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Making the grade: A framework for evaluating race and access in the State University System of Florida, 2019

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MAKING THE GRADE: A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING RACE AND ACCESS IN THE STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA, 2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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In Florida, state reforms such as performance-based funding, preeminence, and the elimination of race-based affirmative action have influenced the composition of student populations in the State University System of Florida (SUS), particularly the composition of Black students across the SUS. This research creates a new framework with which to evaluate state universities, referred to as a Report Card. It utilizes analytical frameworks developed by Allen et al. (2018), Chetty et al. (2017), Peters & Voight (2018), and Leonhardt (2017), and data points were extracted from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the SUS, the Florida Department of Education (FL DOE), the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year, and Chetty et al. (2017). This study calculates Report Card Scores to evaluate the five universities in three categories: Racial Equity, Access, and University Quality. It found that flagship universities in Florida have limited racial diversity and relatively strong student outcomes, while diverse institutions provide greater upward mobility for students.

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"Florida has long been known as the Sunshine State, and it's now time that the nation recognize Florida also as the clearly established Education State." — Richard Corcoran, Florida Commissioner of Education, 2019

"If you dramatically reduce diversity, you're going to reduce the quality of education for all of the students, minority and non-minority alike." — Charles E. Young, President of the University of Florida, 1999-2003

Introduction

In announcing the elimination of race-based affirmative action in 1999, the administration of then-Governor Jeb Bush made a basic argument: "Diversity that disregards performance and focuses solely on race or ethnicity is wrong. It is discrimination" (Johnson & Cobb-Roberts, 2007).[1] By framing affordable action as a practice that disregarded performance, Bush made the basic assumption that diversity in Florida's colleges and universities prior to 2000 was a consequence of unqualified students gaining admission. By eliminating affordable action, then, Bush felt that students of color could still find admissions success via race-neutral factors. Alongside traditional metrics (GPA, SAT/ACT), these race-neutral factors include first generation status and geographic location, in addition to white-preferential practices such as legacy admissions. In the same period, Bush introduced the Talented 20 program which provided guaranteed SUS admission to the top 20% of students from each Florida high school. In years following Bush's executive order, the proportion of students at state universities who identify with a racial or ethnic minority has declined notably (Fessenden & Keller, 2015; Johnson et al., 2007; Samuels, 2015). And, while Talented 20 was introduced as a more equitable, merit-based method of affirmative action, Black

[1] See "Executive Order 99-281" (1999) for Bush's executive order relating to affirmative action. This is referred to as "One Florida."

enrollment declined or remained stagnant at the state flagships (Marin & Lee, 2003).[2] What Bush failed to recognize is that the college admissions process requires a series of scarce resources from students and families: time, money, a quality high school, college counseling, a family background in higher education. Without just one of these resources, the ability of a given student to access a quality college education grows fragile. Students of color are particularly vulnerable to this challenge.

Admissions practices risk creating a self-perpetuating prophecy of only the most privileged students receiving access to the best-funded education when they are not conscious of race and class. In Florida, this prophecy has implications for students in minority groups, some of whom are increasingly unable to access education from the state's top two universities. Though economic status is not explicitly considered, though it is implicitly evident through one's high school, their curriculum, their resume, their access to standardized testing help, and their preparation for the application process as a whole; these factors, among others, are results of one's background characteristics. Florida has the unique privilege of the Bright Futures program, which provides full or partial tuition coverage to students who meet a certain set of academic standards and volunteerism. These standards, however, pose challenges to students without the resources to fulfill them, and an emphasis on need-based aid would be more beneficial to on-campus diversity (Mugglestone et al., 2019). While higher education is affordable for some, it is not necessarily accessible; therefore, it cannot be considered adequate.[3]

[2] See Marin & Lee (2003) for a detailed review of the decision-making process surrounding Bush-era higher education reforms, coupled with their early outcomes.

[3] Adequacy — "the fiscal support needed to meet the objectives of education as required by statutory or constitutional language" — must be evaluated through a lens of inclusivity where possible — specifically, inclusivity "of output and outcomes analysis of all social subsets of individuals" (Mullin & Honeyman, 2008).

Since 2000, several other state initiatives have sought to regulate and reform the SUS. The Preeminent state research universities program established "academic and research excellence standards" tied to funding for universities, including average GPA and SAT scores ("Preeminent…", 2014). Performance-Based Funding 2.0, encompassing 10 metrics, evaluates universities in nine shared categories and one university-selected category and includes a university access rate[4] ("Performance-Based Funding", n.d.). The first implementation of Performance-Based Funding during the administration of Democratic Governor Lawton Chiles was relatively underfunded compared to the current implementation, brought back under Republican Governor Rick Scott. While 1996-97 funding for the program was $12 million total, it ballooned to $560 million in 2019-20, signaling an increased emphasis on the part of the state government on performance metrics (Dougherty & Natow, 2015; "Performance-Based Funding Study", 2019). These initiatives have been successful on paper, with all universities working toward the outlined goals and improving their metrics. As the institutional stature of Florida's higher education system has increased, however, it could have done so to the detriment of racial diversity within individual colleges and universities, particularly in the state's flagship universities, UF and FSU.[5][6]

This research analyzes existing literature on higher education reform, with special attention given to the relationship between race and the SUS. It develops "report cards" for SUS schools in three categories: Racial Equity, Economic Opportunity, and University Quality. In doing so, it tests the variance in higher education access and opportunity for Black students in Florida, whether

[4] The university access rate is the only metric in the performance-based funding standards which concerns equity. It is the percentage of undergraduates who are Pell recipients.

[5] UF is the state's flagship university, while FSU occupies a position close to that. For the purposes of this study, FSU will be referred to as a flagship or top-tier university.

