



**REVOLUTIONIZING
EDUCATION FOR ALL
LEARNERS: A ROAD
MAP TO THE FUTURE**

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ABOUT AACTE: THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

AACTE is a national alliance of educator preparation programs and partners dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based preparation that assures educators are profession-ready as they enter the classroom. Nearly 700 members include public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Guam. Through advocacy and capacity building, AACTE promotes innovation and effective practices that strengthen educator preparation. Learn more at aacte.org and follow us on [Twitter](#).

REVOLUTIONIZING EDUCATION FOR ALL LEARNERS: A ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), founded in 1948, is the leading voice on educator preparation in the United States. AACTE represents more than 700 colleges and universities with educator preparation programs dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based training designed to assure educators are ready to teach all learners.

Over the past three years, AACTE has been engaged in a strategic planning process that will guide the organization through the coming decade. This report reflects findings from a vital part of the planning process: input from a cross-section of deans of education and public policy and foundation leaders outside the AACTE organization who are engaged in supporting education. What do these leaders think of the new AACTE strategic plan, its vision, mission, and goals? What insights do they share?

NEW STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR AACTE

AACTE's strategic planning process began in 2017. Over the next two years, a strategic planning task force composed of members of AACTE Board of Directors and the National Office Staff led an iterative and deliberative process, informed by member input collected through surveys, focus groups, and discussion sessions at the 2019 AACTE Annual Meeting. The AACTE Board of Directors received regular updates on the task force's progress and weighed in with their own perspectives. The Board and task force took seriously members' call for a bold and visionary plan that would enable AACTE to play a leadership role in revolutionizing education for all learners.

In September 2019, the Board finalized the full strategic planning framework with synergistic new vision and mission statements and strategic priorities anchored in AACTE's core values: diversity, equity, and inclusion; quality and impact; and inquiry and innovation.

The new AACTE vision statement reads as follows:

AACTE, its members, and partners collaborate to revolutionize education for all learners.

This new vision is supported by AACTE's new mission:

AACTE elevates education and educator preparation through research, professional practice, advocacy, and collaboration.

Buttressed by its new vision and mission, AACTE's new strategic priorities are threefold:



Advocating for High-Quality Educator Preparation

AACTE and its members advocate for policies that are dedicated to building and sustaining high quality preparation of teachers and other education professionals that ensure our graduates are profession-ready.



Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

AACTE and its members value the diversity of students, their families, and educators; equity in access to high quality instructional environments; and the inclusion of all students, defined as access and opportunity, in PK-20 classrooms.



Advancing Educator Preparation Policy, Practice, and Research

Through cutting edge research, innovative practice, and advocacy, AACTE and its members advance the field of educator preparation.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

While AACTE relies on a governing structure and membership drawn exclusively from working professional educators, this report provides invaluable perspectives on AACTE strategic priorities from other engaged, knowledgeable observers—specifically, a select group of thought leaders at influential grant-making and public policy organizations, as well as a cross-section of deans of education at diverse U.S. institutions.

These foundation presidents and board members, policy organization directors, and AACTE member and non-member deans of education at large, small, public, and private institutions offer unique insights for AACTE as it initiates steps to revolutionize education for all learners.

Perspectives from these thought leaders will inform AACTE’s president and national office staff as they draft operational plans that realize AACTE’s new vision, mission, and strategic priorities. A secondary gain from this study is the building of relationships with prospective new partners and non-members who share AACTE’s commitment to high-quality educator preparation; promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion; and advancing educator preparation, policy, and practice.

THE SETTING: PANDEMIC AND PROTEST

As this report was being completed (May-June, 2020), the world and the United States are grappling with a pandemic caused by a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that has disrupted and stressed to capacity nearly every aspect of the world’s social, political, and economic order. In an attempt to quell outbreaks and reduce infection rates, the United States has implemented measures utilized by other countries that experienced COVID-19 outbreaks prior to the United States. Governors and other elected officials have followed guidance from the president, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and public health officials to enforce stay-at-home orders, social distancing and, in some jurisdictions, the mandatory wearing of face masks. Due to the pandemic and the threat of uncontrollable outbreaks, for the first time in the nation’s history, nearly all K-12 schools and colleges/universities were closed in March 2020 and began attempting to deliver education online. In the months that followed, all businesses were closed to onsite access except for those deemed essential such as banks, grocery stores, and pharmacies. These mandated closures of business and industry, government offices, schools and universities, and other institutions have created record unemployment rates and profoundly impacted the economy worldwide.

The pandemic has ripped away the thin veneer that attempts to hide pervasive and harmful inequality in education. The nation’s poorest students, students of color, and differently-abled students have been the most negatively impacted by school closings. Without meals for food-challenged families and without special education services, many children are suffering. The pandemic has revealed just how much further the nation has to go in order to fulfill children’s constitutional right to an education—a right that states define as a democratic imperative, fundamental value, and paramount duty.

A few weeks into the pandemic, the nation was rocked by massive protests spawned in response to the murders of innocent Black citizens George Floyd (Minneapolis, MN), a laid-off truck driver and bar bouncer; Breonna Taylor (Louisville, KY), an EMT and emergency room technician; and Ahmaud Arbery

(Satilla, GA), an avid jogger. The protests, which continued for weeks, focused on White male police brutality, vigilante White men with ties to local police forces hunting and killing innocent Black men, and a U.S. judicial system irresponsible to Black victims of police brutality. Protests in support of change were so vigorous that 23 governors and the mayor of Washington, D.C. called in the National Guard to quell civil unrest and riots. Protests against police brutality continue to gain momentum not only in the U.S., but worldwide.

Five interviews reported in this study occurred during the pandemic, but prior to George Floyd's murder and national protests. Five of the leaders interviewed reference the pandemic as shaping their perspectives. Due to the pandemic and their universities' closures, interviews with the five academic deans who participated in this study were rescheduled from March to May 2020.

