application.

Table 1: Major Sources of Data on Undergraduate STEM Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Coverage and Representativeness</th>
<th>Feasibility of Disaggregation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal IPEDS</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Nationally representative; mandatory so virtually 100% coverage</td>
<td>Strong for race and ethnicity, gender, institution type, and discipline; does not allow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Postsecondary Longitudinal Study</td>
<td>Every 6 to 8</td>
<td>Nationally representative; 82% response rate in most recent BPS (04/09)</td>
<td>Limited for disaggregating by both demographic characteristics and field of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty</td>
<td>Discontinued in 2004</td>
<td>Nationally representative of full-time, but not part-time, faculty</td>
<td>Strong for individual and institutional characteristics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

2 Table 1 reprinted with permission from Table 6-1 in *Indicators for Monitoring Undergraduate STEM Education* 2018, by the National Academy of Sciences, Courtesy of the National Academies Press, Washington, D.C.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Coverage and Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proprietary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Student Clearinghouse</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>98% of institutions represented, but institutions do not always provide student’s demographic characteristics, disciplines, and degree programs. Limited for student characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERI Freshman Survey</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Nationally representative of first-time, full-time, 4-year students. Good for 4-year student characteristics, but limited for 2-year student characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERI Your First College Year/Senior Survey</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Limited coverage of 2-year institutions. Strong for student characteristics; weak for institutional characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERI Faculty Survey</td>
<td>Every 3 years</td>
<td>Strong coverage among 4-year nonprofit institutions; nationally representative of full-time faculty at 4-year institutions. Strong for faculty at 4-year institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERI Diverse Learning Environments Survey</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Very limited coverage among 2-year and 4-year institutions; student response rates within institutions average 25%. Strong for student characteristics; weak for institutional characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Survey of Student Engagement</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Broad coverage among 4-year institutions; student response rates within institutions average 30–35%. Strong for student and institutional characteristics of 4-year institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College Survey of Student Engagement</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Moderate coverage of 2-year institutions; poor student response rates. Limited for student characteristics due to small sample sizes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Survey of Student Engagement</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Limited coverage of 2-year institutions; faculty responses average 20–25%. Strong for individual characteristics of faculty at 4-year institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other sources not included in table:

ACS  
American Community Survey
This table may be used for comparison:

Table 2: Master’s and Doctoral Degrees Awarded to U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents, by Sex, Race, Ethnicity, and Broad Field Category in 2015³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or ethnicity</th>
<th>Master’s Degrees</th>
<th>Doctoral Degrees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>13,239</td>
<td>8,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>3,337</td>
<td>1,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>8,579</td>
<td>6,507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Table 2 reprinted with permission from Table 2-11 Graduate STEM Education for the 21st Century 2018, by the National Academy of Sciences, Courtesy of the National Academies Press, Washington, D.C.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or ethnicity</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Percent Female</th>
<th>Percent Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic or Latino/a</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>11,392</td>
<td>6,008</td>
<td>5,384</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2,290</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>1,735</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>2,920</td>
<td>1,238</td>
<td>1,682</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>6,182</td>
<td>4,215</td>
<td>1,967</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>72,869</td>
<td>34,368</td>
<td>38,501</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>15,263</td>
<td>3,275</td>
<td>11,988</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>78.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>24,781</td>
<td>10,267</td>
<td>14,514</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>32,825</td>
<td>20,826</td>
<td>11,999</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian or Pacific Islander</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>11,245</td>
<td>4,968</td>
<td>6,277</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3,504</td>
<td>1,031</td>
<td>2,473</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>70.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>5,019</td>
<td>2,183</td>
<td>2,836</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>56.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>2,722</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>33.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other or unknown race and ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>12,938</td>
<td>6,661</td>
<td>6,277</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>48.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2,308</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>76.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>4,172</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>58.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>6,458</td>
<td>4,375</td>
<td>2,083</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Doctoral Degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or ethnicity</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Percent Female</th>
<th>Percent Male</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>1,593</td>
<td>1,186</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>1,869</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>46.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>74.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
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<td>719</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>227</td>
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<td>31.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>S&amp;E</td>
<td>18,544</td>
<td>8,828</td>
<td>9,716</td>
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<td>52.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3,023</td>
<td>707</td>
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<td>23.4</td>
<td>76.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5,423</td>
<td>47.5</td>
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<td>5,190</td>
<td>3,213</td>
<td>1,977</td>
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<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Asian or Pacific Islander

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S&amp;E</th>
<th>1,256</th>
<th>1,239</th>
<th>50.3</th>
<th>49.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>1,338</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or unknown race and ethnicity</td>
<td>2,757</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>1,361</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** At the doctoral level, medical sciences and other health sciences are not included under natural sciences and consequently under S&E. **SOURCE:** Adapted from NSB (2018a) and WebCASPAR.

