

# Journal of Higher Education Policy And Leadership Studies

JHEPALS (E-ISSN: 2717-1426)

<https://johepal.com>

## The Complexity of Social Justice and Leadership on Campuses: An Analysis of Institutional Mission Statements

**Kathy L. Guthrie**

*Department of Educational Leadership and  
Policy Studies, Florida State University, USA*

Email: [kguthrie@fsu.edu](mailto:kguthrie@fsu.edu)



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3209-0963>

**Brittany Devies**

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education,  
and Special Education, College of Education,  
University of Maryland, USA*

Email: [devies@umd.edu](mailto:devies@umd.edu)



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3025-5613>

Article Received  
2024/04/24

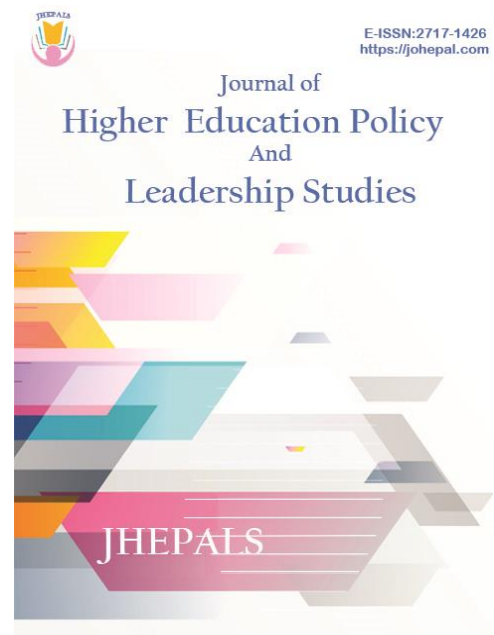
Article Accepted  
2024/06/07

Published Online  
2024/06/30

Cite article as:

Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B. (2024). The complexity of social justice and leadership on campuses: An analysis of institutional mission statements. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies*, 5(2), 53-68.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.61186/johepal.5.2.53>



## **The Complexity of Social Justice and Leadership on Campuses: An Analysis of Institutional Mission Statements**

Journal of Higher Education  
Policy And Leadership  
Studies (JHEPALS)

E-ISSN: 2717-1426  
Volume: 5 Issue: 2  
pp. 53-68  
DOI:  
10.61186/johepal.5.2.53

### **Abstract**

Within the United States, social justice and leadership education have immense and critical overlap, as they both share the common purpose of creating a better and more just world (Chunoo et al., 2019). This article analyzes 40 institutional mission statements that include social justice language through the culturally relevant leadership learning (CRL) model (Beatty & Guthrie, 2021; Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). By analyzing the mission statements using the CRL model, this article looks to see how both leadership education and social justice education are mutually mobilized to enhance student leadership learning and development. From both the content analysis and case study of these institutions, aspects of socially just leadership emerged through various environmental dimensions of campus culture and leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy. Implications will be explored on how higher education institutions can center the work of leadership education and social justice education to enhance student capacity and efficacy to engage in socially just leadership.

**Kathy L. Guthrie \***  
**Brittany Devies**

**Keywords:** Higher Education; Institutional Mission Statements; Leadership; Social Justice; Student Learning

---

---

\*Corresponding author's email: [kguthrie@fsu.edu](mailto:kguthrie@fsu.edu)

## **Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements**

### **Introduction**

Over time, many have argued for the important intersection of social justice education and leadership education with the college context (Beatty et al., 2020; Beatty & Guthrie, 2021; Chunoo et al., 2019; Guthrie & Chunoo, 2018, 2021; Harper & Kezar, 2021; Maia, 2022). The aims of leadership education and social justice education are deeply connected which must result in a shift in mindset that requires that leadership educators see themselves mutually as social justice educators (Chunoo et al., 2019). Chunoo et al. (2019) expands to state, “What makes a leadership educator a social justice educator is the commitment to understanding oppression as pervasive, restrictive, hierarchical, complex and cross-cutting, internalized, and manifested in a web of systems known often as –isms” (p. 88). To better understand the scope of this study and the importance of this analysis, it is important to understand existing literature on mission statements, social justice in leadership education, and the culturally relevant leadership learning (CRL) model (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016).

