

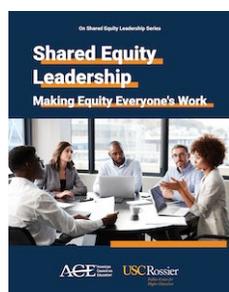
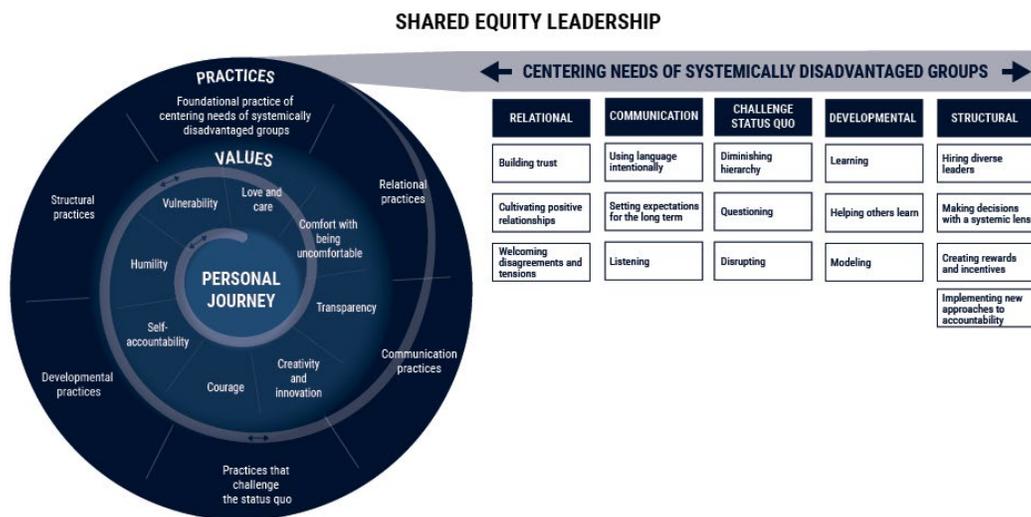
# Shared Equity Leadership:

## A Brief Overview of Publications

The American Council on Education and University of Southern California's Pullias Center for Higher Education researched shared equity leadership (SEL) and produced a series of six reports and an accompanying toolkit. The key takeaways from each are synthesized to provide participants in the virtual SEL Design Convening with a refresher on the SEL model and its corresponding topical areas. For more detail on SEL and the On Shared Equity Leadership series, please visit [acenet.edu/sel](http://acenet.edu/sel).

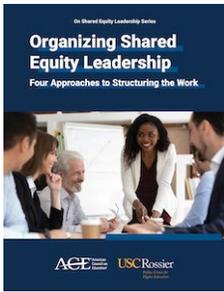
### SEL Research Overview

The reports in the On Shared Equity Leadership series are based on findings from a three-year multiple-case study of eight higher education institutions across the United States. As part of the data collection efforts, the research team collected and reviewed thousands of pages of documents and interviewed over 100 leaders across the eight campuses, including presidents, provosts, and other executive leaders; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) professionals; student affairs staff; faculty in a variety of disciplines; and staff in facilities, alumni affairs, development, and fundraising. This research informed the development of the SEL model, which is detailed in the foundational first report.



### Shared Equity Leadership: Making Equity Everyone's Work

The **first report** in the series describes the personal, collective, and institutional work necessary to enact this approach to equity leadership. At the heart of SEL is the notion that leaders must first turn inward and do their own personal work—the *personal journey toward critical consciousness*—in order to transform their institutions. In this process, leaders reflect not only on their own identities and experiences but also the broader structural and systemic nature of inequities and how they fit within those structures and systems. When a campus has a critical mass of leaders engaged in this personal journey work, they can then use a new set of values and practices to meet equity goals and work collectively for culture change.



