

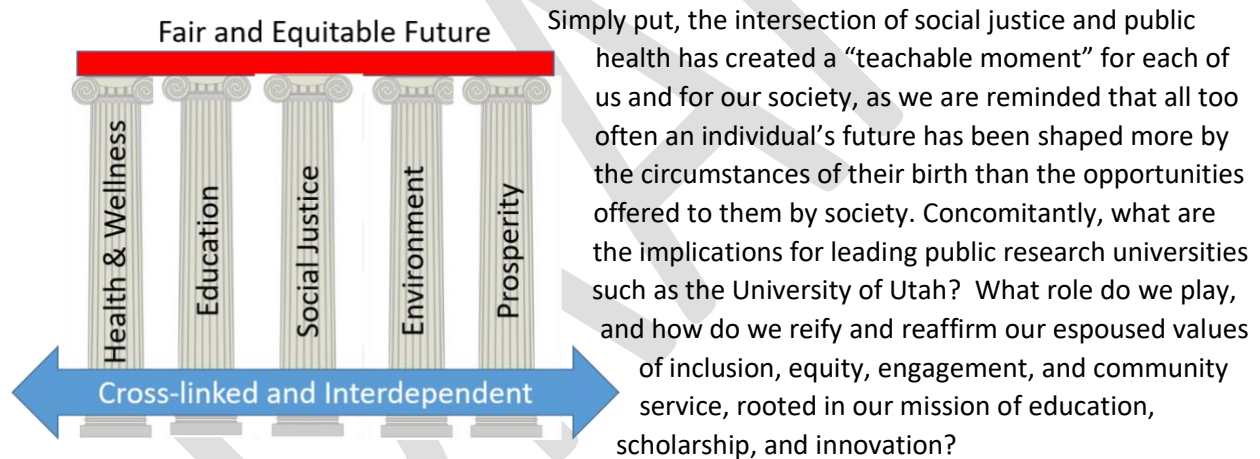
Building a Fair and Equitable Future: A One Utah Grand Challenge

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The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated and exacerbated longstanding structural inequities in our society, all interdependent and intertwined. One need look no further than the striking disparities in COVID-19 incidence, health care access and unemployment among people of color and women for clear and compelling examples of these inequalities. Nor could one help but see the reduced environmental footprint of a global society in hibernation during the first months of the pandemic. However, the underlying issues are much deeper and more inimical than those posed by any viral infection.

Spanning personal, family, and community health and wellness; the environmental quality in home and work environments (air, water, food, and other components); educational access, quality, and attainment; economic opportunities and mobility; and bias, discrimination, and racism, these structural inequities and environmental effects are systemic and interconnected. They predate COVID-19, and unless we act in determined and persistent ways, these deleterious social determinants will continue to compromise the future of our fellow citizens.



It is easy to be consumed by short-term, tactical responses to the evolving pandemic, and the immediate issues of health and safety are rightfully important. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of a strategy of excellence, anchored in a renewed vision of a university as an interconnected whole. These complex, interdependent problems – social justice, environmental quality, health equity, educational access, and economic opportunity – require the type of interdisciplinary scholarship and concerted action that only great universities can mount.

Drawing on campus-wide strategic planning discussions and Council of Deans ideation, we can mount a One Utah initiative – *Building a Fair and Equitable Future* – that integrates expertise from across the campus, engaging students in interdisciplinary education, faculty in collaborative research and scholarship, and our communities in outcome-driven partnerships. More importantly, we can and should do so in a way that leverages our distinguishing institutional assets to make a real difference.

This initiative might involve several distinct thrusts, each targeting a multidisciplinary theme

- *Health and wellness equity in underrepresented and rural communities*
- *Innovative education approaches that address systemic inequalities in K-12, post-secondary and professional education*
- *Environmental sustainability and quality, particularly as it affects specific geographic areas and groups*
- *Economic opportunities and job availability challenges for rural and underrepresented communities*

and all overlaid by studies of social justice, policies, and culture

Exemplar actions

- 1U4U interdisciplinary seed funding for research, scholarship, and teaching
 - Incentives for collaborations across unit barriers
- Theme semesters – equity in (health, environment, education, prosperity, ...)
 - Symposia, events, courses, ...
 - “Team taught” courses to create multidisciplinary perspectives
 - Interdisciplinary certificates and experiential education programs
- Thematic faculty cluster hiring, anchored by senior leaders who are “super-connectors”
- Strategic research initiatives
- Public-private partnerships that galvanize commitments for systemic change
- Community partnerships and collaborations *committed to making a difference*

Funding sources – in the stable state, at least \$2M/year, but in year one, at least \$1M

- University commitments (e.g., F&A returns and campus/college commitments)
- Philanthropy
- Corporate partnerships
- State support
- Research funding opportunities

Example success metrics

- Public policy changes
- Research and scholarship funding
- Undergraduate research and scholarship participants
- Collaborative, cross-college courses and seminars
- Faculty, student and staff diversity (recruitment and retention)
- Community partners
- Theme semesters
- Cluster hires and impact
- Certificates, minors, and majors
- General education requirements
- Measurable change in services access and outcomes
- Community support and heightened coverage of our efforts