### **Missions Statements**

While some research has been done on institutional mission statements (Prins, 2002; Schnaubelt & Statham, 2007; Taylor & Morpew, 2010), higher education’s understanding of how they guide and influence our daily work is limited. Meacham (2008) states, “Mission statements are declarations of a campus's rationale and purpose; its responsibilities toward students and the community; and its vision of student, faculty, and institutional excellence” (para. 1). Some institutions have kept the same mission statement they created at their founding while other institutions have mission statements that have been revisited and evolved over time (Meacham, 2008).

Devis and Guthrie (2022) discovered 842 higher education mission statements that included “leader” or “leadership” within them, represented 16.6% of higher education institutions within the United States. These 842 mission statements fell within four themes: contextual, descriptive, operationalized, and purpose. This study helped better conceptualize if leadership is a priority within higher education institutions within the United States (Devis & Guthrie, 2022). Additionally, Devis et al. (2023) examined social justice within institutional mission statements and within the 40 higher education mission statements in the dataset, they found that social justice within mission statements fell into four major themes: foundational values, espoused values, instilled values, and pursued values. Seven of the mission statements were categorized as foundational values, understood as the “denotation of social justice as an underlying basis or principle or fundamental” (Devis et al., 2023, p. 146). Nearly half of the mission statements were identified as an espoused value, which Devis et al. (2023) defined as “the adoption or support of a cause, belief, or way of life” (p. 146). Thirteen of the 40 mission statements were instilled values (action-focused) and only two of the statements were pursued values (focused on an aim or goal) (Devis et al., 2023).

### **Social Justice in Leadership Education**

Social justice education seeks to equip people with the tools needed "to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in

**Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B.**

themselves and in the institutions and [their] communities” (Adams & Bell, 2016, p. 2). Social justice education often starts with the social issue at play and then leadership development is a bonus to the developmental process (Chunoo et al., 2019). “Despite tendencies to treat leadership education and social justice education as mutually exclusive, the heart of leadership is social justice and effective activism and advocacy requires leading change” (Chunoo et al., 2019, p. 87). Chunoo et al. (2019) believed the shift to leadership education grounded in social responsibility and change “is a response to social and institutional pressures to produce leaders who are ready, willing, and able to engage complex societal issues” (p. 87).

### **Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning (CRL) Model**

Chunoo et al. (2019) called for socially just leadership education to center on liberatory pedagogy and culturally relevant leadership learning. The culturally relevant leadership learning (CRL) model is a framework for leadership educators to work toward making leadership learning spaces more inclusive and culturally relevant (Beatty & Guthrie, 2021; Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). Guthrie et al. (2017) stated the culturally relevant leadership learning model “recognizes the power inherent in leadership, with special focus on the use of language, and power to influence students’ identity, capacity, and efficacy through institutional culture and climate” (p. 62). This model is grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy, which defines culture as “human activity, production, thought, and belief system” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75). The model can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning Model (Reprinted with permission from Guthrie, K. L., Bertrand Jones, T., and Osteen, L. Copyright 2019).

The central pieces of the model focus on leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy development. Identity is a socially constructed concept, just as leadership is, but identity construction is centered in cultural, historical, and political norms (Jones & Abes, 2013). Even though identity is constantly developing, it always has multiple dimensions, and each dimension is best understood when explored in relation to each other. CRL focuses on

## ***Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements***

students exploring their own leader identity in the framework of the complexity of their identity (Jones, 2016). Leadership capacity is an individual's ability to engage in the process of leadership. This development of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to be an effective leader, is enhancing the capacity to engage in leadership. In the process of learning leadership, identity and capacity inform each another (Guthrie et al., 2013), which leads to efficacy. Efficacy is believing in the ability to act effectively in the leadership process (Bandura, 1977). More specifically, leadership efficacy is "...a student's beliefs about his or her abilities to exercise their leadership knowledge and skills in a given situation" (Denzine, 1999, p. 3). As one's capacity increases and validation for efforts are received, self-efficacy increases (Guthrie et al., 2021). These three processes of identity, capacity, and efficacy are constantly flowing, evolving, and informing one another as they move between the leader (individual) and leadership process.

