

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (“DEI”) COMMITTEE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRESENTED TO
THE PAIDEIA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

October 2021

In September 2020, the Paideia School Board of Trustees (the “Board”) established a standing DEI board committee (the “DEI Committee”) responsible for advising the Board regarding policies, initiatives and strategic goals related to DEI to ensure that the School is working towards becoming, and remaining, an anti-racist organization actively engaged in thoughtful efforts to dismantle systemic racism. The DEI Committee is composed of Board members, faculty members, parents and alumni.

The DEI Committee is honored to have been tasked with the important work of preparing DEI strategic objectives (the “Strategic Objectives”), which comprise the DEI strategic Plan (the “Strategic Plan” or the “Plan”). DEI work is analogous to intellectual growth -- both are most successful with a commitment to consistent evolution and a commitment to lifelong learning. The Strategic Plan is both an immediate and multiyear effort that represents the School’s commitment to look inward, and continue the journey to strengthen trust within and for all members of our community. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to outline strategic priorities aligned with the mission and values of the School, as well as DEI best practices, to propel Paideia on its trajectory to become a truly anti-racist educational institution embracing equity and inclusion for, and offering genuine belonging to, people of all races, colors, ethnicities, sexual orientations, genders, religions, nationalities, and socioeconomic statuses. This Strategic Plan is intended to serve as a roadmap for continuous evolution and improvement in DEI work and, ultimately, in becoming an anti-racist School.

Terminology- Distinguishing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (and Belonging)

When discussing the ways in which diversity, equity and inclusion can positively impact Paideia’s environment, it is imperative to appropriately define and understand the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Diversity** is the practice of involving people from different racial, social and ethnic groups. Organizational diversity involves examining the makeup of a group to ensure that all perspectives are represented.
- **Equity** is the fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specific goals.
- **Inclusion** refers to the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes. It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community.

- **Belonging** refers to the feeling that your presence and perspective is so valued within the organization (or the classroom) that the institution would pause if you were not there. Per Oman Frame, Paideia Director of DEI, the feeling of belonging and the concept of social / restorative justice are the future of DEI work.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION- STRATEGIC PLAN

STATEMENT OF INTENT AND PURPOSE

Anti-racism is rooted in action -- namely, taking steps to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural levels. The Paideia DEI Strategic Plan consists of sixteen strategic objectives (the “Strategic Objectives”), which represent intentional **ACTION** to: (a) actively promote and enhance DEI; and (b) identify and dismantle policies and practices that have the effect of undermining DEI. Work on this important issue must be “daily and vigilant.”¹

STRATEGIC HORIZONS

The timeframes associated with each Strategic Objective are based upon the horizon model, which is a model used to set and manage growth and optimization strategy in a coordinated way. This model is particularly helpful because it can serve as a visual tool that helps guide conversations by showing the objectives for the Plan over time. The time horizon is tightly related to meeting the Strategic Objectives, because all decisions concerning the Strategic Objectives refer to the given time horizon. It refers to such time frames, within which the Strategic Objectives are achieved by performing the outlined tasks. The DEI Committee has reframed certain recommendations from the Vivian Report into Strategic Objectives, while also adding additional Strategic Objectives that were not addressed therein. All Strategic Objectives should begin as soon as possible and the horizons refer to the accomplishment of each recommendation. To the extent that work has already begun on the recommendations, it should continue toward completion based upon the requisite horizon.

- **Horizon 1-** Horizon 1 innovations are generally short-term objectives (low-hanging fruit) that can be completed within approximately 9-12 months.
- **Horizon 2-** Horizon 2 innovations are mid-term and will take a bit longer because they require additional resources. These innovations might involve adapting technology, processes, financial structures and/or personnel. The completion timeframe for Horizon 2 is approximately twelve months to thirty-six months.
- **Horizon 3-** Horizon 3 ventures are long-term innovation projects that generally produce results in 3-5 years. Horizon 3 innovations typically associated with non-incremental changes (architectural innovations, for instance).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THEMES

The Strategic Objectives have been grouped into four (4) themes:

1. Build Infrastructure
2. Augment DEI in Certain Key Areas
3. Optimize Frameworks, Policies & Tenets
4. Communication & Measuring Progress

While some Strategic Objectives may reach into multiple categories, the purpose of these themes is for ease of reference.

