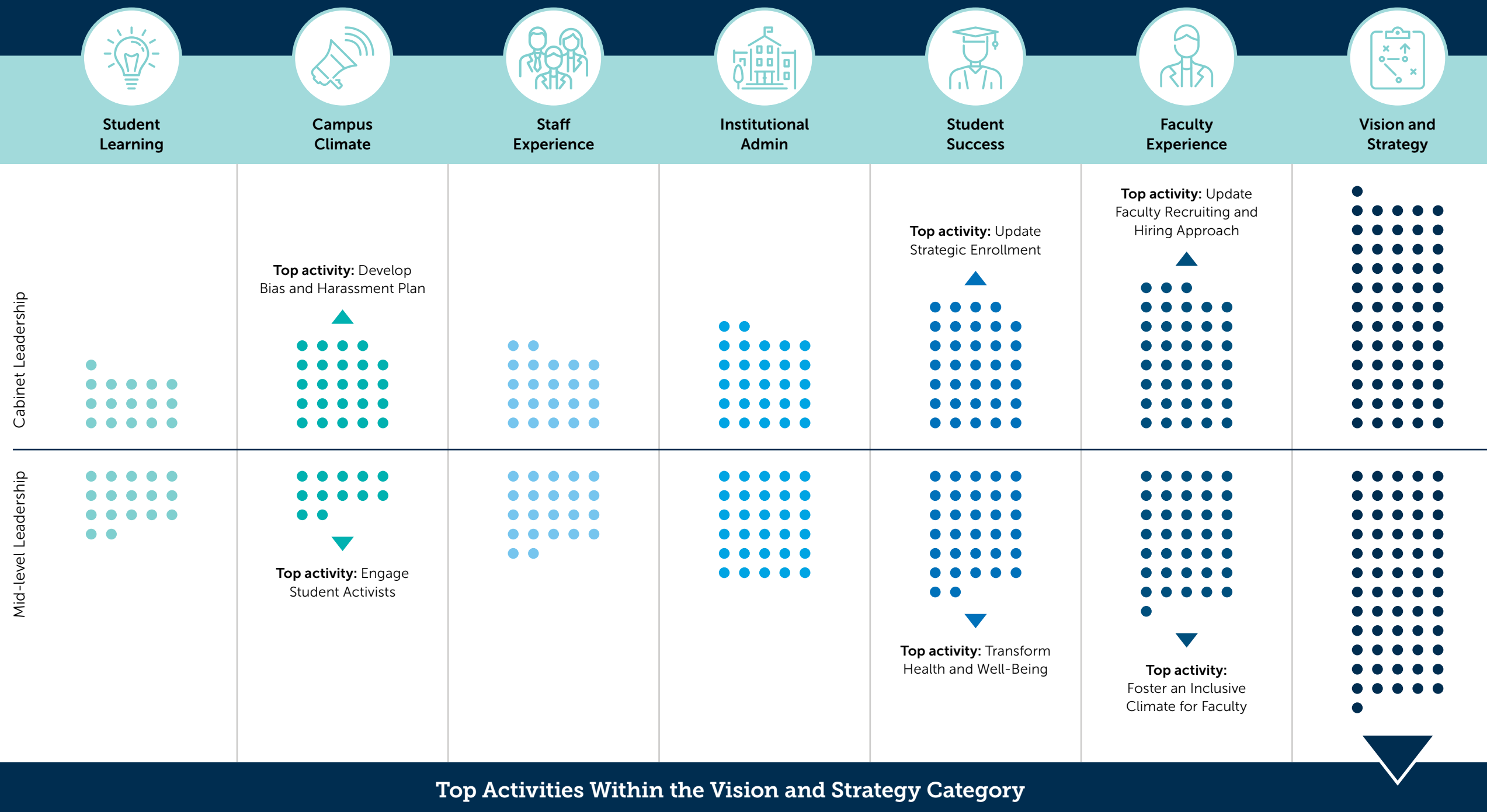# Why Setting a Clear Vision Matters Most to DEIJ Progress Right Now

