MAKING THE CASE FOR EQUITY

VIRGINIA CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION

- **DIVERSITY** *is the presence of difference*
- **INCLUSION** *is the accepting, respecting, and valuing of diversity*
- **BELONGING** *is the feeling of being accepted, valued, respected, and included in a particular group or community, just as you are*

(Source: Terrell Strayhorn)

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EQUITY

- **EQUITY is the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair**

(Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation)

- **Equity is both a process and an outcome**

(Source: Glenn Harris)

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SESSION OVERVIEW

- Exploring The Current Climate
- Considering Your Approach
- Making The Case
- Pitfalls To Consider
- Making Commitments

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SETTING NORMS

In order to have a productive session:

- What do you need to ***leave*** behind?
- What do you hope to ***get*** from others?
- What do you pledge to ***give*** to others?

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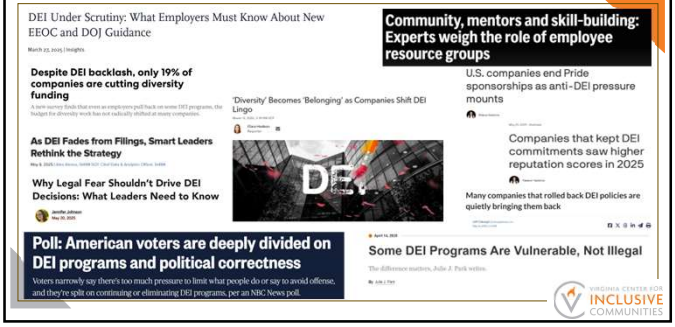
IN THE NEWS



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STATISTICS

- 89% of companies say their efforts are similarly or even more embedded in talent processes than they were a year ago
- 90% are investing in efforts to create more fair decision-making processes
- 91% are prioritizing casting a wide net for diverse talent
- 84% are continuing to invest in inclusion-focused training
  - Types of training are evolving
- 86% say they won't stop collecting employee or applicant demographic data

Source: Paradigm

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STATISTICS

58% of companies report no change in funding for their efforts for building representation in the workforce and fostering inclusion, 23% are increasing funding in 2025

Larger companies (10,000+) are evolving more than smaller ones. 57% of large companies are stopping some efforts, vs. 21% of companies with 200 or fewer employees (similar with federal contractors)

Source: Paradigm

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STATISTICS

89% of Americans are seeking deeper human connection and trust

78% of Americans believe that promoting diversity in the workplace is important to heal the harm racism has had on our country

Source: National Collaborative on Health Equity

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CONSIDERING YOUR APPROACH

- Fight: Staying the course with minimal or no adjustments.
- Flight: Withdrawing considerably or fully abandoning previously established DEI programs.
- Finesse: Sustaining commitment to the underlying values of diversity, equity, and inclusion while shifting strategy and execution.

Source: A. Pollack, D. Glasgow. T. Van Bommel, C. Joseph & K. Yoshino

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CONSIDERING YOUR APPROACH

- Think about your organization or an organization in your community. What approach is that organization currently taking?
- What are the benefits of this approach? What are the drawbacks?

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MAKING THE CASE

1. Connect to Universal Values
2. Use Specific Examples
3. Lead with Shared Aspirations
4. Integrate Fairness into Core Business Functions
5. Balance Validation with Challenge

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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MAKING THE CASE

1. Connect to Universal Values

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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CONNECT TO UNIVERSAL VALUES

- Integrity
- Quality
- Humanity
- Commitment
- Innovation

Create a brief statement to show how this organization's values an be used to make the case for equity

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MAKING THE CASE

2. Use Specific Examples

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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MAKING THE CASE

Instead of:
"We're working to dismantle systemic barriers in our organization."

Consider:
"We noticed that members from our Atlanta office weren't advancing at the same rate as those in headquarters. By examining our promotion process, we discovered that informal networking played a bigger role than we realized. We've since implemented more transparent advancement criteria, and we're already seeing more diverse talent moving up."

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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MAKING THE CASE

3. Lead with Shared Aspirations

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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MAKING THE CASE

Instead of:
"Our organization has significant disparities we need to address."

Consider:
"We all want a workplace where the best ideas rise to the top, where advancement is based on contribution, and where different perspectives strengthen our work. We've identified some gaps between that aspiration and our current reality that we're working to close."

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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MAKING THE CASE

4. Integrate Fairness into Core Business Functions

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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MESSAGING

- Internal – not "one more thing"
- External – equity is not tangential to "bottom line" success or values

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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MAKING THE CASE

5. Balance Validation with Challenge

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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VALIDATION AND CHALLENGE

- Tie back to shared aspirations
- Thank them for feedback
- Values will not shift; practices may

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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CREATING A MESSAGE

For Executive Leadership
Focus on strategic advantage, risk management, and long-term organizational health. Connect workplace fairness efforts to talent development, innovation, and market relevance.

For Middle Management
Emphasize practical tools and approaches that help them lead diverse teams effectively. Focus on creating psychological safety, resolving conflicts productively, and leveraging different perspectives for better outcomes.

For Individual Contributors
Address concerns about fairness directly. Be transparent about how decisions are made and how opportunities are distributed.
Create multiple channels for input and feedback.

Source: Yusuf Ramelize

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COMMON PITFALLS

- Isolated Initiatives
- Pursuing Equity Without Inclusion or Belonging
- Focusing on Only One Identity

Source: Vu Le

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CLOSURE

- Fight, flight, finesse
- Making the case in your organization
  - Connecting to values
  - Using specific examples
  - Lead with shared aspirations
  - Integrate fairness in to core functions
  - Balance validation with challenge
- Pitfalls to avoid

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STAY IN TOUCH

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