¹ *Whites Confront Racism*, By Eileen O’ Brien (2001)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

A. BUILD DEI INFRASTRUCTURE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1- HIRE A CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

Strategic Objective #1 is a widely recognized best practice in corporate America and in independent schools -- hiring an experienced DEI professional with significant DEI expertise and experience to lead, ideate, oversee and implement DEI initiatives, as well as a best-in-class DEI department (*See Strategic Objective #2*).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2- CREATE AND STAFF A DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ("DEI") DEPARTMENT

Strategic Objective #2 entails establishing a DEI department that develops and implements comprehensive systems and best-in-class programming to support our community's mission, goals and values. Research of peer schools and schools recognized as DEI leaders indicate that DEI departments at independent schools are oftentimes composed of a CDO, a DEI manager (or Assistant Director), admin support, and coordinators at each school level. Prior to this Plan being written, the School selected an internal candidate as Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The DEI Committee strongly recommends a search (aligned with DEI hiring and procedural best practices) for the Assistant Director (or similar leadership role) for the DEI department.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3- CREATE AND STAFF A HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Build a human resources department ("HR Department") that develops and implements best-in-class systems, processes and programming to support our community's values and the Plan's Strategic Objectives. The HR Department should be appropriately staffed to lead recruiting, hiring, retention, grievances, and establish processes related to performance reviews and job and pay equity analyses (based upon roles, qualifications and credentials). The DEI Committee further recommends the Director of Human Resources position report to the Head of School and serve on the Senior Leadership Team.

B. AUGMENT DEI IN CERTAIN KEY AREAS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4-

AUGMENT DIVERSITY IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Strategic Objective #4 entails optimizing the School's hiring, professional development, retention and promotion practices to augment diversity and inclusion among the senior leadership team. This strategic objective recognizes that diversity of thought, diversity of experience and diversity of perspective at the highest levels of any organization empowers organizations by illuminating blindspots and providing:

- **Strong role models.** Diverse leadership demonstrates daily how different types of individuals can be effective leaders.
- **Culture of acceptance, kindness and respect for differences.** Reiterates that the School community is a place where students, faculty and families can thrive as their authentic selves, that their unique voices will be heard and valued.
- **Multi-dimensionality.** Diversity of thought in leadership makes for well informed decision-making.
- **A safe place to take risks.** Diversity in leadership reiterates that the School environment encourages our leaders (and, by extension, all students) to use their voices, take risks and advocate for themselves.

To clarify, the leadership team is thought to include, but is not necessarily limited to:

- Head of School
- Assistant Head of School
- Principals at all three (3) levels
- Director of College Counseling
- Director of Admissions
- Director of Development
- Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Director of Human Resources
- Director of Parent Involvement

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #5-

AUGMENT DIVERSITY IN STUDENT BODY

Implement innovative & best-in-class admissions and retention initiatives that augment diversity in the student body to better reflect the demographics of the City of Atlanta. Use voluntary self-reporting to track race/ethnicity for students (at each grade group level -- elementary, JH, HS) including for the previous 3 years, if possible. Strategic Objective #5 requires more specificity when collecting routine demographics such as US Census categories for capturing race and ethnicity demographics. (Current data collection captures whether students are White or "of color.") Demographic data, as well as quantitative and qualitative information garnered from family exit interviews, will be important gauges for the Board.

In addition, the DEI Committee recommends reevaluating the School's current pipeline approach to determine additional avenues to identify and encourage diverse student applicants. Some tactical approaches that other schools have used to increase the number of diverse student applicants include: (a) inviting prospective parents to certain school cultural events (e.g., Dia de Los Muertos, BHM celebration (post-pandemic); (b) partnering w/ affinity groups to share information about School resources, increase engagement with current families, and encourage prospective families in their communities to consider the School for their children; (c) hosting informational gatherings for certain civic, leadership groups (e.g., Jack & Jill, Mocha Moms, etc.); (d) liaising with additional "feeder" schools; and (e) "Festival of Nations" concept.