THE INTERVIEWEES

The interviewees for this report were selected from three distinct types of organizations: grant-making foundations, policy organizations with missions of social equality and/or education equity, and institutions of higher education. Among these, three interviewees were foundation presidents or board members, five interviewees were leaders of policy organizations, and five interviewees were deans of education representing, respectively, three large public universities, one large private university, and one private historically Black college or university (HBCU). Notably, four of these deans were AACTE members, while one was a non-member. A list of the 13 interviewees and their organizations is provided as follows:

Interviewees and Affiliations

Interviewees from Academic Institutions

Institutional Description

Dr. Michael Heithaus, Dean
College of Arts, Sciences and Education
Florida International University, Miami, FL

Large public university
Largest producer of Hispanic/Latinx teachers

Dr. Bridget Long, Dean
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Large private university graduate school

Dr. Debbie Mercer, Dean
College of Education
Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS

Large public land-grant university

Dr. Robert Pianta, Dean
Curry School of Education and Human Development
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

Large public university

Dr. J. Fidel Turner, Dean
School of Education
Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA

Mid-sized (4,000-student) HBCU
Largest UNCF institution

Interviewees and Affiliations

Interviewees from Policy Organizations and Foundations

Organizational Description/Mission

Gen. (Ret.) Lloyd J. Austin III
Board of Trustees
Carnegie Corporation of New York
www.carnegie.org

The Carnegie Corporation of New York is one of America's oldest grantmaking foundations. Established in 1911 by Andrew Carnegie, the corporation's work focuses on international peace, the advancement of education and knowledge, and strengthening democracy. Carnegie Corporation's work in education presently focuses on advancing literacy, urban school reform, and teacher education reform.

Dr. Milton Chen
Board of Trustees
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
www.wkkf.org

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal innovator and entrepreneur Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work, and life.

Lorraine Hariton
President
Catalyst
www.catalyst.org

Catalyst is a global nonprofit working with some of the world's most powerful CEOs and leading companies to help build workplaces that work for women. Founded in 1962, Catalyst drives change with pioneering research, practical tools, and proven solutions to accelerate and advance women into leadership—because progress for women is progress for everyone.

Dr. Khalilah Harris
Managing Director of Education Policy
Center for American Progress
www.americanprogress.org

The Center for American Progress is an independent nonpartisan policy institute dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans, through bold, progressive ideas, as well as strong leadership and concerted action. Our aim is not just to change the conversation, but to change the country.

Dr. Na'ilah Nasir
President and CEO
Spencer Foundation
<https://www.spencer.org>

The Spencer Foundation invests in education research that cultivates learning and transforms lives. The Spencer Foundation has been a leading funder of education research since 1971 and is the only national foundation focused exclusively on supporting education research.

Deborah Santiago
CEO
Excelencia in Education
www.edexcelencia.org

Excelencia in Education accelerates Latino student success in higher education by promoting Latino student achievement, conducting analysis to inform educational policies, and advancing institutional practices while collaborating with those committed and ready to meet the mission.

Hilary Shelton
Director of the NAACP's Washington Bureau / Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy
NAACP
www.naacp.org

The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons.

Kent Withycombe
Director, Public Education
Washington Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
www.washlaw.org

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs works to create legal, economic, and social equity through litigation, client and public education and public policy advocacy.

Interview Protocol and Research Questions

The interview protocol used in this study aligns with AACTE's vision, mission, and strategic priorities. Interviews were conducted in person, online via Zoom, and via phone calls. Twelve of the thirteen interviews were 50 minutes; one was 30 minutes. Interview transcriptions and notes were reviewed for dominant themes, and at least one member-check was conducted with each interviewee to ensure that each participant's perspectives were accurately captured and represented in this report.

The goal of the tiered interview process was to generate and share ideas from national foundation and policy leaders that will help inform how AACTE moves toward its new strategic goals, as articulated in the AACTE 2020-23 Strategic Plan.

Interview Questions based on AACTE 2020-23 Strategic Plan

Vision: AACTE, its members, and partners collaborate to revolutionize education for all PK-12 learners.

Is "revolution" the most appropriate term to describe what is needed in our PK-12 education system? Is a revolution needed? If so, what do you think it will take to revolutionize education for all PK-12 learners? What do you or your organization want to learn in order to achieve this goal? What needs to be done differently or at a better scale by AACTE and/or by your and other institutions?

Mission: AACTE elevates education and educator preparation through research, professional practice, advocacy, and collaboration.

Are you feeling shifts in your ecosphere? How can AACTE help you to strategize and maneuver through those shifts? Where do your institution's and AACTE strategic priorities merge? How might we collaborate to advance our shared institutional priorities/goals?

**Strategic Priority 1: Advocating for High Quality Educator Preparation
Strategic Priority 2: Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

What research, commentary, feelings/thoughts, and personalities guide your institution's diversity and inclusion work?

When you think about your institution and the topics of diversity and inclusion, which component of your organization's portfolios is strongest? Can you provide examples of the conduct and/or support of the following?

- Research on diversity and inclusion related issues
- Instructional content/courses designed to address diversity and inclusion
- Federal and state policy work to advance diversity and inclusion
- Strategic partnerships with Minority-Serving Institutions and organizations with a global focus (such as UNESCO)
- Recruitment of Black and Hispanic/Latina/o/x faculty and/or leadership personnel

Strategic Priority 3: Advancing Educator Preparation, Policy, Practice, and Research

What is your organization doing that is future or forward leaning? In this regard, do you have suggestions for future/forward leaning policy, research, or other activities that AACTE could or should pursue? Is there something futuristic, new, or next that AACTE and your organization would be excellent collaborators on?