### FACULTY

- **AAU STEM**  
  *Education Initiative – [status report](#) appendix (p 36, 70-74)

- **AAUDE**  
  *American Association of Universities Data Exchange*

- **AAUP**  
  *American Association of University Professors*, including *Faculty Compensation Survey*

- **COACHE**  
  *Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education*

- **DISA**  
  *Diversity in Science Association – [Nelson Diversity Surveys](#)*

- **FSSE**  
  *Faculty Survey of Student Engagement*

- **HERI**  
  *Higher Education Research Initiative ([Faculty Survey](#))*

- **NCSES**  
  *National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics*  
  *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering*

- **SEI**  
  *Science and Engineering Indicators*

- **PULSE**  
  *Partnership for Undergraduate Life Science Education*; rubrics for all STEM education include:  
  Faculty practice/support; infrastructure; climate for change

### CLIMATE & CULTURE

There are many approaches to the assessment of institutional culture and climate, something critical for a holistic assessment of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Surveys of institutional climate dominate, but there are more approaches to consider for a comprehensive assessment including: focus groups, interviews, document analyses, observation, and environmental scans. Self-assessment teams should determine the best method(s) for assessing the climate for each focal population; most likely, this will begin with a survey and some additional approaches to follow up on the results of the survey. If an institution already regularly does climate assessment, leverage those findings and incorporate new approaches to drill down deeper into the exploration of institutional culture. Note that it may be more effective to
describe behaviors/actions rather than to use labels (sexual harassment or discrimination or bias) in determining the occurrence of sexual harassment, discrimination, and bias. [See National Academies Study on Sexual Harassment of Women, 2018.]

More about the study of climate can be learned from:


All these approaches have their value, and the best are tailored to fit the institution’s needs.

CECE  Culturally Engaging Campus Environments

DoJ  Campus Climate Survey Instrument

DLE  Diverse Learning Environments (Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA)

HEDS  Independent consortium with several climate surveys

HERI  Higher Education Research Initiative

NCCS  National Campus Climate Survey

NILIE  National Initiative for Leadership and Institutional Effectiveness (NC State University)

NSSE  National Survey of Student Engagement

PACE  Personal Assessment of the College Environment (NC State University)

PSRII  Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory (Iowa State University)

UCUES  University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey

Also see:

ADVANCE  NSF ADVANCE portal details climate surveys used for ADVANCE institutions

Rankin & Associates  Consultants with a Campus Climate Assessment Instrument

Commercial providers  ex: Viewfinder™ Campus Climate Surveys, Survey Design & Analysis
APPENDIX E: LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND NEUTRAL STRATEGIES

The following explanation is not intended to be comprehensive or to provide legal advice to any institution. It provides a high-level general overview of laws that apply to diversity efforts, and the importance of neutral strategies to development of effective and legally sustainable policies and strategies. Institutions are encouraged to work with their own legal counsel as they develop action plans that encompass good policy and are also legally sustainable.

While mission and policy drive equity, inclusion, and diversity efforts, federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity and gender are a “design parameter” that must be addressed for success and sustainability of efforts and design of programs and systems, including an institution’s action plan.

If the institution considers race/ethnicity, even as one of many factors, in admission or conferring other educational benefits on applicants or students (1) the institution must articulate and document the reasons why broad diversity (including but not limited to racial/ethnic diversity) is important to achieving mission-tied specific educational and societal outcomes that are beneficial for all students—and having done so, the institution’s judgment on its objectives is to be given deference by courts, as long as the objectives are legally permissible and evidence of use of diversity to enhance educational quality is gathered and documented; and (2) before the institution may consider race/ethnicity as a means to achieve its objectives, the institution bears the burden of providing evidence that existing diversity is not adequate to produce the desirable student experience associated with diversity and that considering and using workable race-neutral strategies are not alone sufficient—the institution’s mere opinions are not adequate and will not be given deference. While there is less recent legal guidance on gender discrimination in higher education, and there are some exceptions for gender that do not apply to race or ethnicity, the standards under federal law are somewhat similar although not identical and an institution may decide that it is prudent to design policies and strategies addressing race, ethnicity and gender to similar standards (while working with their legal counsel to reserve the ability to raise any legal distinctions).

The law prohibiting race, ethnicity, and gender discrimination in employment terms, conditions, and decisions (which affects faculty), allows voluntary “affirmative action” to remedy “underutilization” of individuals in certain groups in an employer’s workforce, considering their representation in the available and qualified pool from which the employer could recruit. Similarly, federal contract recipients (virtually all colleges and universities) are required to make good faith efforts to remedy underutilization. (While different definitions apply, underutilization is generally regarded as representation of a race or gender in a particular job category, level and discipline of an employer that is less than 80 percent of its representation in the available qualified pool from which an employer could recruit. Annual affirmative action plans meeting regulatory requirements determine underutilization and good faith actions to address it. Information in these plans should be disseminated to the relevant departments but disassociated from any particular search). In STEM fields, women and people of color may not be “underutilized” if, due to a limited pipeline, the available and qualified pool from which an employer could recruit to fill a position is limited. Discrimination on the basis of race,