The DEI Committee further recommends (based upon recommendations from leaders in Admissions and Financial Aid) that the School's financial aid award philosophy and processes be reevaluated so that enrollment is a more realistic option for families of color situated in the middle of the economic bell curve (*See Strategic Objective*

#11).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #6-
AUGMENT DIVERSITY - (FULL-TIME) FACULTY

Implement innovative & best-in-class recruiting, hiring, professional development and retention efforts that augment diversity in the department leadership and full-time faculty for all core subjects to be commensurate with city of Atlanta demographics. Use voluntary self-reporting to track race/ethnicity for faculty, staff and applicants at the School, while also employing more specificity when collecting routine demographic as current data only captures whether faculty members are White or “of color”.²

In addition, there is always room for growth as it relates to cultural competency. Increased cultural competency equates to more awareness and ultimately a more respectful and inclusive experience for all community members. In addition, optimizing faculty search and hiring processes, as well as transparency related thereto, establishes the integrity of both the School and applicants (as well as a level of trust between the two and the School community at large). For the school’s consideration, certain innovative ideas and best practices include creating a DEI action plan for hiring³ and retaining⁴ diverse candidates, as well as exit interviews (that include demographic data) for all employees.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #7-
AUGMENT DIVERSITY IN THE CURRICULUM

Strategic Objective #7 pertains to the Board’s support for efforts to expand multiculturalism in the curriculum and in the classroom. Best practices for augmenting DEI in the curriculum (particularly in an environment that values teacher autonomy) include: (a) a DEI statement of commitment; (b) an expectation of diverse cultural representation (particularly from perspectives that are considered marginalized and that are excluded from the conversation); (c) peer discussions regarding inclusive teaching strategies (successes and challenges); (d) regular curriculum evaluation to optimize cultural representation and ensure cultural sensitivity and responsiveness; (e) faculty self (and peer) evaluations to gauge inclusivity, sensitivity and beneficence (do no harm).⁵

C. OPTIMIZE FRAMEWORKS, POLICIES & TENETS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #8-
ADDRESS NEPOTISM

Nepotism is essentially a form of favoritism that is granted to relatives and friends.⁶ Nepotism creates challenges in the workplace because it can undermine morale; raise conflict-of-interest issues; give the appearance of preferential treatment and undermine the credibility of employees (who may be deemed to have been hired due to familial relationships or analogous friendships). Strategic objective #8 entails incorporating guardrails and transparency in hiring processes to mitigate conflicts of interest (and perceived unfairness due to conflicts of interest). Tactical recommendations based upon best practices include: (a) eliminating situations whereby someone has a direct line of authority with someone to whom they are related; (b) instituting a nepotism policy aligned with

² For the School’s consideration, some ideas for increasing URG faculty retention include: (a) enhanced professional development opportunities; (b) mentorship by senior faculty; (c) faculty affinity group meetings at each level of the school; (d) more interactions with parents of color and teachers of color in informal settings; and (e) regular cadence of career path discussions.

³ Research and best practices regarding optimizing faculty search guidelines to include: (a) diverse search / hiring committees; (b) use of hiring rubrics by all interviewers (to mitigate against unconscious bias); (c) use of metrics to assess and confirm diversity for each candidate pool; (d) including a teaching statement and diversity statement in application materials; (e) creating a pipeline of historically underrepresented group talent pool to actively cultivate; (f) maintaining a list of minority candidates at peer institutions and begin nurturing relationships (where possible/appropriate); (g) clustering hiring; and (g) leveraging affinity group and alumni networks for recruitment and to increase the applicant pool and yield.

⁴ Research and best practices regarding optimizing faculty retention include: (a) use of assessment rubrics for promotion at department and school levels (to mitigate against unconscious bias);(b) job equity analysis (ensuring organizational alignment with respect to promotion and pay for candidates with similar levels of education, experience and job responsibilities).

⁵ Increase in number of *regular, seminar, theme, short term* courses centered on multicultural subject matters or having additional emphasis on multi-cultural matters within the subject matter

⁶ The Oxford dictionary defines “nepotism” as “the practice among those with power or influence of favoring relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs.”