## Organizing Shared Equity Leadership: Four Approaches to Structuring the Work

The [second report](#) focuses on organizational structures for broadly distributing equity leadership. Traditional structures of leadership for equity may focus on the work of a chief diversity officer (CDO) or campus offices that are isolated from institutional strategic priorities. In contrast, this report identifies, describes, and compares whole-institution approaches to sharing leadership in four distinct models for structuring SEL:

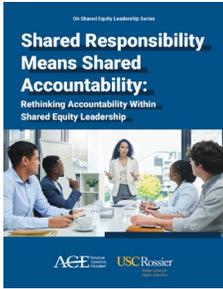
- **Hub and Spoke Model**

DEI work is led by a CDO or equivalent executive-level staff who reports to the president, as well as by staff in a DEI office or division. This office is a hub for DEI work and is connected to various spokes of equity work on campus. The CDO and the team in the hub share leadership, guide the campus's equity agenda and strategic initiatives, and help to build the capacity of others on campus to identify ways to be more equitable in their work.
- **Bridging Model**

DEI work is led jointly by a university's most senior leaders (including the president); a permanent council of faculty, staff, and students responsible solely for helping the institution meet its long-term equity goals; and a person in a bridge or translator role who connects senior- and ground-level leaders. The bridge is a capacity builder, coordinator, and connector rather than someone who is responsible for leading the equity charge or carrying out equity programming. This model embeds equity work into existing roles rather than creating new ones.
- **Highly Structured Model**

DEI work includes a CDO who reports to the president, an extensive staff and multiple reporting units within the DEI division, and many layers of DEI representatives throughout the divisions and units of the university. The complex web of structures emanating from the DEI division helps embed equity work throughout the institution, while also leaving discretion and autonomy to individual offices or units for how they plan to achieve equity goals. The clear, formal lines of accountability established both centrally and within units are a major benefit of this model.
- **Woven Model**

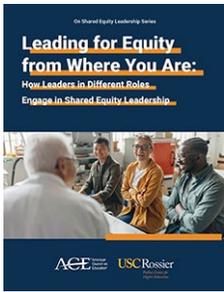
DEI is embedded into everyone's work and woven into the fabric of the institution as part of institutional strategic plans and goals and into individuals' roles. In this model, everyone in a leadership role—unit-level, mid-level, and senior leaders—is expected to pursue campus equity goals as a part of their regular work. A key benefit of this approach is that it embeds DEI responsibility into everyone's role rather than into formal, DEI-specific positions.



## Shared Responsibility Means Shared Accountability: Rethinking Accountability Within Shared Equity Leadership

The [third report](#) describes the ways in which campuses that are implementing SEL grapple with accountability in environments where responsibility for DEI work is broadly distributed. SEL can involve an expansion of who is accountable for equity work; who they are accountable to; and the goals, timelines, and metrics used to assess successful implementation. Accountability systems become a way to ensure that responsibility for the work is truly embraced by leaders across campus at all levels and units, as well as that campus constituents are making progress on this work.

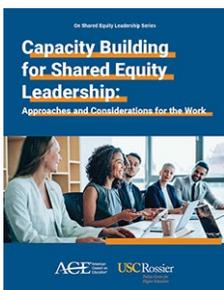




## Leading for Equity from Where You Are: How Leaders in Different Roles Engage in Shared Equity Leadership

The [fourth report](#) considers how leaders in varying roles are able to lean into particular values and practices from the SEL model that are associated with their role.

- Faculty and staff have unique perspectives and experiences from their various roles that they can bring to SEL environments. For instance, faculty members are particularly well suited to enacting practices such as *learning* and *helping others learn* due to their work as experts and educators.
- Leaders can also engage in SEL in ways that vary by their role function—the specific type of work done in particular roles such as student affairs work, faculty work, or DEI-specific work, among others. For example, a leader in a student-facing role is well positioned to enact the practice of *understanding and centering students' needs* due to the student-centered nature of their work.
- Leaders' positions in the organizational hierarchy also shape the way they engage in SEL. Senior-level leaders, for example, have the power and authority to enact structural practices such as *creating rewards and incentives*, whereas ground-level leaders are well positioned to use relational practices such as *cultivating positive relationships* and *building trust* to develop coalitions and advocate for change. Mid-level leaders work up, down, and across the organization, and they may lean on different values and practices depending on the situation and the audience.