The internal components of leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy happen within five domains: historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, compositional diversity, behavioral dimension, organizational/structural dimension, and psychological dimension (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). These five domains are the five core themes of this case study. Historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion looks at the inclusion and/or exclusion of marginalized populations in university history and campus climates (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). Compositional diversity "represents the proportion of various populations who are represented in your organization, as both leaders and followers" (Guthrie et al., 2021, p. 13). The behavioral dimension encompasses the "interactions between all students and the quality of interaction within culturally diverse groups" (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016, p. 18). The organizational/structural dimension includes the process, structures, and systems that guide the operation of the institution or organization (Beatty & Guthrie, 2021; Guthrie et al., 2021). The psychological dimension "emphasizes individual views of group relations, perceptions of discrimination or conflict, attitudes about difference, and institutional responses to diversity" (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016, p. 17). These dimensions will be explored more in-depth in the findings as they are used to analyze the case study.

### **Methodology**

This analysis examined 5,072 mission statements from higher education institutions. This data set stemmed from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data of all 6,583 reporting institutions for the year. Of the 6,583 recorded institutions in the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) data set, 2,675 institutions provided their mission statements directly while 3,469 institutions provided a website address to their institutional mission statement. When cleaning the data set, the following cases were removed: 1,066 cases of multiple campuses, 49 closed institutions, and 396 missing mission statements that could not be located. After these multiple rounds of data cleaning, the dataset ended up with 5,072 institutional mission statements for analysis.

### **Content Analysis**

The first wave of an analysis was a content analysis to understand how social justice was used in these 40 mission statements. We used conventional content analysis, which is an approach to content analysis that describes a phenomenon and is used "when existing

**Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B.**

theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). From this content analysis, six themes emerged across the 40 mission statements. These themes were used to help situate the second level of analysis: the case study.

**Case Study**

The content analysis led us to question how social justice operationalized at these institutions, given its place in their mission statements. Questions arose on how this relatively small group of institutions enact social justice on their campuses since the terminology was included in their institutional guiding documents. This led to a second wave of analysis utilizing qualitative case study analysis. Yin (2003) wrote to use case study methodology when: (a) trying to answer the “how” and “why” questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of the participants; (c) you want to focus on the contextual conditions relevant to the phenomenon; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Baxter and Jack (2008) describe case study methodology as an approach that can be used "to develop theory, evaluate programs, and develop interventions" (p. 544). The guiding model used for this analysis was the culturally relevant leadership learning (CRL) model developed by Bertrand Jones et al. (2016). Specifically, the five domains on campus culture included in this model were used for analysis: historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, compositional diversity, organization/structural dimension, behavioral dimension, and psychological dimension (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016).

**Findings**

Of the 5,072 mission statements analyzed, 40 campuses included the words “social justice” in their mission statements. This study sought to contextualize and further analyze the operationalization of socially just leadership education, building off of the Devies and Guthrie (2022) study and the Devies et al. (2023) study. In the first wave of analysis, a content analysis was completed on the 40 mission statements that explicitly included the words “social justice.” Table 1 shows how the words social justice had meaning across six themes.

Table 1.  
Themes of Social Justice Mission Statements

Theme	Number of Cases/Institutions
Commitment to	12
Value, Guiding Principle, Vision	9
Advancement of, Promote, Action Toward	8
Emphasizing, Encouraging	3
Institution Promotes	3
Preparing Students for, Fostering	2

Table 1 provided a high-level overview of what was included in the mission statements from a first round of coding. It provided the research team more questions than answers, especially around the operationalization of social justice and leadership education on each of these 40 campuses. This first level of coding provided a foundation in which the team then sought to do a second round of additional data collection and analysis via qualitative case study, specially using the culturally relevant leadership learning (CRL) model (Beatty &

## ***Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements***

Guthrie, 2021; Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). The findings presented below are evidence from the secondary data collection and analysis where the research team went through online materials from each institution to find how each of the CRLLE model domains operationalized (or did not) on each campus. Each domain is presented below with example institutions from the data set as well as connections to leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy within each domain.

### **Historical Legacy of Inclusion and Exclusion**

“Leadership has a history of exclusion when it comes to labeling what people of color or other marginalized populations ‘do’ as leadership” (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016, p. 16). Oftentimes, leadership in communities of color had historically been labeled service or activism (Guthrie et al., 2013). This exclusionary tone of who can engage in leadership and what leadership historically looks like is seen on college campuses across the nation. With many institutional missions upholding the same language and goals since their founding in the 1800 and 1900s, many marginalized students, faculty, and staff are excluded from the aims and goals of their own institutions. The historical legacy of exclusion often means the dominant narrative is upheld within the institution. This domain “acknowledges that People of Color have historically been left out of the leadership conversation” and “examines who has been traditionally marginalized or underrepresented when it comes to leadership in a particular environment” (Guthrie et al., 2021, p. 67). Within mission statements, the exclusionary history of higher education means the exclusionary language and tone of many institutional mission statements and in our further analysis of websites of these institutions, could mean deeper history undergirding institutional practice surrounding exclusion and inclusion.