HR best practices; and (c) hiring committees.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #9-
REDISTRIBUTION OF DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY

The School's Founder and Head of School is also a member of the Board of Trustees and a person whose intellect, ability and gravitas are not at all in question. The nature of holding so many foundational leadership roles thereby entails a significant amount of decision-making authority resting in the hands of one person. This power differential can consciously (and/or unconsciously) interfere with the free flow of thoughts and ideas; thereby impacting creativity, innovation and diversity of thought. Further, A clearly articulated organizational architecture and the decision making structure will streamline succession planning and transition. The DEI Committee recommends the following:

Phase I- Formalize and document organizational & decision making structure in writing. Ideas that serve to meet the articulated goal include:

- HR team to create job architecture (including reporting structure, salary bands reflecting education and experience, performance and decision-making authority);
- Map practical & strategic decision-making structure; and
- Board Governance committee tasked with: (a) researching and evaluating NAIS governance & best practices; and (b) making recommendations to the Board.

Phase II- Implement a clear organizational & decision making structure that is informed by: (a) best practices; and (b) recommendations/ guidance from NAIS, SAIS, etc.

- Task Board Governance committee with: (a) making recommendations to the Board with respect to revising the bylaws to reflect organizational architecture and decision making structure; and (b) modernization of bylaws to clearly articulate the Head of School's role in relation to the Board, as well as the Board's independent decision making authority.
- Informed by NAIS and SAIS best practices, the DEI Committee suggests that a revised governing structure be considered which includes:
 - The Head of School provides input, advice and counsel to the Board; and
 - The Head of School serves as an *ex-officio*, non-voting member of the Board.⁷
- Revised governing structure implementation to occur upon installation of a successor (or interim, if applicable) Head of School and thereafter.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #10-
CULTIVATE SYNERGY BETWEEN TEACHER AUTONOMY AND THE DEI
FRAMEWORK OF
DIGNITY, JUSTICE & PERSONHOOD

The *Essential Paideia* by Paideia School Founder, Paul Bianchi, begins with the question “What makes Paideia Paideia?” Bianchi goes on to note that Paideia was founded upon the “penumbra of respect and trust,” as well as: (a) the freedom for faculty to develop their educational passions; (b) a commitment to lifelong learning; and (c) a compassionate, empathetic and personal regard for children and families.

Diversity is a supremely important pillar of the School's *Framework of Values* and has a rich history at The School. Balancing DEI expectations and cultural competence with teacher autonomy is of the utmost importance.⁸ Calibrating these critical considerations thoughtfully, without compromising one for the other, is the primary objective. Strategic Objective #10 involves establishing parameters around teacher autonomy that incorporate DEI principles so as to underscore compassionate, empathetic and respectful regard for the personhood and diversity of experience of all children, families and colleagues. The first step is acquiring cultural competence (via professional development and a commitment to personal growth), which is an ongoing process that entails: (1) understanding the benefits of diversity, (2) having the ability to manage the dynamics of difference, (3) acquiring and applying cultural

⁷ Non-voting board members should not be present whenever the Board conducts any vote, of any type, on anything.

⁸ “Cultural Competency” is a term of art that represents a set of values, principles, skills, attitudes, policies, and behaviors that enable individuals and groups to work effectively across cultures.

knowledge, and (4) being adept at respectfully navigating the cultural contexts of the communities in which one lives and works.⁹

Strategic Objective #10 seeks to establish a framework of dignity, ethics and accountability that's aligned with the tenets of the "Essential Paideia"- a school built on a love and respect for all children and faculty. The intent of this strategic objective is not to micromanage classrooms, curriculum decisions or other operational matters. Rather, the intent of Strategic Objective #10 is to incorporate DEI training and considerations as an expectation and an anchor so as to underscore the heartbeat of Paideia -- that every child is as equally human as another. Tactical measures for strategic objective #10 include: (a) cultural competency training for faculty and staff¹⁰; (b) establishing benchmarks for assessing teacher alignment with DEI expectations; (c) establishing a diverse team of faculty to research and advise on appropriate guardrails that balance the ability for teachers to deliver the creativity and level of excellence for which they are known with expectations for inclusion and diversity; and (d) incorporating DEI expectations into self-evaluations and performance reviews.¹¹

Best practices for DEI expectations and related accountability require consistent, fair, and equitable consequences for teacher conduct that is determined to be harmful to students due to a cultural identifier (e.g., race, sex/gender, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, age, or socioeconomic status).¹² Such conduct violates the Faculty Code of Conduct and Student Code of Conduct and is in contradiction to the School's commitment to anti-racism.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #11- **REEVALUATE FINANCIAL AID TENETS**