[6] Umbricht et al. (2017): "If rigorous empirical study finds that a performance funding policy does not improve efficiency and instead creates more inequity by restricting college access, the effects of the policy may be described as government failure."

universities are serving the diversity of their communities and the diversity of the state, and ultimately whether Jeb Bush's 2000 argument still holds weight.

Literature Review

Existing literature on disparities in higher education access and opportunity provide a foundation for understanding why disparities exist and how they relate to Florida. Some include quantitative frameworks for evaluating these disparities in universities and university systems. Much of it utilizes interview-based qualitative research (Cottom, 2017; Cruz, 2011; Jack, 2019; Selingo, 2020; Stolzenberg et al., 2020; Tough, 2019) while others exemplify the statistical trends of our increasingly unequal colleges and universities (Clotfelter 2017; Chetty et al. 2017; Cellini & Turner 2019).

For these purposes, literature is sorted into several categories: Racial Disparities, Admissions Practices and Rankings, and Access and Opportunity. These categories closely parallel the three categories utilized in this report's Report Card framework: Racial Equity, Economic Opportunity, and University Quality. Some Florida-specific literature exists (Borman & Dorn, 2007; Frank et al., 2017; Guistwhite, 1975; Johnson et al., 2007; Micceri & Borman, 2006; Micceri, 2003). However, there is a dearth of research on enrollment trends of the 2010s, a unique time given changes in higher education within Florida. Additionally, while existing research on Florida higher education identifies the origins of racial disparities in detail, they have yet to seriously examine quality differentials.

Racial Disparities

Florida resisted desegregation for decades, and did not develop a higher education desegregation plan deemed acceptable by the courts until 1978, long after its peers (Johnson et al., 2007). Florida's oldest public universities — the University of Florida, Florida State University, and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University — were founded in the mid-to-late 1800s and were segregated. UF and FSU were white schools, and FAMU was the state's Black university. Desegregation (formally between the 1950s and 1970s) "depended on the prestige of the institution", meaning that historically white UF and FSU remained rooted in their segregationist tactics while newer universities such as the University of South Florida (USF) were more apt to accept Black students (Johnson et al., 2007). UF, for example, tied with the University of Alabama as the last flagship institution nationwide to graduate a Black undergraduate (in 1965), an unsurprising and dubious distinction given the concerted effort by state leaders to dissolve Black schools during the same period. Black junior colleges were merged with white community colleges, and the FAMU Law School was shuttered in favor of opening a law school at FSU given their geographic proximity. Though community colleges typically have open enrollment, these integrated community colleges did not, implementing admission standards "just high enough to eliminate the vast majority of nonwhite students" through entrance tests and cutoff scores (Abraham & Simmons, 1966). As a consequence of the elimination of Black junior colleges, Black enrollment declined by 75% in some counties — though it rose in a select few — and Black faculty were given limited opportunity to receive positions in integrated institutions. These institutions, then, were integrated "in ways that undercut blacks' opportunities and disrupted their educational plans" while access to four-year institutions remained disjointed across the state and severely curtailed at the state's most

prestigious institutions, UF and FSU (Johnson et al., 2007).[7] Florida never fully developed parallel educational systems by race. It developed a comprehensive system for white students and left its Black system weak and underfunded, then shuttering most of it in favor of limited integration.

Following implementation of One Florida, as previously characterized, Black enrollment declined at varying rates dependent on the selectivity of the university. Backes (2012) found that, in an average of 1990-2009 enrollment, Black enrollment declined by 1.4% post-affirmative-action at high selectivity universities and Hispanic enrollment declined by 0.32% in the same cohort.[8] The decline at middle- and lower-selectivity universities was limited. Backes hypothesized that the decline in enrollment at four-year institutions for Black students could have led to increased enrollment at two-year institutions; this was echoed by Johnson et al. (2007). In later research, Backes and Velez (2015) follow the paths of these state college students[9] transferring to four-year institutions, finding that students most often transfer to four-year institutions near their two-year institution (i.e. Miami-Dade College to FIU, Santa Fe College to UF). While two-year institutions are not a focus of this research, the hypothesis that Black two-year enrollment takes precedence over Black four-year enrollment is worth considering in the context of institutional quality and funding.

[7] This section's history is sourced primarily from Johnson et al. (2007) which is worth reading in its entirety. The segregation of universities and colleges in Florida remains recent; as such, its history is vital for anyone examining why Florida's universities and colleges are unequal. The most striking observation the authors make is this: "The outcome [of One Florida] has been a system in which African American students are shunted into the least prestigious postsecondary institutions, the community colleges."

[8] To the contrary, Card & Krueger (2005) found that, in a study of California and Texas, the elimination of affirmative action had no impact on application decisions of minority students, meaning that students did not see affirmative action as a deterrent to applying.

[9] Most Florida two-year schools have transitioned from the "community college" moniker to "state college", generally following their incorporation of some four-year programs. The Florida College System, previously the Florida Community College System, reflects this change in lexicon.

For low-income individuals and those in racial and/or ethnic minority groups (and particularly the combination of the two), college education can be crucial to their social mobility, particularly given the stubborn persistence of the racial wealth gap in Florida and the United States at large. White average wealth, according to a 2020 national Brookings study, is 6.7 times greater than Black average wealth (McIntosh et al., 2020). This is a consequence of several compounding factors that include residential racial discrimination stemming from zoning and from the Federal Housing Administration's concerted effort in the mid-1900s to restrict Black individuals from qualifying for mortgages (Rothstein, 2017).[10] Today, it can primarily be attributed to the intergenerational transfer of wealth, which is lightly taxed and is greater in scope among white families. Contrary to the idea that education is a "great equalizer", however, exists the reality that the median wealth of a Black family where the head of the household graduated from college is less than the median wealth of a white family where the head of the household dropped out of high school (Hamilton et al., 2015).