## Capacity Building for Shared Equity Leadership: Approaches and Considerations for the Work

The [fifth report](#) shares capacity-building approaches that can help implement and enhance SEL. To create environments in which SEL can thrive, campuses must build capacity at multiple levels for both shared leadership and DEI.

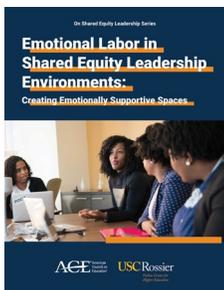
- Personal capacity building

This approach involves individuals building the knowledge, skills, and capabilities to do DEI work and to share leadership. Strategies for building personal capacity include professional development, trainings, and workshops as well as coaching, mentoring, and peer feedback.
- Collective capacity building

This approach helps groups of leaders learn how to work together effectively across differences and in solidarity. Collective capacity-building strategies include professional learning communities and communities of practice, affinity groups, and healing circles.
- Organizational capacity building

This approach focuses on changes to structures and practices that support the goal of promoting equity by making it everyone's work. Campuses build organizational capacity by creating cross-cutting groups and structures; hiring, onboarding, and promoting diverse leaders; and incentivizing and rewarding the work.

This report strongly encourages more planning and thought to capacity building around shared leadership as well as at the collective and organizational levels to extend opportunity beyond top-level leaders and promote more inclusive processes and outcomes.



## Emotional Labor in Shared Equity Leadership Environments: Creating Emotionally Supportive Spaces

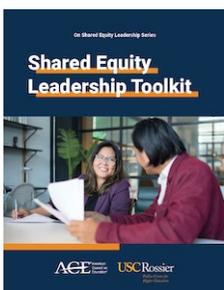
The [sixth report](#) focuses on navigating the dynamics of emotional labor that are inherently part of the processes aimed at ameliorating equity issues. While the challenging emotions and emotional labor that accompany DEI work do not disappear in SEL environments, the burden is minimized by working in community with other leaders who share the labor. The emotional labor that does still occur is often less burdensome and overwhelming to those involved because of the support they have from colleagues who share both the work and the emotions that come with it.

- SEL alleviates the emotional labor of proving that equity work matters.

Campus leaders who were using an SEL model often found that they needed to convince others that there was a problem. Due to a critical mass of people collectively engaging in the work, individual leaders—who were often leaders of color or women of color—noted that they no longer felt the burden was solely on them to make the case for equity. Instead, there was a shared understanding within the campus community that equity is a priority.
- SEL creates supportive environments to process difficult emotions that are part of DEI work.

Equity work can involve deeply personal issues of systemic oppression based on identity that can provoke intense emotions, particularly in confronting challenges and traumas created by campus structures and cultures. While these emotions are not eliminated on campuses using SEL, the model can mitigate their impact by creating environments in which leaders felt their experiences were welcomed, understood, and affirmed among the collective. In these spaces, leaders received the validation and support they needed to honor and process their emotions and not suffer its negative consequences.
- SEL helps mitigate the impact of managing others' emotions.

Leaders in the SEL model are expected to actively engage in a *personal journey toward critical consciousness*, and White leaders are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and growth rather than relying on the (unpaid) labor of their colleagues of color. Further, the critical mass of leaders doing this work means that leaders share collective responsibility for educating and holding each other accountable, as opposed to a single leader or a couple leaders of color being forced to manage the emotional responses of White leaders who may be early in their journeys.



## Shared Equity Leadership Toolkit

The [Shared Equity Leadership Toolkit](#) accompanies the first report and enables leaders to reflect on their personal journey toward critical consciousness. Through reflection questions, mapping exercises, and inventories shared in the toolkit, leaders can identify their own strengths and potential areas for growth in the values and practices that are necessary to effectively practice SEL. Leaders can assess and reflect on their strengths individually as well as map the strengths present in their team or group.