Strategic Objective #11 entails reconsidering tenets upon which financial aid awards are evaluated by contemplating affordability, as well as accessibility, in admissions and award of scholarships so as to attract more middle class families of color who need partial grants. The DEI Committee suggests researching the feasibility of a pilot program (for 3-5 years) to determine the extent to which partial financial aid awards (e.g., \$5k-\$7,500) impact DEI at the School. A data analysis at the culmination of said pilot program would be informative in this regard.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #12- **DEI CONSIDERATIONS-AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS**

Community conversations and reporting from students of color via Black@Paideia and other settings reiterate the need for after school care for high school students who remain on campus by necessity. Strategic objective #12 entails addressing this issue and communicating to students and parents the supervised areas for students who need to stay on campus until after school transportation arrives.

With respect to athletics, Strategic objective #12 entails establishing a reporting protocol for athletes subjected to DEI related incidents in athletics (e.g., by students from other schools). Similarly, strategic objective #12 entails optimizing the hiring process for coaching staff so as to reflect the diversity within the team, the student body and the city of Atlanta. Accordingly, providing cultural competency training and setting DEI expectations for coaching staff are very important components of successful DEI programming.

⁹ *In Practice: Building Schoolwide Cultural Competency with Teacher-Leaders* by Sara Poplack and Katie Dlesk, National Association of Independent Schools, Fall 2018.

¹⁰ Faculty has reiterated the desire that cultural competency training be offered in the regular course of day and/or at faculty meetings (not as an extra during "off" hours).

¹¹ For the School's consideration, some ideas for incorporating DEI expectations within the framework of teacher autonomy include: (a) developing a Code of Conduct, an annual Code of Conduct review reminder (and, perhaps an annual signed attestation).

¹² Cultural competency training underscores that identifiers may be used to assist in recognizing, understanding, and appreciating the positive unique aspects of individuals based on their backgrounds, values, experiences, traditions, and the contexts in which they are expressed. There are countless demographic markers and ways people identify, and these categories are changing and emerging with the times. (National Association of Independent Schools suggests consideration of (at minimum) the following sample identifiers: Ability/Disability, Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Race, Religion/Spiritual Belief, Sexual Orientation, and Socioeconomic Status).

D. COMMUNICATION & MEASURING PROGRESS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #13- DEI STATEMENT OF VALUES

DEI organizational optimization begins with a written commitment to anti-racism as a value that should be shared by administration, faculty, students, and parents. The Paideia Framework of Values was written several decades ago. Paideia's 50th year is an opportunity to refresh and reframe the diversity framework to include a DEI and antiracism commitment as the foundation of the School's ongoing active work, both now and in the future.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #14- SYSTEM FOR REPORTING DEI INCIDENTS

Strategic objective #14 entails creating a multi-layered system and processes for students, faculty and parents to report DEI incidents (including, but not limited to, racial harm or harm done to any other racial, ethnic or cultural identifier). Given the way in which students utilize and continually innovate using technology, we strongly recommend incorporating technology as one mechanism for reporting DEI incidents.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #15- ACCOUNTABILITY & METRICS REGARDING DEI PROGRESS

Management guru, Peter Drucker, famously said: “[only] what gets measured gets managed”, recognizing that progress metrics are critical components for measuring and optimizing success.¹³ DEI strategies, like any others, should be rooted in data and metrics to measure progress and promote accountability. Tracking performance against goals and objectives, and communicating with your key stakeholders to keep them informed about progress (or lack thereof) is crucial. The Head of School and CDO should report periodically to the Board of Trustees with quantitative metrics and progress made with respect to: (a) this Plan; and (b) NAIS climate surveys; and (c) DEI considerations referenced in SAIS accreditation reports (if applicable).