Adler University in Chicago, Illinois is one of the institutions where the historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion emerged. As it states on their website:

Alfred Adler began community psychology by articulating the constructs of *gemeinschaftsgefühl* (social interest or the connection between individual and community wellbeing) and systemic / structural community intervention (such as preventative public health measures). Adler University, as a higher education institution, continues his work today through the production of three outcomes which are specified in the mission: socially responsible practitioners, community engagement, and social justice. (Adler University, n.d.a., para. 2)

The strong statement of how Dr. Alfred Adler’s work is foundational to the social justice mission of this institution, which is aligned with the culturally relevant leadership learning (CRLLE) model (Beatty & Guthrie, 2021; Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). It specifically states the university’s namesake and the articulation of the constructs of psychology which guided his practice and how it reflects in the university. That historical legacy is amplified through the mission statement.

American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee is another institution that emerged with a strong historical legacy. This historically Black college opened in 1924 with the focus of training Black Baptist ministers. It is well documented of how this institution was active in the Civil Rights movement where students engaged in sit-ins and marches. Their mission statement reads, “The school continues today firmly rooted in its historic purpose to

**Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B.**

promote higher education through a Christ-centered vision of the world for under-served students. (American Baptist College, n.d., para. 2).

Another example is Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in Los Angeles, California. This university was created in response to the Watts Rebellion in the 1960's because of health disparities among Black Americans in the area. In fact, this institution was started because of social justice, and it continues to be at the heart of everything they do. Their mission statement states:

Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science is a private non-profit student-centered University that is committed to cultivating diverse health professional leaders who are dedicated to social justice and health equity for underserved populations through outstanding education, research, clinical service, and community engagement. (Charles R. Drew University, n.d., para 2).

Historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion, like that of the institutions presented above, is critical context to understanding leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy. In campuses with exclusionary history and/or practices, Beatty and Guthrie (2021) stated, "Consequentially, diverse students could not see themselves as leaders. This exclusion not only emerges in a hidden curriculum but perpetuates this harmful historical legacy by not developing future leaders" (p. 24). It is immensely more challenging to see oneself as a leader in a space that has not historically valued their identities and lived experiences. Leadership capacity development requires access to developmental experiences and opportunities to grow one's leadership characteristics, traits, and abilities. If the legacy on campus or within a program is one that has not welcomed your community historically, the barrier to those spaces is a deterrent to development. Finally, leadership efficacy is the belief in oneself to succeed (Guthrie et al., 2021). In the case of American Baptist College, the history of the campus was around empowering Black Baptist ministers to lead change in their communities, like in the example provided above about the Civil Rights movement. If students on that campus hear how empowered Black students in particular have been on that campus in the past, that can certainly influence their own leadership efficacy development.

**Compositional Diversity**

Compositional diversity can refer to the number and proportion of student populations (Milem et al., 2005), but Bertrand Jones et al. (2016) argued compositional diversity needs to go beyond just number of diverse students within a given space. Guthrie et al. (2021) asked, "who is present?" (p. 67) regarding compositional diversity. Beatty and Guthrie (2021) argued, this must go beyond recruiting diverse students, but how diverse students fully engage within the institution. "As representation of diverse students increase, so will the diversity of ideas and opinions which will increase the opportunity for student engagement across differences" (Beatty & Guthrie, 2021, p. 24).

When researching compositional diversity of the institutions that focus on social justice, almost all institutions did not provide demographic numbers of students, faculty, and staff. Adler University in Chicago, Illinois not only state on their home page "We Stand for Social Justice" (Adler University, n.d.b.), but they emphasize that the graduation rate for

## ***Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements***

ethnic minorities was 80% in 2020-2021. They also mentioned that of the 25 student organizations they have on campus, 8 of them are directly related to social identities. Another institution, Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California, stated that based on Spring 2020 student census data, student demographics included:

- Latino(a)/Hispanic 48.9%
- African-American 13.0%
- White 21.9%
- American Indian/Native Alaskan 0.3%
- Asian 5.5%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0.5%
- Two or More Races (3.1%)
- Non-specified 0.4%
- Not reported 6.4% (Pacific Oaks College, n.d.a.)