There exists a wide variance in outcomes for students of different colleges and universities. 19.7 million students are estimated to have been enrolled in a degree-granting program at a university or college in the United States in Fall 2019. According to UCLA's long-standing CIRP Freshman Survey, 83.5% of these students evaluated the ability to get a better job as "very important" to their decision to attend college and 73.2% evaluated the ability to make more money as "very important" (Stolzenberg et al., 2020). These factors, as with most students, are valued by Black students. While the factors motivating students to pursue an education are near-universal, not all colleges are created equal.

[10] For a detailed perspective on these issues, I highly recommend Rothstein's 2017 book, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, which examines why racial disparities exist and persist.

The for-profit college industry has historically targeted Black students, and these same students have opted for the false promise of for-profit schools "because their family and … circumstances required it" (Anderson, 2016). In reality, the rapid credentialing sought by these students in order to assuage immediate financial challenges does not manifest itself in most circumstances, and students are instead saddled with debt (Cottom, 2017; Bonadies et al., 2018). These students enter the process of receiving postsecondary education with what Anderson (2016) refers to as an "information gap", lacking the resources to discern their most affordable and sensible option. Federal data collection regarding for-profit colleges is limited; as a consequence, the full picture of for-profit colleges' influence on Florida higher education is difficult to establish. However, national trends identify that these colleges disproportionately target Black students, ensnaring them in an inferior education for a higher cost.

Admissions Practices and Rankings

Since the widespread adoption of enrollment management in the 1980s, the college admissions process has become increasingly competitive. Enrollment management sees "admissions not as an art but a science, employing mathematical models…[using] market research to find new and better-qualified applicants…[and deploying] financial aid...strategically, as a way to attract and retain the students who would best serve [an] institution's long-term goals" (Tough, 2019). In other words, universities have utilized big data to find potential students, target them with promotional materials, and make matriculation more attainable through financial support and other incentives.[11] The College Board's Student Search Service allows such data to be accurate and easily purchased

[11] This incentivization in the form of merit aid disproportionately helps middle- to upper-class students; see Burd (2015). Florida is no stranger to this process, and according to Burd's study, two SUS schools rank among the "top 50 schools by share of freshmen without financial need who receive merit aid." They are New College of Florida (9th) and Florida International University (15th).

(Selingo, 2020). The enrollment management approach grapples with competing priorities. Its originator, Jack Maguire, used the term to characterize his university's approach toward "getting ahead of looming demographic and economic trends" that put the growth and prosperity of universities at risk (Tough, 2019). In its simplest form, the objective is to enroll the right balance of students for the university to remain financially sound.

In Florida, this nationalized approach means that the application process is more competitive; students who would have gained admission to UF a decade ago may no longer be able to do so today, simply because the standards have increased. In seeking to meet the standards outlined in Performance-Based Funding[12], coupled with national rankings like those by U.S. News and World Report, universities have worked to broaden their applicant pool (Diep, 2020). This push is evident in proposals from the Florida Legislature to allow out-of-state students to pay in-state tuition if they meet certain academic criteria and have grandparents residing in the state ("CS/HB 1273", 2021) and to provide full merit scholarships to out-of-state National Merit Finalists ("Chapter No. 2018-4", 2018). Preeminent institutions in Florida have worked toward increasing their own national rankings; though they essentially have no choice, as the preeminent statute (1001.7065) identifies that universities must meet 11 of 12 standards, those of which include receiving "a top-50 ranking on at least two well-known and highly respected national public university rankings, including, but not limited to, the U.S. News and World Report rankings." For the emerging preeminent or non-preeminent institutions, breaking the top 50 would be an act of considerable financial and reputational consequence. In the 2018-19 school year, preeminent universities (UF, FSU, USF) received over $6.1 million each in preeminence funding (Schreiner,

[12] See "Performance-Based Funding" (2020).

2018). The State University System 2025 System Strategic Plan (2019) noted that the preeminence funding was used (in the case of UF and FSU) explicitly "to raise their national rankings."

The original 1983 U.S. News and World Report rankings were guided by no statistical methodology — rather, they were based upon a perception survey sent to university presidents nationwide. In other words, university presidents were evaluating their peers. The rankings, even though they were rejected by some, "establish[ed] a social order among colleges that was widely understood at the time, but rarely acknowledged" (Selingo, 2020). As universities work to increase their U.S. News ranking, their acceptance rate often declines precipitously over time as a consequence of stringent admissions standards, though acceptance rate is not a current piece of the rankings methodology, though selectivity is 7% of a school's ranking (Kutner, 2014). Monks and Ehrenberg (1999) found that "a less favorable ranking leads an institution to accept a greater percentage of its applicants...and the resulting entering class is of lower quality." Notably, these universities had lower yield among accepted students. An example of the admissions selectivity wrought by rankings would be amending admissions policies "to seek more transfer students and admitting fewer, better qualified, FTIC students instead of implementing interventions to improve outcomes for their traditional student populations" (Cornelius & Cavanaugh, 2016). The issue of yield in Florida was addressed by Thedore Micceri in 2003, who found that the applicant's proximity to the school meant they had a higher likelihood of matriculating once accepted. This raises the question of whether UF and FSU, the state's best universities, have less diverse student bodies due to location, social considerations among racial and ethnic groups, or financial reasons.[13]

[13] While this issue will not be directly addressed in this research, future research in the field would be well-advised to consider these factors as they relate to the SUS. Frank et al. (2017) examined FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus in Northeast Miami-Dade County and found that of FIU's in-state students, 90.5% were from Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe counties and most (above 85% of students surveyed) were motivated by cost of attendance and the types of programming offered. The drivers of student choice are important to grasp when considering university demographics.