Recommendations for quantitative DEI data collection and metrics include:

- Adding more specificity to routine demographic data collection (even for self reporting) to align with census categories for race and ethnicity and DEI best practices for other self identifiers;
- Formal and informal assessments of the experiences of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students, faculty, staff and families in the school community and in order to inform responsive, culturally affirming policies and practices.
- Analysis of school demographics trend year over year on data (race, ethnicity, gender)
 - Use the last 5 years statistics, with diversity broken down to include racial/ethnic groupings.
- Track annual change in racial & diversity composition of the Board, school leadership, faculty, student leaders, admission rate by race, ethnicity (and, as appropriate, other DEI identifiers), increase in financial aid spending, & percent of Black students & other students of color receiving financial aid.
- Exit interviews with all departing families and faculty to record the reason(s) for their departure to be shared with the Board (in aggregate) annually.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #16- REGULARLY INITIATE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Communication is essential at every stage of the planning and implementation process-- preliminary discussions to the launch of Strategic Plan and beyond. Strategic objective #16 calls for regularly held communications (and community conversations) to consistently reiterate the commitment to DEI as a pillar of the School's values. The DEI Committee recommends that the DEI Committee, the Board and the School engage in listening sessions with school community groups particularly parent and student multicultural affinity groups.

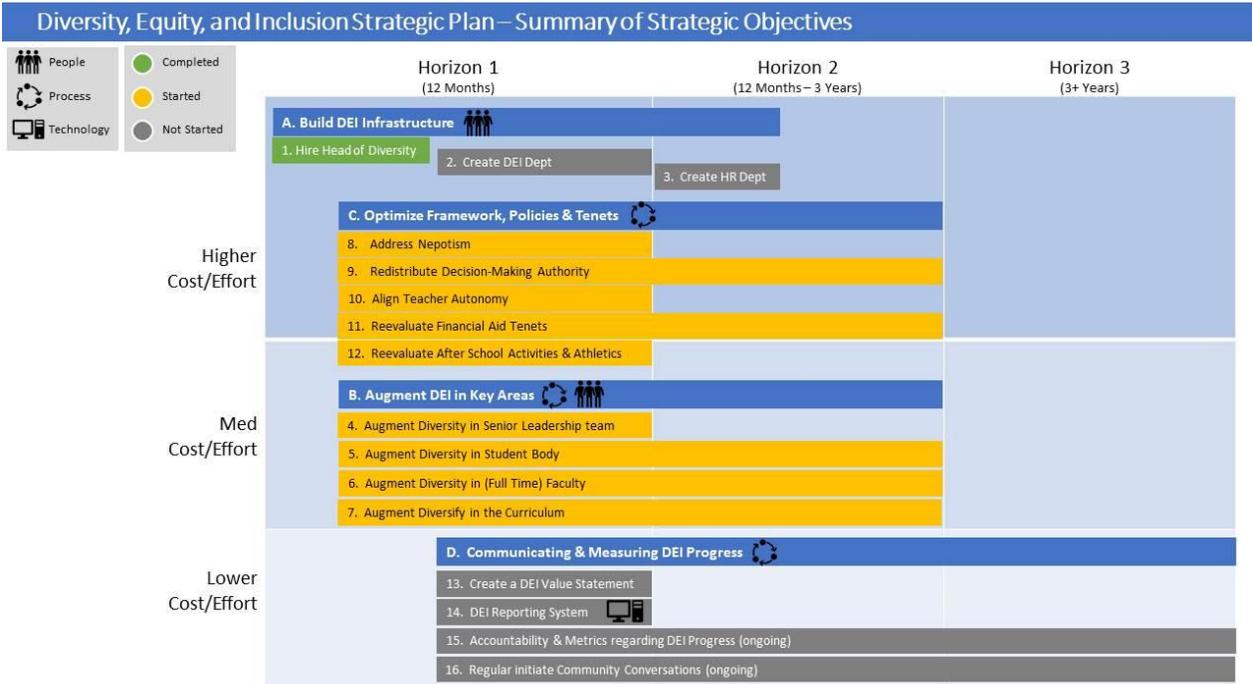
¹³ “What Can't Be Measured” by Larry Prusak, Harvard Business Review, October 7, 2010

Regular communication with consistent messages will mitigate disruption and distraction. While the communication plan will address the extended Paideia community, particular attention should be focused on the faculty, staff, parents, parents of new applicants, Board members and key funding sources. A list of key constituencies include:

- Faculty
- Current parents
- Current students
- Alumni
- Alumni Parents

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I- Pictorial Representation



APPENDIX II-
[“The Essential Paideia”](#) By Paul Bianchi