Compositional diversity is integral for leadership identity development on college campuses. There is great value in seeing representation of your shared identities in leadership process surrounding a leadership learner (Beatty & Guthrie, 2021). Representation matters immensely in leadership development (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). Dugan et al. (2013) found that engaging across differences is a significant outcome for leadership learners. But for that dialogue across differences to occur, compositional diversity must exist. Building off the Dugan et al. (2013) finding the importance of engaging across difference, leaders can develop their capacity to lead from learning from diverse leaders. Compositional diversity not only influences how one identifies as a leader, but also can influence how they learn and develop the capacities of leadership (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016; Dugan et al., 2013). Finally, compositional diversity is closely and deeply connected to leadership efficacy development. There is incomparable value in seeing a leader who shares your lived experiences and identities succeed (or not succeed) as a leader in a shared space. For example, at the time of this article being written, Pacific Oaks College has 15 Board of Trustees members and 11 are women. Their University President is a woman. Over half of Pacific Oaks College's President's Cabinet is People of Color and over half of their Cabinet is women (Pacific Oaks College, n.d.b.). Students on that campus see compositional diversity at the highest level of the institution, showing their commitment to empowering leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy development within compositional diversity.

### **Organizational/ Structural Dimension**

Analysis for the organizational/structural dimension was inclusive of the structures that guide the daily processes of campus and institutional systems (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016). More specifically, how do organizational structures lead to day-to-day cultural relevance and socially just actions. Bertrand Jones et al. (2016) argued, "These structural aspects of higher education institutions are represented by course curricula, budget allocations to support diverse learning opportunities, admissions practices, hiring practices of diverse faculty and staff, tenure and promotion procedures, and rewards structures" (p. 18). Beatty and Guthrie (2021) further emphasized that these structures and policies influence campus culture, including the student experience.

**Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B.**

Several institutions in this study that amplified social justice in their mission statements also had dedicated offices that focused on this aspect of their institutional mission. Table 2 has provided examples of what these offices are named and in which institution they are located.

Table 2.  
Office Names and Campus Locations

Office Name	Location
Social Justice, Equity, Advocacy and Leadership (SEAL) Initiative	American Baptist College (Nashville, TN)
Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching, & Service	Georgetown University (Washington, DC)
Social Justice Center	Laney College (Oakland, CA)
Center for Social Justice and Community Engagement	Notre Dame de Namur University (Belmont, CA)
Institute for Social Justice and Transformation	Roosevelt University (Chicago, IL)
The Center for Community Engagement and Social Justice	Union Theological Seminary (New York City, NY)

All the offices in Table 2 demonstrate a commitment to their institution’s focus on social justice. For four of the six offices, community service and engagement are at the core of enacting social justice. Framing the work of these offices within social justice highlights the organizational and structural dimension of cultural relevance.

Roger Williams University in Providence, Rhode Island is an example of an institution that has social justice in their mission statement and through organizational/structural dimensions social justice is relevant to daily processes. Roger Williams University discussed how they focus on embedded equity. Their website states this:

The Roger Williams University community has committed to diversity, respect for all races, ethnicities, genders, identities and abilities, and access to an affordable education. Our diversity, equity, inclusion, and access efforts are embedded within our Strategic Action Plan and are essential to our institutional direction. Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access Initiatives include macro initiatives that embed equity into all our university operations, and focused initiatives that support the retention, empowerment and thriving of underrepresented students and employees. (Roger Williams University, n.d.)

Leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy is heavily influence by the organizational/ structural dimension. The examples in Table 2 provide campus-wide offices to support identity, capacity, and efficacy development on these campuses. Additionally, Roger Williams University is a great example of weaving social justice work into their strategic plan. But the key component in the organizational/structural dimension is that these policy, structures, and practices are practiced at *both* the macro and micro level. Are there university policies in alignment with socially just leadership education and *are* there student programs that exist to support more individual development. Within this domain, attention to leadership identity development may look like creating spaces on campus where students feel like they can identify as a leader and find communities with others who share lived experiences. Leadership capacity development is having policies and structures in place to

## ***Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements***

ensure students have access to leadership opportunities where they can develop the skills and abilities to lead successfully.