Espinosa, Crandall, & Tukibayeva (2014) found that university rankings hold less significance to lower-income students during the admissions process, who instead see "family involvement and encouragement, peer and other networks, and school-and higher education institution-based resources" as more important factors.

For students of color, the implications of these competitiveness practices are significant, particularly if they do not have the economic resources to engage in many of the rituals of the college admissions process, including test preparation services, college counseling, or college tours (Tough, 2019; Selingo, 2020). While the racial diversity of universities nationwide has increased, stratification along economic lines has meant that, for example, liberal arts colleges and elite universities seeking racial diversity have increasingly recruited high-income students of color in an effort to both have on-campus diversity and full-paying students (Selingo, 2020).

Access and Opportunity

Raj Chetty's formative 2017 work "Mobility Report Cards" utilizes data on the earnings outcomes of students alongside their parents' incomes in order to discern the role that colleges have in intergenerational income mobility. Chetty focused on colleges with bottom-to-top-quintile mobility rates, or "those that offer both high success rates and low-income access." These universities are not typically Ivy-Plus institutions or flagship universities, and are often not considered "highly selective" by external arbiters concerning their admissions strategy. Rather, these universities note strong outcomes for alumni (employment, pay, etc.) without the added benefit of the bulk of these students holding strong admissions credentials prior to matriculation. Flagship state universities are often resigned to lower mobility rates because of restricted access, as is the case with UF and FSU.

While "the racial and ethnic diversity of American four-year colleges advanced dramatically" over a 40-year period, socioeconomic diversity decreased among these schools, according to the annual Freshman Survey (Clotfelter, 2017; Stolzenberg et al., 2020). While elite colleges could continue diversifying and desegregating, much like their peers, they "did not have to rely on low-income students" to diversify their student populations during this timeframe. During this same timeframe, according to the Freshman Survey, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) experienced a steep decline in family income levels. In the period between 1972 and 2008, the gap between average student family income at HBCUs and the national average rose by $27,000 to $60,000 (Clotfelter, 2017). This is reflective of similar trends in income distribution when comparing white and nonwhite individuals as noted by McIntosh et al. (2020). An example of generational wealth among white families is that of inheritances: among those surveyed, white families expected to receive inheritances more than Black families — and in larger amounts.

While 34.4% of white families surveyed had parents with a college degree, only 24.8% of Black families said the same. Higher levels of education are associated with greater wealth; white educational attainment and wealth are a cyclical process in which Black families often do not have the resources to participate. This is significant to the educational process in that wealth protects itself through education. According to Clotfelter, affluent students in high school are continually able to solidify their advantage in the four-year college admissions process through standardized testing tutoring, unpaid internships, sports, and attending private academic institutions. These students are often white.

Methodology

This research utilizes analytical frameworks developed by Allen et al. (2018), Chetty et al. (2017), Peters & Voight (2018), and Leonhardt (2017) to evaluate the five universities in three categories: Racial Equity, Access, and University Quality.

In each category, two to three metrics are utilized when determining each university's report card score. With each of these metrics, data was collected for each university in the SUS. New College of Florida and Florida Polytechnic University were both excluded, given their sizes and specialized natures. The universities (10 total) were then ranked in comparison with their peers and assigned a score for each category. The scores are explained in Table 1.

Table 1: Score Legend

Rank	Score
1st	5
2nd	5
3rd	4
4th	4
5th	3
6th	3
7th	2
8th	2
9th	1
10th	1

In the Racial Equity category, the highest score possible for an individual university is 15. In the Access and University Quality categories, the highest score possible for an individual university is 10. Each university is then given a report card score, which is the sum of their scores for each of these categories. As a consequence, the highest score possible for the report card is 35. Report card scores are computed in order to test the following hypotheses:

H_1: Flagship and top-tier universities in Florida rank poorly compared to their other Florida university peers in regard to Racial Equity.

H_2: HBCUs and MSIs in Florida rank poorly compared to their other Florida university peers in regard to University Quality.

H_3: Flagship and top-tier universities in Florida rank highly compared to their other Florida university peers in regard to Economic Opportunity.

For this study, data points were extracted from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the SUS, the Florida Department of Education (FL DOE), the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year, and Chetty et al. (2017). When IPEDS and SUS data were insufficient, data was utilized from individual universities. Given the diverse set of data points utilized, all data were extracted as a snapshot of the most recent data available at the time of writing — 2019, unless otherwise noted.

The universities selected for this study are modeled after Allen et al. (2018), which compared flagship (UF), HBCU (FAMU), and BSI (FAU) schools. In order for a more robust sample size, FSU is included as another flagship/top-tier school and FIU as a MSI. While all SUS

universities but two are included in the score calculation, analysis focuses on the implications of the performance of these select universities, given their unique characteristics.

An explicit goal of this study is to evaluate universities in both the context of serving the diversity of their communities and the diversity of the state. For the community connection, RE4 metric is used. For the state connection, the RE2 metric is used. To evaluate longitudinal trends, RE3 identifies discrepancies between enrollment and graduates.

Table 2: Universities

Name	Category
University of Florida	Flagship/top-tier
Florida State University	Flagship/top-tier
Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University	MSI (HBCU)
Florida Atlantic University	MSI (BSI)
Florida International University	MSI (HSI)

Data sources were selected based on their inclusion in other indices, with the intention of alleviating the lack of Racial Equity metrics in the SUS Performance-Based Funding standards. Both Economic Opportunity metrics are utilized by the SUS in Performance-Based Funding. One of two University Quality metrics is utilized by the SUS in Performance-Based Funding; the other, a lagging indicator from Chetty et al. (2017), is the "joint probability of parents in bottom quintile and child in top quintile of the income distribution." Racial Equity metrics were independently calculated and are, as a collective, unique to this study. Metrics as a whole emphasize ultimate student outcomes versus intermediate student outcomes (Dougherty & Natow, 2015).