AN EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Is revolution the most appropriate term to describe what is needed in our PK-12 education system? Is a revolution needed? If so, what do you think it will take to revolutionize education for all PK-12 learners? What do you or your organization want to learn in order to achieve this goal? What needs to be done differently or at better scale by AACTE and/or by your and other institutions?

The leaders interviewed for this study responded to this set of questions with observations in four predominate themes:

- (1) Yes, revolution and transformation are needed.
- (2) Democratic principles must guide what we revolutionize toward.
- (3) Structural inequalities are tied to outdated attitudes and school funding systems, both of which need to change.
- (4) A race equity agenda explicitly focused on Black and Latinx students is needed.

Revolution: Right for the Times

Almost every leader interviewed agreed that “revolution” is the correct term to describe what is needed to better serve the nation’s PK-12 public school students in today’s world. The word “revolution” was viewed by respondents as “bold,” “definitive,” and “the right idea and action” for this time. Many described the public-school system as especially ill-serving the needs of students of color and students from families experiencing poverty—groups that comprise the majority of public-school students. Furthermore, each of the interviewees recommended a “fundamental re-design,” a “reordering of foundational assumptions,” and “transformation” of the system in order to achieve educational equity, increase educational attainment, and improve life outcomes for all students.

First and foremost, the interviewees concluded that there needs to be a national and more robust attitudinal shift to reach new generations of students in new ways. The attitudinal shift required by the nation’s citizenry can assure that enabling policies do not outpace public sentiment and stall progress toward a more equitable and just society.

Democracy in Schools

Each interviewee discussed the national need to recommit to a democratic and inclusive society and an economic system that works for more Americans. In short, they affirmed that schools that are designed to prepare students for a participatory democratic life must have funding, governance, administrative structures, curricular content, and instructional strategies that reflect democratic ideals.

“

For far too long, we’ve tolerated a status quo in our school systems. I spend a lot of time in schools and observe that the system is passive. It takes what society hands it. We don’t do much—enough—to shift those orders and elevate the potentials of a more diverse group of students.

”

Bob Pianta
Dean, Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

“

Basic and fundamental democratic principles should guide our work as we revolutionize education for all learners.

”

Hilary Shelton
Director and Senior Vice President
NAACP

Reducing the educational and economic gaps between the “haves and have nots” is of central concern to these leaders. They recognize that nearly 70 years of litigation about education access, school funding, education equity, and opportunity to learn has yielded an essential finding: money matters. And, how money is spent makes a difference in students’ educational experiences. They believe the pandemic has put in plain view how economic and educational inequities are hurting children and youth. Going forward new work must be done to eradicate inequalities and inequities.



Who do we believe is worthy? From whom have we ideologically and financially divested? Where is our sense of urgency to correct that divestment?



Na'ilah Nasir
President and CEO
Spencer Foundation



Sadly, there are children who are hungry for food their parents can't afford. Children who are hungering for affirmation and safety. And children hungry for social interactions with their peers and the adults who teach and nurture them. COVID is showing just how hungry and unfed some of our nation's children are.



J. Fidel Tuner
Dean, School of Education
Clark Atlanta University

“Pandemics, environmental disasters, and other seismic-shifting events will continue to occur and threaten how we do schooling in this nation,” says Michael Heithaus, dean of the College of Arts, Sciences and Education at Florida International University (FIU), one of the nation’s largest producers of Hispanic/Latinx teachers. As an example, Heithaus cites the profound effect of 2005’s catastrophic Gulf Coast hurricane on K-12 education in New Orleans: “Hurricane Katrina was used to raze the New Orleans public school system and reduce it to a collection of charter schools,” says Heithaus. Despite research findings that show that “increasing per-pupil spending yields large improvements in educational attainment, wages, family income, and reductions in the annual incidence of adult poverty” (National Bureau on Economics, 2015, p. 39), experimentation with such specious and unproven schemes continues in districts and schools serving urban poor students of color.

Structural Inequities: Excessive Testing, Inadequate Funding

The interviewees also expressed strong concern about how standardized testing has taken over school curricula and instruction, especially in districts serving urban and poor students of color. Empirical evidence is beginning to show that the fundamental assumption—that achievement-focused education systems incentivize improvement—is flawed. A recent four-part Harvard education study found that test-driven systems do not incentivize improvement and that they hurt minority and high-poverty schools—often leaving these schools dramatically worse off.

According to AACTE (2011), students in high-poverty schools (federally designated when at least 50% of students receive free/reduced lunch) are 70% more likely than their affluent and White peers to have a teacher teaching them four subjects (math, English, social studies, and science) who is not certified in those subjects or does not have a college major or minor in the subject taught. Compounding such blatantly unacceptable classroom problems are other factors that systematically and consistently limit these students’ opportunity to learn. In short, too many students of color and students from families experiencing poverty languish in schools that are underfunded, lack contemporary technology, and suffer from short-tenured superintendents, a revolving door of principals, and high turnover rates among teachers. Yet despite these fiscal and human resource inequities, 84% of Black students attend schools in states that require high stakes tests. Far fewer White students (66%) live in such states.

The leaders interviewed for this report devoted considerable discussion to the long-standing issue of how economic inequity is baked into states' school funding systems. Simply put, these leaders believe reliance on property values as the primary funding source for schools has resulted in the nation's wealthiest districts spending nearly 10 times more than the poorest. Under current formulae used in almost every school district across the nation, schools in wealthier districts and neighborhoods with higher property valuations and property taxes have better-funded schools. Wide variations in funding can exist between and within districts—even those within the same state. These disparities impact the quality of instruction in measurable ways, impacting the size and quality of schools' educator workforce, class sizes, and learning time. Funding inequities are so pervasive and acute that lawsuits have been filed in 40 states. In order to improve academic achievement and educational attainment for students from families experiencing poverty, financial investment in resource-challenged, low-performing schools and districts is critical. There is a general sense among these leaders that the nation can ill-afford a future where large numbers of Americans have been pushed to the edges of the nation's political, economic, and social order. If the nation is to maintain its allegiance to democratic and enlightenment values, more must be done for the nation's poor students who are disproportionately students of color. There is a moral duty to do better by the nation's neediest students. The current pandemic has made this duty clearer and more critical than ever.