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4 Federal nondiscrimination statutes reference “sex” in their legal prohibitions and protections, but a majority of federal court decisions include gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, at least in legal prohibitions against sex stereotyping and arbitrary or malevolent action. We use “gender” to address all of these factors.
ethnicity or gender is not required or sanctioned and any consideration of these factors in deciding which individuals will receive (or not) an employment benefit (e.g., deciding whom to interview, hire, promote, support with research funding or training, etc.) should meet applicable strict or heightened legal standards and conditions. (These require a need to remedy underutilization or the institution’s own discrimination, and the inadequacy of barrier removal, inclusive outreach, and neutral strategies alone, or in combination with capacity building programs, to address it). Race, ethnicity and gender targeted inclusive outreach, within a program of robust general outreach, to ensure effective communication of the same consequential information to all potentially qualified audiences in order to build a diverse recruitment pool, is generally sustainable. Consideration of an individual's race, ethnicity or gender status per se in making hiring, promotion and other benefit-conferring decisions is generally not (unless evidence demonstrates a need to do so is to remedy underutilization or an institution’s own discrimination). (Even where limited consideration is permitted, being of a particular race or gender should not be an exclusive requirement; all qualified candidates should have the opportunity to compete for the position or promotion). Consideration of race or gender in lay-offs are likely overly burdensome and not sustainable.

Consider barrier removal to enhance diversity—the focus of SEA Change—including, e.g.:

- Adopting hiring policies that, at the start of a search, require or promote intentional evaluation of qualification criteria for employment opportunities to eliminate unnecessarily restrictive or ineffective qualifications. Such unnecessarily restrictive criteria include, e.g., assuming the most qualified fellows or junior faculty come from a limited number of PhD programs that are familiar to a predominantly White male department. In STEM, sometimes faculty members of a department and their students are dominated by individuals of a particular nationality, which may relate to the demographics of the qualified, available pool or may result from implicit bias of faculty recruiters. The qualified pool is also unnecessarily limited when a field is more narrowly defined than relevant and sufficient expertise require. Another example is foreclosing opportunities to those who have taken non-customary or otherwise non-traditional education or career paths or whose advancement has taken more time than expected (i.e., is outside the dominant “norm”), even when there are reasons for these outcomes and they do not diminish ability in relation to a position.

- Providing periodic and episodic implicit bias and other training for search committees and faculty generally.

- Adopting hiring policies that require a senior official (e.g., a dean) to confirm the robustness and adequacy of outreach to build a diverse, qualified applicant pool, before closing the application period and before selecting any applicants for interviews. Adequate outreach is measured, not in large part by the diversity of the applicant pool itself but, rather, where an applicant pool is not diverse in race and sex, by serious conduct of outreach to all possible sources that offer reasonable potential to produce qualified applicants.

- Adopting employment benefits and enhanced climate that are available to all who need them (regardless of race or sex) but which address subjects that tend to impose disproportionate burdens on people of color or women, e.g., providing flexible work schedule options, parental and other family leave, providing an accommodation in the
tenure timeline, and spousal and domestic partner relocation benefits including access to a networking and recruitment consortium, career counseling, adjunct opportunities.

Consider these guidelines to pursue neutral strategies that also enhance diversity:

(a) Neutral strategies do not on their face—or in their purpose or aim—prefer individuals of a particular race/ethnicity or sex or seek to increase racial, ethnic, or gender compositional diversity.

(b) They serve other authentic, mission-tied purposes.

(c) If they do have other authentic, mission-tied purposes, the fact that they may also increase the racial, ethnic, or gender diversity of the undergraduate student body or graduate students or position in a discipline should not destroy neutrality and is a welcome ancillary benefit.

(d) Some neutral strategies that do not appear neutral on their face—such as targeted outreach—should still be regarded as neutral if they do not allocate significant benefits to individuals based on race, ethnicity or gender, and they have an inclusive (rather than exclusive) effect.

(e) The Supreme Court’s Fisher II decision raises the specter that facially neutral approaches that are aimed at compositional racial diversity—e.g. Percentage Plans applied to racially segregated school systems—are not neutral. While not deciding the issue, the Court seems more comfortable with this “macro-race consciousness,” where an individual’s race is not considered in making decisions on the conferral (or denial) of benefits, even though there is awareness of likelihood to benefit people of a particular race and that may be the aim.

One resource for general guidance on race-neutral strategies and student diversity efforts (not legal advice to an institution) is the “Checklist of Institution Action Post-Fisher I and Fisher II: Supporting Strong, Effective, and Sustainable Diversity Strategies,” for student diversity, a document developed by Jamie Lewis Keith, Partner, EducationCounsel, LLC. Another resource of general guidance on student and faculty diversity is The Handbook on Diversity and the Law: Navigating a Complex Landscape to Foster Greater Faculty and Student Diversity in Higher Education, which is available here. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has provided a grant to AAAS so that AAAS and EducationCounsel can produce Edition 2 of the Handbook and complementary resources to help institutions of higher education maintain commitment, pursue good policy, and address new and developing changes in an ever more complex legal landscape. Another resource on student diversity efforts is Ms. Keith’s article, HOW TO REALIZE THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE STUDENT BODY; Pursuit of Student Body Diversity is Doable, But Do It Right!