What 215+ higher ed leaders think are today's biggest barriers to DEIJ strategy

Where should institutions allocate their scarce resources in the year ahead to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) goals? To help partners answer that question, EAB developed the Institutional Strategy Index for DEIJ, a tool that comprehensively and objectively evaluates the current state of your institution's DEIJ efforts against best practice and creates a personalized roadmap of investments and actions to close gaps. The tool is grounded in EAB's validated framework that organizes 33 mission-critical activities (i.e., tasks and initiatives) into the categories (i.e., areas of work) in the chart below. During the launch of the tool, **EAB surveyed 215+ senior leaders** across the public and private four-year sectors, providing a unique look into how they view the urgency of each area. Explore the takeaways below to compare where your priorities fit.

Chart categories (left to right):
Student Learning · Campus Climate · Staff Experience · Institutional Admin · Student Success · Faculty Experience · Vision and Strategy

Rows: Cabinet Leadership (above axis) / Mid-level Leadership (below axis)

Campus Climate — Top activity: Develop Bias and Harassment Plan (Cabinet); Top activity: Engage Student Activists (Mid-level)

Student Success — Top activity: Update Strategic Enrollment (Cabinet); Top activity: Transform Health and Well-Being (Mid-level)

Faculty Experience — Top activity: Update Faculty Recruiting and Hiring Approach (Cabinet); Top activity: Foster an Inclusive Climate for Faculty (Mid-level)

Top Activities Within the Vision and Strategy Category

Cabinet Leadership

1 Articulate Inclusive Vision
Communicating a vision for DEIJ and making the case for progress

2 Develop Executive Understanding
Helping cabinet leaders develop an understanding of the importance of DEIJ and how it impacts the campus

3 Set and Communicate Accountability
Assigning ownership, setting timelines, and communicating progress on DEIJ goals

Mid-level Leadership

1 Develop DEIJ Infrastructure and Resourcing
Creating the infrastructure to support and fund DEIJ initiatives on campus

2 Articulate Inclusive Vision
Communicating a vision for DEIJ and making the case for progress

3 Integrate Stakeholder Voices in Planning
Including the voices of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members when developing future DEIJ strategy

High-Level Aspirations Fall Short Without a Concrete Roadmap

Given the complex and systemic nature of DEIJ issues on campus, it's unsurprising that activities within the Vision & Strategy category repeatedly scored highest. Too often, institutions choose lofty, vague goals that set them up for failure or—at the other end of the spectrum—create a very detailed list of action items that don't amount to a clear strategy. Top scores for activities such as Articulating Inclusive Vision and Integrating Stakeholder Voices into Planning indicate that **leaders at all levels want to align on a coherent vision and agenda before addressing more granular challenges.**

Cabinet Leaders Prioritize Actionable Vision over Discrete Divisional Activities

Cabinet leaders rarely picked activities directly related to their functional area as the most critical, **challenging the belief that they would prioritize their immediate area of responsibility over any other and further illustrating leadership's focus on setting a common vision.** It's not that cabinet leaders don't consider their terrains important (average scores show they do). Instead, they consider activities within the Vision & Strategy category the most critical in the near term. This is likely because colleges and universities without a clear institutional strategy to coordinate around **increase the risk of units gravitating toward incremental and highly niche programming, duplicating efforts, and cannibalizing resources.**

Barrier or Opportunity? Split Around Critical Activities Could Facilitate Shared Accountability

Cabinet and mid-level leaders disagreed about which activities within the Vision & Strategy category are most critical. Where cabinet members prioritized understanding and accountability, mid-level leaders scored resourcing and stakeholder involvement higher—**a complementary split in priorities that may help to operationalize initiatives rather than hinder strategic change.** With these activities as their top priorities, **institutions that assign dual ownership of initiatives to cabinet members and leaders help to drive accountability throughout the institution.**

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To learn more about **EAB's Institutional Strategy Index for DEIJ,** visit:
eab.com/DEIJ-Strategy