School finance reform is needed. To solve the quality education problems that are at the root of many equity concerns, school finance reform is essential to ensure that resources are allocated according to student needs. States should undertake the kinds of weighted student formula reforms that Massachusetts and California have pursued, and the federal government should fully enforce the funding-equity provisions in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).



**Hilary Shelton
Director and Senior Vice President
NAACP**

Still, intense resistance to court-ordered remedies persists, even in the face of forceful judicial opinions finding that states are defaulting on their constitutional duty to fairly educate their poorest children. Change is not easy, especially in the aftermath of natural disasters and during a pandemic, when many long for a return to a stable (though dysfunctional) norm.



We need a revolution to end the arms race caused by market-based school reform models and the oppressive use of standardized tests that control and drive too much instruction, especially in schools serving low-income students of color.



**Kent Withycombe
Public Education Director
Washington Lawyers' Committee on
Civil Rights and Urban Affairs**



High stakes testing doesn't get us to equity, but equitable school funding formulae can.

**Na'ilah Nasir
President and CEO, Spencer Foundation**



An Agenda for Racial Equity

The leaders in this study understand that addressing race-based inequalities is essential to improving the nation's public schools and accelerating education achievement and attainment for African American and other underserved students, particularly students of color and those from families experiencing poverty.

Sixty-six years have passed since *Brown v Board of Education*. The Brown decision came down in 1954; however, in the 17 dual-system (segregated) states, White resistance stalled school desegregation until the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since Brown, state and federal courts have steadily engaged litigation about education access, school funding, education equity, and opportunity to learn. In recent years, litigation school reform vouchers, charters, qualified" teachers, disproportionately teachers-in-training in schools and urban poor too often these often viewed as have old roots in Brown.

According to the an explicit and racial justice African American to languish in percentages of revolving door of and curricular the intellectual, contributions of other people of



Equitize school funding and target low-resource states and districts.



Khalilah Harris
Managing Director of Education Policy
Center for American Progress



COVID is a stress test for our public education system, and we have failed. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and shown how structurally fractured the system is. We need to double-down on structural inequalities and solve this problem. We cannot settle for a logistical return to normal and doing schooling the same way we did prior to COVID.

Bob Pianta
Dean, Curry School of Education
University of Virginia



has challenged approaches such as definitions for "highly and the practice of placing uncertified as teachers-of-record classrooms serving students of color. All schemes – which are new and innovative— White resistance to

interviewees, without thoroughly embedded agenda, too many students will continue schools with high uncertified teachers, a ineffective principals, materials that deny cultural, and historical African Americans and color.



The crisis is more than just a learning loss for students affected by school closures and the slow move to online delivery of instruction. For too many students, the crisis is their loss of a safe space, warm meals, daily structure. They no longer have school or the neighborhood library as safe spaces.



J. Fidel Turner
Dean School of Education
Clark Atlanta University

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

What research, commentary, feelings/thoughts, and personalities guide your institution's diversity and inclusion work?

When you think about your institution and the topics of diversity and inclusion, which component of your organization's portfolios is strongest? Can you provide examples of the conduct and/or support of the following?

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- Instructional content/courses designed to address diversity and inclusion
- Federal and state policy work to advance diversity and inclusion
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- Recruitment of Black and Hispanic/Latina/o/x faculty and/or leadership personnel

In contemplating this set of research questions, every leader interviewed for this report affirmed that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agendas are essential to meeting and improving education and social outcomes for the nation's schoolchildren and youth. Four themes predominated as they discussed DEI:

- (1) Mechanisms that support privilege
- (2) Deficit versus asset research and approaches
- (3) The digital divide
- (4) Technology-inspired innovations in teaching and learning, particularly those that can be used to reach special needs/differently-abled students

Generally, the interviewees used the following broad definitions to define DEI:

- Diversity is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, and status as differently abled.
- Equity is acknowledging historic and root causes of disparities, instituting policies and practices that expand access and resources previously restricted to White and affluent groups to traditionally marginalized groups, and advancing social justice.
- Inclusion is the degree to which traditionally marginalized groups participate fully in organizational leadership and decision-making processes.

“

Race equity begins with naming and correcting the generational ills that this nation has hoisted on Black people. Addressing these ills will help lift all students.

”

Khalilah Harris
Managing Director of Education Policy
Center for American Progress

“

How does privilege reproduce itself? What policies and practices routinely privilege some and disenfranchise others?

”

Na'ilah Nasir
President and CEO
Spencer Foundation

“

We can't get to equity without resolving historical issues and inequalities! Let's serve the students we have in meaningful ways!

”

Deborah Santiago
CEO, Excelencia in Education

“

One priority in our national platform is addressing the racial gap in technology and internet access. Expanding broadband access across the country, with particular investments in rural and low-income communities, will ensure a national standard of internet access, quality, and affordability.

”

Hilary Shelton
Director and Senior Vice President, NAACP

“

As a nation, we are missing out by not moving forward more assertively with our commitment to DEI!

”

Michael Heithaus
Dean, College of Arts, Sciences and Education
Florida International University

All of those interviewed indicated that their own institutions are guided by DEI frameworks. Some of those frameworks are centralized and not unit-specific; others have long been embedded in the history of the institution (as minority-serving or land grant). Leaders have seen their institutions move away from the one-person and one-division models of DEI to a more whole-cloth commitment. Each interviewee cited personnel, divisions, centers/institutes, special initiatives and degree programs exclusively devoted to DEI; however, they view impactful and sustainable DEI work as that which is institutionally diffused, built on partnerships, and, in the case of public colleges and universities, incentivized by state funding.