Table 3: Data Sources

Data Source	Description	Years
IPEDS	- Black undergraduate students - Degrees awarded to Black students	2019
SUS	- University access rate (Pell recipients) - Net price	2019
FL DOE	- Black Florida high school graduates	2019
U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year	- Black MSA (all except FIU) or County (FIU) population	2019 (5-Year)
Chetty et al. (2017)	- Mobility rate	"Students in the 1980, 1981 and 1982 birth cohorts"

Table 4: Sample Report Card

	Sample University		
Name	**Metric**	**Amount**	**Index Score**
RE	**Racial Equity**		
RE1	Black undergraduate students		
RE2	Difference between Black Florida high school graduates and Black undergraduate students		
RE3	Difference between Black undergraduate students and degrees awarded to Black students		
RE4	Difference between Black MSA or County population and Black undergraduate students		
EO	**Economic Opportunity**		

EO1	University access rate (Pell recipients)		
EO2	Net price		
UQ	**University Quality**		
UQ1	4-year graduation rate		
UQ2	Mobility rate		

Limitations

This study is meant to serve as a snapshot of the diversity of a given university's population and their ability to produce strong career/educational outcomes at one point in time. It does not represent a longitudinal view of changes in access and opportunity. As a consequence, the final report card scores are limited in their explanatory value. Future researchers utilizing this model are advised to examine 5-10 years of data in order to ascertain trends in how universities are meeting Racial Equity, Economic Opportunity, and University Quality standards.

The net price indicator is slightly misleading given its incorporation of merit aid. For example, UF has the lowest net price, and it has the highest concentration of Bright Futures recipients along state universities. While net price is an accurate representation of what students are paying, it is important to note that the standards associated with receipt of merit funding may exceed that of admissions, meaning that talented low-income students from under resourced high schools may face higher obstacles to paying for college. Castleman & Long (2013) notes the positive impact of need-based aid on student success in Florida; the state remains focused on merit-based aid in the meantime.

As with any index, it is reasonable that the choice of indicators should come under scrutiny. Several metrics employed by the SUS in Performance-Based Funding — including employment outcomes and wages, timely degree completion, and an "academic progress rate" dependent on GPAs — are not utilized in this study. While useful in examining universities at the micro level, only a few questions need to be addressed in evaluating universities:

- **Are they serving their community?**
- **Are they accessible?**
- **Do they provide good outcomes to their students?**

Results

This study found that racially diverse, growing schools established around or following the formal conclusion of higher education segregation in Florida such as FIU, USF, UCF, and FAU ranked highly in all categories. Historically white flagship universities (UF and FSU) ranked in the middle of the SUS cohort studied, while FAMU and smaller regional schools like UNF, UWF, and FGCU performed the worst when compared to their peers.

Racial Equity

H_1: Flagship and top-tier universities in Florida rank poorly compared to their other Florida university peers in regard to Racial Equity.

This research confirmed H_1. Both flagship universities tied for 4th out of 5.

In terms of racial equity, diverse schools FIU, FAU, and UCF tied for 1st place when compared to their SUS peers. Universities were evaluated by the difference between Black Florida high school graduates and Black undergraduate students (RE2), the difference between Black undergraduate students and degrees awarded to Black students (RE3), and the difference between Black MSA or County population and Black undergraduate students (RE4).

While these universities tied for 1st place, they were not universally well-performing. For example, while FAU ranked 1st for RE2 and RE4, it ranked 8th (last) for RE3. Its performance with this lagging indicator shows that the 2019 percentage of Black undergraduate enrollment is lower than the percentage of Bachelor's degrees conferred to Black undergraduates in the same year, showing that FAU's Black enrollment may be declining. FIU and UCF performed relatively evenly in all categories.

Performance of flagship institutions was notably poor in RE2 and RE4. Both UF and FSU have student demographics distant from their MSAs and from the state as a whole. While UF and FSU were the state's first two universities to receive Preeminent designation and are the highest-performing Florida public universities in the national U.S. News and World Report ranking, their segregated legacy is still perpetuated; while other, newer schools have integrated closer to parity with the state's population, UF and FSU have resisted integration in their admissions practices.

While FAMU performed consistently low across each metric in this category, it is important to situate its performance alongside the intent of the index, which is to identify whether universities are racially equitable. FAMU is not, and its disproportionately Black student body is significantly more Black than UF or FSU are white. Notably, FAU performed well in RE2 and RE4,

showing that its demographic concentration is nearly identical to that of its MSA and that of the state at large.

Table 5: Racial Equity Comparison

RE Rankings	**RE2**	**RE3**	**RE4**
UF	9	2	7
FSU	7	1	9
FAMU	10	10	10
FAU	1	8	1
FIU	5	4	3

Economic Opportunity

H_3: Flagship and top-tier universities in Florida rank highly compared to their other Florida university peers in regard to Economic Opportunity.

This research found mixed results for *H_3*. UF ranked 3rd out of 5, while FSU ranked 4th out of 5.

In terms of economic opportunity, flagship/top-tier universities UF and FSU ranked 3rd and 4th, respectively. Universities were evaluated by the university access rate (EO1) and the net price (EO2). UF and FSU, although affordable schools, have low university access rates, meaning that while they are affordable they are not serving low-income students. This contradiction may owe to their students' receipt of merit aid.