“

Deficit perspective research and commentary is stalling education equity advances. We need more challenges to this—more strengths and asset-based research approaches to inform policy and funding.

”

Deborah Santiago
CEO, Excelencia in Education





The way we structure teaching and learning is mismatched to millennial teachers and post-millennial students—both of whom are digital natives.



Na'ilah Nasir
President, Spencer Foundation

Mechanisms that Support Privilege

Much of the leaders' DEI commentary was grounded in Gloria Ladson-Billings' 2007 concept of "education debt," defined as a debt owed to poor communities by society at large as a result of withheld resources. There was consensus among interviewees that this debt is a function of White privilege that permeates the larger society and all its institutions, including schools.

White privilege is based on a deficit perspective about people of color generally, and it results in devaluing investment in the education of students of color specifically.

White privilege also is evidenced in data about schools. In 2020, nationwide comparisons of schools attended by students of color show persistent inequities, including the following:

- Enrollments nearly twice that of schools attended by White students
- Larger classroom sizes
- Fewer advanced placement and college preparatory classes at the high school level
- Curricula that is more explicitly standards-based
- Instruction that is excessively focused on standardized test performance

These realities reflect school funding policies and practices that benefit White and affluent students over students of color and students from families experiencing poverty.

Deficit versus Asset Research

Students typically experience academic success in schools that have a credentialed and caring educator workforce; curricular materials and instructional strategies that are high-quality, student-centric, and culturally responsive; and a school climate that is safe and encouraging. More often than not, students of color do not have access to schools with these attributes.

When school personnel, culture and climate, and curricular materials do not reflect or are oppositional to students of color, opportunity to learn declines. Using a quantitative measure to define Opportunity to Learn, The Schott Foundation (2009) found that African American, Native American, and Latinx students, taken together, have just over half of the opportunity to learn as compared to White, non-Latino students in the nation's best-supported, best-performing schools. A low-income student of any race or ethnicity has just over half of the opportunity to learn, compared to the average White, non-Latino student. The Schott study concluded that "half a chance is substantively no chance at all" (p. 6).



Equity is not just providing what is adequate. It's about providing sufficient resources to prepare students to be successful.



General (Ret.) Lloyd Austin III
Trustee, Carnegie Corporation of New York

The Digital Divide

Interviewees were keenly aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a significant digital divide between families, schools, and communities along the lines of geography, family income, and race/ethnicity. Unanimously, these leaders issued an urgent appeal to fix this digital divide—now.

When K-12 instruction moved online as the nation's 130,000 schools closed due to the pandemic, some students were left unschooled. For example, students in rural areas are less likely than their suburban peers to have access to fixed broadband service, with 87% of suburban students having access, compared to 71% of rural students and 65% of students in remote rural areas. Among students whose family income is between \$20,000 and \$29,000, 30% do not have fixed broadband service, compared to 9% of students whose family income is \$100,000. Furthermore, the closure of public libraries and community centers since the pandemic (as well as due to prior budget cutbacks) has had deleterious effect on internet access for the nation's lower-income and rural students.

Finally, due to the ongoing pandemic, the prospect of school closures into the 2020-21 academic year increases the urgency to fix the digital divide—especially regarding the needs of special needs and differently-abled students. Almost every interviewee said that superintendents, principals, and teachers need new knowledge about adaptive technology and to gear up for the rapid deployment of it.

Technology-Inspired Innovations

The leaders interviewed for this report spent considerable time discussing how new or evolving technology platforms will drive new pedagogical models and curriculum improvement. They viewed use of interactive technology in learning as providing more insertion points for students to make decisions about their learning, juxtaposing this to traditional teaching and learning, where students are far less likely to make determinative decisions about the content and pace of their learning.

Education technology industry reports indicate that the number of schools asking for virtual reality technologies have increased threefold since 2016. Schools are also seeking to use robotics and drones and to acquire more powerful desktop computers that can support advanced art and design programs, animation software, and virtual reality.

All this activity suggests dramatic changes for PK-12 and higher education students. In such an environment, teaching and learning will look very different. New models of teaching and learning will likely emphasize more student autonomy, teaming, flexible scheduling, and synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid course delivery options.



There's a hollowing out of old jobs and rapid increase of jobs that require digital and data literacy, the ability to work with robots, the capacity to think critically, and ability to act compassionately and with empathy. We also need more female students in engineering and AI. These are just a few of the new demands that educators and workforce leaders must respond to.



Lorraine Hariton
President and CEO, Catalyst



Some say today's kids are born digital. Let's use what naturally motivates students to learn. For today's kids, that happens to be technology. Innovative approaches like experiential education, project-based learning, and getting kids into outdoor spaces can be enhanced by novel uses of technology.



Milton Chen
Board of Directors, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Former Executive Director, EduTopia



We have an emergency situation on our hands that government and government and private industry collaboration can fix. The digital divide exists in K-12 and higher education. If it's not fixed, too many students will be left behind and uneducated.

Michael Heithaus
Dean, College of Arts, Sciences and Education
Florida International University



Among the interviewed leaders, there is also a serious concern that unless there are policy and funding changes, wealthier states, districts, and schools will outpace poorer ones relative to instructional quality. These leaders expressed great commitment to meeting PK-12 and higher education students “where they are” relative to their digital native status, interest in gaming, and constant phone connectivity.

They assert that modern students live in a world with technology that is increasingly interactive and fast-paced. This rapidly changing future with a fully digital economy will necessitate a system of lifelong learning and societal commitment to rethink the concepts of jobs.

CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL ECOSPHERE

Are you feeling shifts in your ecosystem? How can AACTE help you to strategize and maneuver through those shifts? Where do your institution's and AACTE strategic priorities merge? How might we collaborate to advance our shared institutional priorities/goals?

An organization's ecosystem is defined as those features, functions, tacit and explicit assumptions, and ways of being that allow the organization to maintain balance while growing and changing. As the leaders interviewed in this study addressed this set of questions, two themes predominated:

- (1) Challenges to tacit and operational assumptions governing schools and society
- (2) Realigning fractured systems to better serve PK-12 students, especially the urban poor

Whether they were interviewed before or after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the leaders featured in this report each acknowledged changes in their own organization's ecosystem.



Society's eyes have been opened by COVID. This window of opportunity helps the fight for social justice in education.

Debbie Mercer
Dean, School of Education
Kansas State University



PK-12 teaching is not 8:00 to 3:00 anymore. In the best schools, the pandemic enabled students to have nearly 24-hour access to teachers. Students in these schools now expect immediate and ongoing communication. They are able to reach their teachers via text, FaceTime phone calls, and Google/ Microsoft Teams or Zoom meetings for homework guidance. This is the new normal—until new technology enables even faster and better access and communication between students and teachers.

J. Fidel Turner
Dean, School of Education
Clark Atlanta University





Schools alone cannot be the economic development engine. The nation needs a cradle-to-career pipeline.



Debbie Mercer
Dean, School of Education
Kansas State University

Challenges to Assumptions Governing Schools and Society

The five academic deans interviewed spoke thoughtfully and candidly about how destabilizing and rapid changes were occurring in their institutions. Some referenced daily threats to stability and wondered whether certain institutions of higher education (mainly, smaller minority-serving institutions) would survive the destabilizing impact of the pandemic on families’ financial security and college student enrollments. Others saw COVID as an opportunity to pursue productive change—to accelerate the work of total redesign of teaching and learning that was already happening prior to the pandemic. All the deans worried about having the human and fiscal resources to pursue quick, effective, and needed changes.

The leaders engaged in considerable conversation about redesigning the nation’s schools from an agricultural and industrial model—one that is outmoded and mismatched to contemporary students and teachers—to a more knowledge-based, information- and digital-age model. All of the interviewees made observations that schools—and the teaching and learning that occurs in them—need to change. They believe that in this new, post-COVID model of schooling, teachers, and students will focus on gathering and organizing information, judging its value through multiple and global perspectives, and working collaboratively in teams and groups through information made available by technology and interactive communications.



We are going to need more special education teachers, school counselors, school psychologists and school and family social workers.



Michael Heithaus
Dean, College of Arts, Sciences and Education
Florida International University



In philanthropy there is a huge shift related to critique of wealthy people having an oversized influence on what gets funded. Philanthropy should be intended to boost public systems, not replace them.



Na’ilah Nasir
President and CEO, Spencer Foundation

The deans who were interviewed during the COVID-19 pandemic also suggested that PK-12 schools and colleges/universities will experience changes to the typical academic calendar that may persist well after the pandemic. Technology can enable 24/7 access to teachers, easier study across disciplines, integration of subject matter with less reliance on separate subject area classes, multi-aged classrooms with a project-based learning focus, and novel and more robust partnerships with between PK-12 schools, colleges/universities, local businesses, and other organizations.

Realigning Fractured Systems for Better Schools

As we have seen, the COVID-19 pandemic has starkly revealed disparities in educational opportunities and how these disparities are part of broader economic issues. If it is true that schools reflect and reproduce society's social and economic order, then it is also true that schools cannot reverse that order on their own. Changing the social order is fundamental to eradicating education disparities.

According to the leaders interviewed here, a cross-sectors commitment to achieving education and social equity is needed. Such a commitment will involve striving toward the nation's highest ideals and growing systems that can enable change.

In particular, the academic deans in this study, all interviewed during the pandemic, said that a return to the status quo that existed prior to the pandemic is a mistake. They urged using this moment while inequities are in stark relief to fight for better resource distribution, new schooling models, and better access to and utilization of technology to meet instructional delivery needs and energize school curricula around skills and jobs of the future.

The deans uniformly spoke about a future need for certain education professionals and social workers to address the trauma induced by the pandemic. Of particular concern to all the leaders interviewed is the plight of nation's nearly seven million special education students, most of whom are missing out on speech, occupational, and physical therapy as well as individualized instruction—none of which can adequately be provided by parents. Those interviewed urged national efforts to produce more special education teachers, counselors, and psychologists.

Assumptions about how education equity work will be undertaken and funded was also discussed. These leaders pointed out that philanthropy can address societal issues and problems in quick, innovative, and nimble ways not always possible by government agencies. However, the best models for reform protect democratic ideals, promote idea and solutions sharing with constituent populations, and support healthier public systems

FORWARD/NEXT INITIATIVES

What is your organization doing that's future- or forward-leaning? In this regard, do you have suggestions for future-/forward-leaning policy, research, or other activities that AACTE could or should pursue? Is there something futuristic, new, or next that AACTE and your organization would be excellent collaborators on?

Though each of the leaders interviewed spoke about institutional initiatives that excited them



How did we lose our way? How is it that in 2020 there are fewer resources and time for the arts and humanities in school than 40 years ago? How do we rebalance schools for connection, fun, and joy?

Kent Withycombe
Director of Public Education
Washington Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights and Urban Affairs



It's already outdated to train and professionally develop teachers for only face-to-face instruction. We need more pedagogical variety given online delivery of instruction.

Debbie Mercer
Dean, College of Education
Kansas State University



and that they viewed as impactful, they were more interested in speaking about broad trends around the future that address three needs:

- (1) The need to remedy initiative fatigue
- (2) The need to conduct major curriculum redesign and reengineering
- (3) The need to reconceptualize leadership to build a new social compact that spurs more equality and opportunity for more people

Initiative Fatigue

Many leaders in this study are concerned about initiative fatigue—a personal and institutional weariness that occurs when the number of initiatives proliferates without an attendant increase in time, human and fiscal resources, and generative energy. When initiative fatigue sets in, even well-conceived and well-initiated work receives less financial support and attention. The leaders interviewed viewed initiative fatigue as driven by the perpetual quest for funding in the name of reform and innovation. As an antidote to this weariness, there were numerous calls to have a better accounting of what is not working in PK-12 teaching and learning, as well as the training and professional development of teachers. In short, these leaders want to see the research community marshalled to investigate and report what is not working. They believe that this type of research can help shape innovation.

Curriculum Redesign

There was also substantial conversation about the need for substantive PK-12 curriculum redesign as schools move into the future. Many of these leaders recommended beginning the deep-tissue work of redesign at the middle school level.

Though each leader interviewed saw a role for standards and standardized testing, they believe that the standards movement and the proliferation of standardized testing have proceeded hand-in-hand, unabated, resulting in school curricula that is burdensome to both teachers and students.

Over the last 20 years, states have stipulated an official curriculum. This official curriculum is translated from the state at the district level into benchmarks, standards, and common curricular goals, all of which determine the specific textbooks and other instructional materials that teachers use. Ultimately, the curricula are determined by the benchmarks and intended to shape students' performance on state-mandated standardized tests.

The leaders interviewed for this report believe that the logic of having an official curriculum is outdated, especially given emerging society's new and different demands. They assert that outmoded schools



Modern reform movements have fractured natural systems—taken away local control of schools, reduced curricula to standards, and taken assessment of students out of the hands of teachers and placed it in the hands of the testing industry. These shifts have upset the natural systems that sustain vibrant and democratic school-communities.



Kent Withycombe
Director of Public Education
Washington Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights and Urban Affairs



New ways of being require new teachers—for example, those who are multidisciplinary in their training and teaching.



Milton Chen
Board of Directors
W.K. Kellogg Foundation



Regrettably, standards have become the curriculum, and testing the instructional tool.

Bob Pianta
Dean, Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

inculcate facts and skills, while future schools will need to prepare learners who understand how to gather and organize information, judge its value through multiple and global perspectives, and work collaboratively in teams and groups through information made available by technology and interactive communications.



The pace of leadership is necessarily changing alongside the pace of change. This means that leadership cannot reside in just one person. We need more of the right people doing the right thing!

General (Ret.) Lloyd Austin III
Trustee, Carnegie Corporation of New York



We must normalize a growth conversation.

Bridget Long
Dean, Graduate School of Education
Harvard University

New Concepts of Leadership

Whether they were interviewed before or after the COVID-19 pandemic, these leaders spoke about the future of the nation and schools as intimately interdependent. They view the failure to resolve the social and economic issues that have created a permanent underclass as a threat to democracy. They understand that a better future lies in eradicating structures that disenfranchise and marginalize and instead, creating inclusive new spaces and institutional structures that enable participation for all.

According to these leaders, curriculum and schooling occurs in dialectic relationship with social change. Educational change reflects social change and can help resolve social issues and transform society. Future leaders will need to reconstruct the social contract and address fundamental moral and ethical issues related to wealth distribution and work, citizenship, health, the environment, war, democracy, self-determination, and freedom.

Those interviewed believe that vast and dramatic changes are impacting every aspect of the world. They assert that worldwide displacement of people due to dramatic climate change, war and conflict, and collapsing economies and nation-states is challenging establishment thinking, upending deep-rooted notions of self-interest, and altering existing socio-economic and political models. Additionally, the nation's (and the world's) workforce is becoming less human and more reliant on artificial intelligence (AI) and collaborating robots. Under these circumstances, disruption is more and more a normative state.

In a milieu of disruption, organizations must be pliable—equipped for continuous learning, improvement, and innovation. And most important, organizational structures must be able to sustain and overcome loss.

These leaders conclude that the world's new realities argue for new ways of teaching and learning, inspired and led by continued innovation in educator preparation.

AACTE'S ROADMAP TO REVOLUTIONIZE EDUCATION FOR ALL LEARNERS

The leaders whose input is presented here—drawn from their broad experience base in philanthropy, nonprofits, and higher education institutions—provide invaluable strategic perspectives about AACTE's new vision to revolutionize education for all learners. As we have seen, those interviewed support the idea of revolution: reimagining, redesigning, and transforming PK-12 teaching and learning and teacher preparation.

Critically, these leaders also defined AACTE as being the lead research, convening, and policy advocacy organization in this endeavor. According to them, each role has a series of interrelated and primary mandates that should guide how AACTE will fulfill its new vision. These active, measurable steps describe AACTE's capabilities on a national level in the coming decade.

AACTE as a Research Organization

As a research organization, the leaders found that AACTE

- Produces cutting edge research about teacher preparation and promulgates best methods in innovative ways that include media and unique applications of technology;
- Acts as a world leader in pedagogy redesign research;
- Catalogs evidence-based resources;
- Serves as a resource bank and shares expertise with myriad audiences;
- Maintains a pulse on and reports about what teachers believe and feel about teacher preparation; and
- Encourages and helps prepare a new and more diverse group of researchers committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

AACTE as a Convener

As a convener of professionals working in higher education, the AACTE

- Clears space to encourage fresh thinking;
- Continues its industry alignment work between institutions of higher education, school districts, teachers, and students;
- Assembles communities of common cause/coalitions of the willing doing equity work;
- Works collaboratively with strategic external partners to remove roadblocks to equal educational opportunity and equity;
- Collaborates with members and partners to advance plans of action to eradicate the racism in education;
- Spurs universities to be part of the solution to education disparities; and
- Acts as a bridge between organizations committed to education equity that may not be working together.