Table 6: Economic Opportunity Comparison

EO Rankings	**EO1**	**EO2**
UF	9	1
FSU	10	4
FAMU	1	3
FAU	3	8
FIU	2	6

University Quality

H_2: HBCUs and MSIs in Florida rank poorly compared to their other Florida university peers in regard to University Quality.

This research found mixed results for *H_2*. FIU ranked 1st out of 5, while FAU and FAMU tied for 3rd out of 5. UF and FSU, to the contrary, performed in the top 50% for UQ1 and the bottom 50% for UQ2. HBCUs and MSIs perform worse in UQ1, a state indicator that emphasizes a student's ability to graduate on time and the university's ability to support their graduation, but better in UQ2, a longitudinal indicator identifying the ability of a university education to engineer mobility across income brackets.

Table 7: University Quality Comparison

UQ Rankings	**UQ1**	**UQ2**
UF	2	5
FSU	1	7
FAMU	10	2
FAU	7	3

FIU	5	1

Discussion

Evident in the result of this study is that Florida's public universities remain disparate in access and outcomes. To some, this may make sense: "good schools" are less accessible because they are meant to attract students of a higher academic caliber. The question the SUS, and higher education at large in Florida, must grapple with is this: what population should our schools serve? Should schools be reflective of the demographics of the state, or should they be reflective of the community's demographics?

It seems unlikely that each university will possess a student demographic composition echoing that of the state — only FAU, whose MSA is a microcosm of the state's overall diversity — was able to achieve that goal in this study. Rather, universities will continue to utilize the enrollment management approach of meeting enrollment targets however possible, and working to meet the state funding targets which disregard racial diversity as an important and valued goal.

While the state of Florida disproportionately funds UF and FSU — its most nationally prestigious schools — at the expense of its other schools, it risks minimizing the very universities that have found success in being racially and economically diverse while still achieving strong student outcomes post-graduation. This study shows that racially diverse universities in major metropolitan areas — FIU, FAU, USF, and UCF — are quality schools that promote the economic success of their graduates. Once-segregated and relatively rural UF and FSU, though well-funded, remain distant from full desegregation and equal access.

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APPENDICES

Chart 1: Racial Equity Score by University

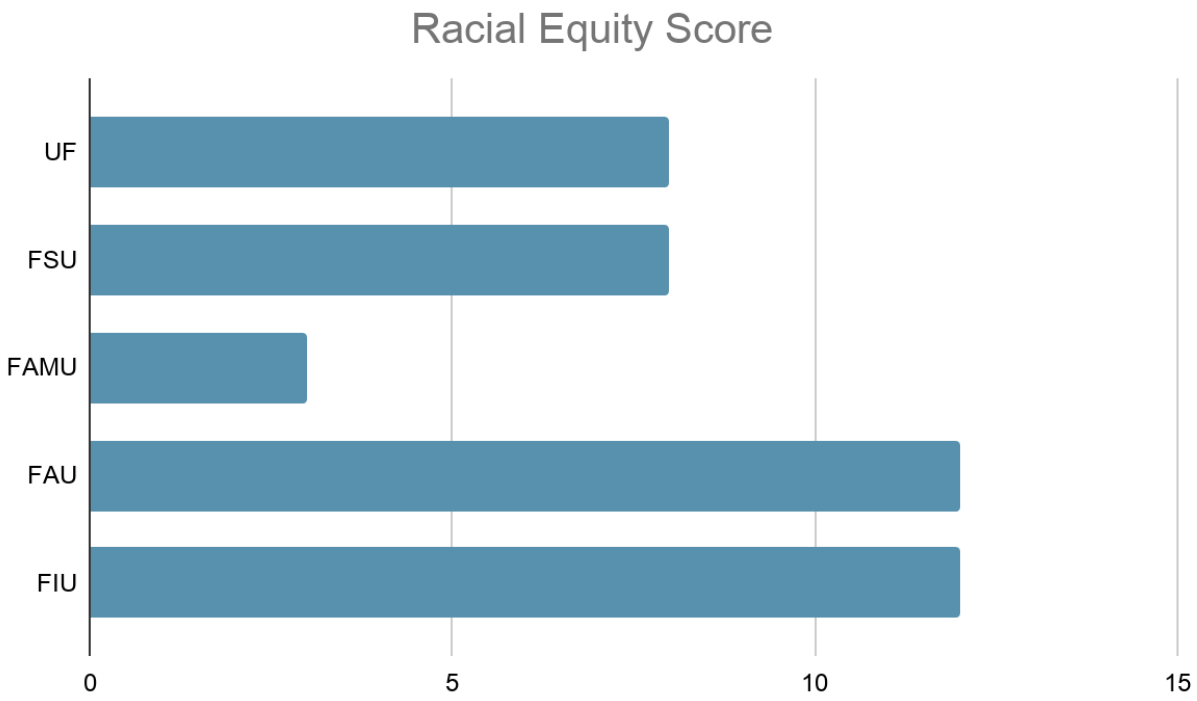

Chart 2: Economic Opportunity Score by University

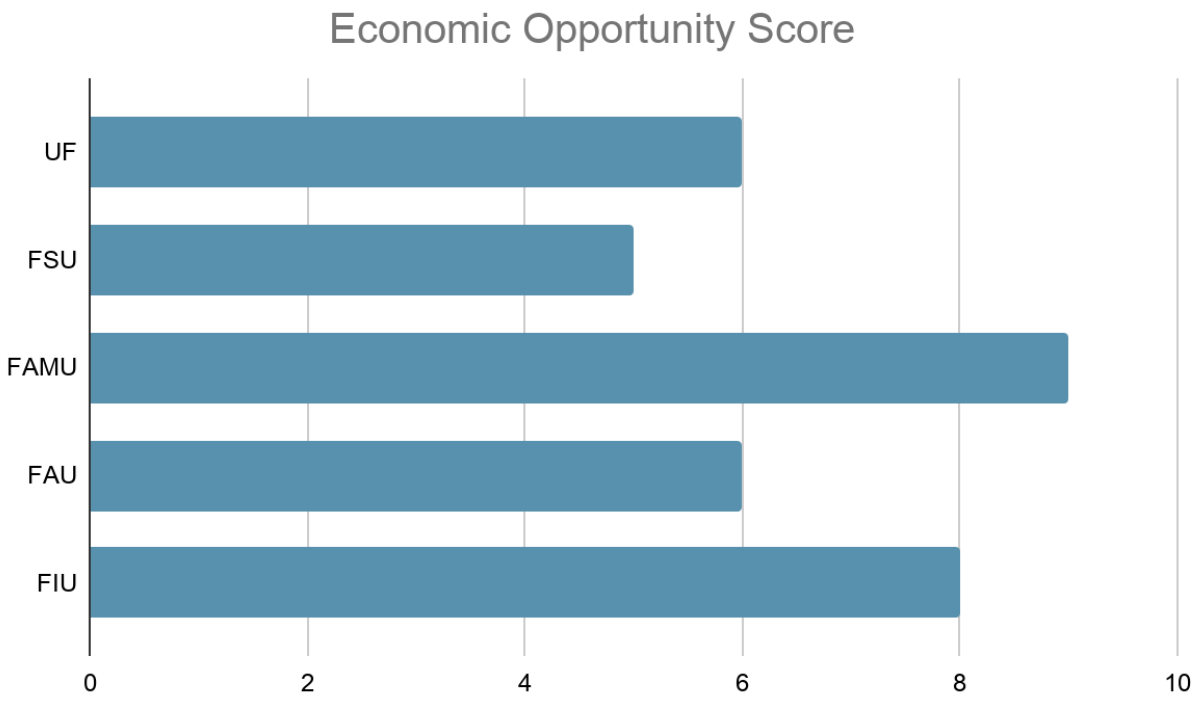

Chart 3: University Quality Score by University

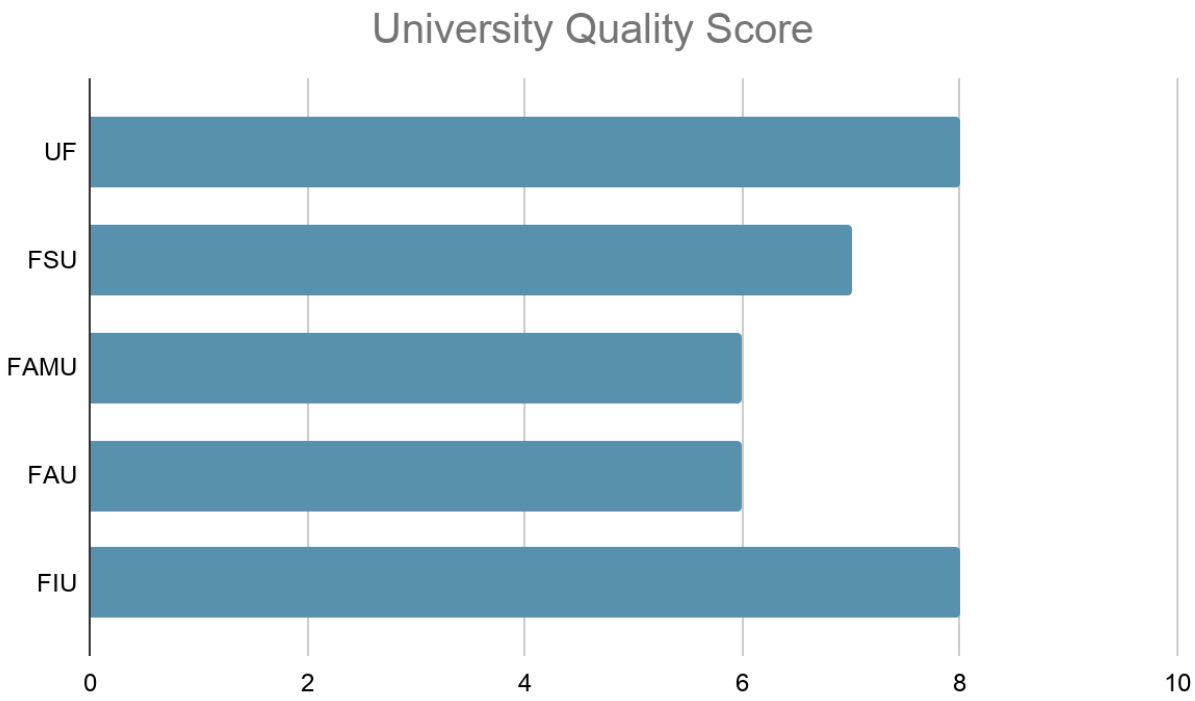

Table 8: Report Card, University of Florida

University of Florida			
Metric	**Amount**	**Rank**	**Index Score**
Racial Equity			
Black undergraduate students	6.52%		
Difference between Black Florida high school graduates and Black undergraduate students	14.73%	9	1
Difference between Black undergraduate students and degrees awarded to Black students	.66%	2	5
Difference between Black MSA or County population and Black undergraduate students	11.18%	7	2
Economic Opportunity			
University access rate (Pell recipients)	28.6%	9	1
Net price	$2,140	1	5
University Quality			
4-year graduation rate	67.1%	2	5
Mobility rate	2.61%	5	3