COVID has exacerbated inequalities and isolation and revealed the depth and breadth of technology and digital access divides affecting students.



General (Ret.) Lloyd Austin III
Trustee, Carnegie Corporation of New York



Do we believe our nation's youth are assets?



Bob Pianta
Dean, Curry School of Education

AACTE as a Policy Advocate

The leaders interviewed saw AACTE as occupying a unique role as a policy advocate for educator preparation across a wide spectrum of settings. Specifically, the leaders observed that AACTE

- Plays a critical role in shaping federal and state policies related to teacher training, licensure, and diversity;
- Informs state and federal legislators about the state of teacher preparation and innovation by highlighting member programs and initiatives; and
- Acts to reduce regulatory sclerosis in state and federal policies impacting teacher education.

CONCLUSION

AACTE is viewed by philanthropic, nonprofit, and higher education leaders as uniquely positioned to advance an equity research and practice agenda in teacher education that results in a more diverse and innovatively prepared generation of teachers. These teachers, in turn, will be better equipped to serve future generations of PK-12 students.

The 13 leaders interviewed for this report view AACTE as a preeminent research, convening and policy advocacy organization. In their view, AACTE's future work should build on its current strategic roles and activities by encouraging its members to experiment, create new models, grow innovative programs, and stimulate responsive policy.

Primary among the recommendations made by those interviewed is that AACTE continue with an increasing emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, coupled with efforts to eradicate racism and other structures that marginalize PK-12 students.

About the Author

Leslie T. Fenwick, Ph.D., is dean in residence at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and a former visiting fellow at Harvard University. Additionally, she is dean emeritus of the Howard University School of Education and a professor of education policy. Fenwick has worked in every sector of education as a PK-12 school teacher and administrator in urban public and private schools, university faculty member and administrator, foundation program officer, and legislative aide in the State of Ohio Senate when the state crafted its first omnibus school reform legislation.

Appendix A: AACTE Partners

AACTE partners with a diverse range of institutions to build stronger education communities and provide higher levels of excellence in teaching and learning. AACTE 2020 partners include the following:

- American Council on Education (ACE)
- Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education (AILACTE)
- The Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center
- Council of Academic Deans from Research Education Institutions (CADREI)
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
- Education Testing Service (ETS)
- Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLEN)
- International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
- Learning First Alliance
- Learning Policy Institute
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Appendix A: AACTE Partners (Continued)

- National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs
- National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC)
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA)
- National Technology Leadership Summit (NTLS)
- Phi Delta Kappa (PDK)
- Sanford Inspire
- Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE)
- Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities (TECSCU)
- Teaching Works
- The Wallace Funds
- Washington Higher Education Secretariat
- Western Governors University (WGU)

Appendix B: AACTE Strategic Plan: Goals and Objectives

Strategic Priority 1: Advocating for High-Quality Educator Preparation

AACTE and its members advocate for policies that are dedicated to building and sustaining high quality preparation of teachers and other education professionals that ensure our graduates are profession ready.

Goal: Graduates of educator preparation programs will be profession-ready and prepared to meet the needs of PK-12 districts and schools.

Conditions to be changed (objectives):

- a) Increase AACTE's impact on revolutionizing educator preparation
- b) Expand enrollment in educator preparation programs especially in shortage areas and among diverse candidates
- c) Expand public and institutional policies promoting and supporting high quality, clinically based, educator preparation programs.
- d) Increase the number of educator preparation programs and colleges of education recognized as effective because they have, support, and advance Black, Brown, and otherwise diverse candidates and faculty, effective integration of advanced technology, and utilization of evidence- and clinically-based experiences.
- e) Increase the capacity of educator preparation programs to advocate successfully with policy makers at the local, state, and national levels.

Appendix B: AACTE Strategic Plan: Goals and Objectives (Continued)

Strategic Priority 2: Promoting Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

AACTE and its members value the diversity of students, their families, and educators; equity in access to high quality instructional environments; and the inclusion of all students, defined as access and opportunity, in PK-20 classrooms.

Goal: Educator preparation programs and their faculty, students, and communities will provide successful learning environments that demonstrate diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Conditions to be changed (objectives):

- a) Expand public and institutional policies that support diverse aspiring and current educators.
- b) Increase diversity of educator candidates, preparation faculty, and clinical educators with specific emphasis on recruitment, retention and advancement of professionals who identify as Black, Brown, Asian, Latinx, Native Americans, LGBTQ+ and as persons with a disability.
- c) Increase the capacity of minority serving institutions (Alaska Native, Asian American Native American Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American Non-Tribal, and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Predominantly Black Institutions; and Tribal Colleges and Universities) to promote, support, and increase the pipeline of diverse teachers in the profession.
- d) Increase the capacity of educator preparation programs to prepare candidates to work effectively in environments where complex and multiple forms of discrimination intersect in the experience of individuals or groups.

Strategic Priority 3: Advancing Educator Preparation Policy, Practice, and Research

Through cutting edge research, innovative practice, and advocacy, AACTE and its members advance the field of educator preparation.

Goal: The use of leading-edge research and models of innovative practice will advance the field of educator preparation and strengthen public education for all students.

Conditions to be changed (objectives):

- a) Increase support for research, experimentation, and pilot testing in educator preparation.
- b) Increase the capacity of AACTE and its members to collaboratively address persistent and complex challenges facing education.
- c) Develop, obtain and sustain the financial, human, and intellectual capital necessary for our members to fulfill their missions.
- d) Increase the use, impact, and public recognition of research and technology in educator preparation and PK-12 schools.
- e) Expand state and federal public policy that reflect a vision of educator preparation grounded in research and best practice and designed to address needs of a diverse educator workforce.