Table 9: Report Card, Florida State University

Florida State University			
Metric	**Amount**	**Rank**	**Index Score**
Racial Equity			
Black undergraduate students	8.72%		
Difference between Black Florida high school graduates and Black undergraduate students	12.53%	7	2
Difference between Black undergraduate students and degrees awarded to Black students	1.45%	1	5
Difference between Black MSA or County population and Black undergraduate students	23.68%	9	1
Economic Opportunity			
University access rate (Pell recipients)	28.30%	10	1
Net price	$8,680	4	4
University Quality			
4-year graduation rate	71.50%	1	5
Mobility rate	2.16%	7	2

Table 10: Report Card, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University

Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University			
Metric	**Amount**	**Rank**	**Index Score**
Racial Equity			
Black undergraduate students	85.64%		
Difference between Black Florida high school graduates and Black undergraduate students	-64.39%	10	1
Difference between Black undergraduate students and degrees awarded to Black students	-4.46%	10	1
Difference between Black MSA or County population and Black undergraduate students	-53.24%	10	1
Economic Opportunity			
University access rate (Pell recipients)	65.60%	1	5
Net price	$7,640	3	2
University Quality			
4-year graduation rate	22.50%	10	1
Mobility rate	3.27%	2	5

Table 11: Report Card, Florida Atlantic University

Florida Atlantic University			
Metric	**Amount**	**Rank**	**Index Score**
Racial Equity			
Black undergraduate students	20.31%		
Difference between Black Florida high school graduates and Black undergraduate students	0.94%	1	5
Difference between Black undergraduate students and degrees awarded to Black students	-0.93%	8	2
Difference between Black MSA or County population and Black undergraduate students	-0.21%	1	5
Economic Opportunity			
University access rate (Pell recipients)	42.90%	3	4
Net price	$12,230	8	2
University Quality			
4-year graduation rate	33.90%	7	2
Mobility rate	3.07%	3	4

Table 12: Report Card, Florida International University

Florida International University			
Metric	**Amount**	**Rank**	**Index Score**
Racial Equity			
Black undergraduate students	12.75%		
Difference between Black Florida high school graduates and Black undergraduate students	8.50%	2	5
Difference between Black undergraduate students and degrees awarded to Black students	.30%	4	4
Difference between Black MSA or County population and Black undergraduate students	7.35%	6	3
Economic Opportunity			
University access rate (Pell recipients)	52.00%	2	5
Net price	$11,930	6	3
University Quality			
4-year graduation rate	38.90%	5	3
Mobility rate	5.22%	1	5

Table 13: Value, Rank, and Score Conversions

		Racial Equity				Economic Opportunity		University Quality		Overall Score
		1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	
FAMU	*Value*	85.64%	-65.39%	-4.46%	-53.24%	65.60%	$7,640	22.50%	3.27%	18 (6th, tied)
	Rank		10	10	10	1	3	10	2	
	Score		1	1	1	5	4	1	5	
			3 (5th)			9 (1st, tied)		6 (3rd, tied)		
FAU	*Value*	20.31%	0.94%	-0.93%	-0.21%	42.90%	$12,230	33.90%	3.07%	24 (3rd, tied)
	Rank		1	8	1	3	8	7	3	
	Score		5	2	5	4	2	2	4	
			12 (1st, tied)			6 (3rd, tied)		6 (3rd, tied)		
FGCU	*Value*	7.24%	14.01%	-0.47%	0.86%	32.50%	$15,350	28.80%	1.88%	14 (8th)
	Rank		8	7	2	7	10	9	9	
	Score		2	2	5	2	1	1	1	
			9 (3rd)			3 (5th, tied)		2 (5th)		
	Value	12.75%	8.50%	0.30%	7.35%	52.00%	$11,930	38.90%	5.22%	
	Rank		2	4	6	2	6	5	1	

FIU	*Score*		5	4	3	5	3	3	5	28 (1st)
			12 (1st, tied)			8 (2nd)		8 (1st, tied)		
FSU	*Value*	8.72%	-12.53%	1.45%	23.68%	28.30%	$8,680	71.50%	2.16%	20 (5th)
	Rank		7	1	9	10	4	1	7	
	Score		2	5	1	1	4	5	2	
			8 (4th, tied)			5 (4th, tied)		7 (2nd, tied)		
UCF	*Value*	11.40%	9.85%	0.56%	4.00%	40.60%	$12,070	45.70%	2.60%	24 (3rd, tied)
	Rank		4	3	4	5	7	4	6	
	Score		4	4	4	3	2	4	3	
			12 (1st, tied)			5 (4th, tied)		7 (2nd, tied)		
UF	*Value*	6.52%	14.73%	0.66%	11.18%	28.60%	$2,140	67.10%	2.61%	22 (4th)
	Rank		9	2	7	9	1	2	5	
	Score		1	5	2	1	5	5	3	
			8 (4th, tied)			6 (3rd, tied)		8 (1st, tied)		
UNF	*Value*	9.26%	11.99%	0.19%	11.74%	30.70%	$12,970	38.50%	1.69%	15 (7th)
	Rank		6	6	8	8	9	6	10	
	Score		3	3	2	2	1	3	1	
			8 (4th, tied)			3 (5th, tied)		4 (4th, tied)		

USF	*Value*	10.49%	10.76%	0.21%	1.01%	41.70%	$7,130	58.60%	2.75%	27 (2nd)
	Rank	[redacted]	5	5	3	4	2	3	4	
	Score		3	3	4	4	5	4	4	
			10 (2nd)			9 (1st, tied)		8 (1st, tied)		
UWF	*Value*	11.57%	9.68%	-1.01%	4.53%	39.60%	$9,920	31.30%	2.00%	18 (6th, tied)
	Rank	[redacted]	3	9	5	6	5	8	8	
	Score		4	1	3	3	3	2	2	
			8 (4th, tied)			6 (3rd, tied)		4 (4th, tied)		