### **Behavioral Dimension**

The behavioral dimension includes “interactions between all students and the quality of interaction within culturally diverse groups” (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016, p. 18). Beatty and Guthrie (2021) stated, “This includes the quality of interactions between individuals, across groups and intragroup, which increases the complexity of this dimension. Personal and individual complexity add to the group dynamics and influence behaviors” (p. 25).

In the analysis of institutions with mission statements that include social justice, vision statements, goals, and programs were reviewed to see if behavioral dimensions were highlighted. For example, Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington asks, “What Inspires You?” (Gonzaga University, n.d.) on their home webpage. Under this question the first link is “Fighting for Social Justice”, which leads to a page that has sections titled: Like-Minded People, Academic Paths, What You’ll Learn, Outside the Classroom, and Keep Exploring. Gonzaga’s mission statement “...The Gonzaga experience fosters a mature commitment to dignity of the human person, social justice, diversity, intercultural competence, global engagement, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and care for the planet” (Gonzaga University, n.d.) speaks to behaviors that support leadership in social justice behaviors.

Supportive actions to allow for space for diverse individuals to interact and learn is another marker of strong behavioral dimension for culturally relevant leadership learning. Hollis University (2020) in Roanoke, Virginia, held a “Leading Equity, Diversity, and Justice Day” in October of 2020. During this day classes were canceled for students, faculty, and staff to attend workshops and trainings on social justice topics. That day 35 in-person and virtual sessions were provided and since then each year, Hollis University has held an across campus conference in the Fall to provide a space for the campus, faculty, staff, and students to have critical conversations about equity in all aspects of life.

The behavioral dimension is closely interwoven with leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy. Regarding leadership identity, Guthrie et al. (2021) noted that within this dimension, it is important to focus on the quality of the exchanges between students and how they treat each other when there are perceived differences. It is important that students feel empowered within their own identities and lived experiences within the leadership learning space to have empowering and developmental interactions. Additionally, leadership capacity is impacted because the behavioral dimension can often occur in peer-to-peer relationships. Many skills, traits, and abilities to lead are learned from peers and interactions within them. Finally, peer interactions are important for leadership efficacy as positive interactions can lead to positive leadership efficacy development. Hollis University’s (2020) “Leading Equity, Diversity, and Justice Day” created a space for students, faculty, and staff to feel comfortable coming to a space to develop their leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy through critical conversations about equity.

### **Psychological Dimension**

Finally, the psychological dimension “emphasizes individual views of group relations, perceptions of discrimination or conflict, attitudes about difference, and institutional responses to diversity” (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016, p. 17). Beatty and Guthrie (2021)

**Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B.**

emphasized that the psychological dimension considers, “how learning environments are created to both support student learning, but also provide opportunities for dissonance cannot be overlooked for the psychological aspect this holds” (p. 25). In our interpretations of the mission statement, we considered how language was used in communicating various aspects of the institution.

Calumet College of Saint Joseph in Whiting, Indiana is a Catholic-based institution that connects social justice work to its roots in faith. An example of this institution’s use of language to communicate psychological dimension is their mission statement expresses, “The mission of the College is to cultivate the academic, spiritual, and ethical development of our students by affirming the inherent dignity of all people, promoting social justice and an ethic of service, and providing opportunity and empowerment.” In referring to community service activities, they call them “social justice projects” (Calumet College of Saint Joseph, n.d.). This not only signals the significance of the work but connects it back to social justice and their strong focus.

Metropolitan College of New York in New York City, New York was not only started by a group of social activists in the 1960’s but developed “The MCNY Theory of Change” to advance their mission towards a more just and equitable society (Metropolitan College of New York, n.d.). This theory of change frames motivated students as one of several resources that lead to actions of the university including teaching and learning that results in direct impact of purpose-centered abilities developed at the institution. This all leads to an extended impact of social justice. Not only the development of this theory of social change, but the language used to communicate the mission of this institution has significant influence on the psychological dimension of the entire campus community.

Beatty and Guthrie (2021) stated, “the construction of identity occurs when individuals start to recognize the cultural contexts in which they live and internalize the cultural messages that encompass them” (p. 22). Leadership identity development could be cultivated in many ways in regard to this dimension; at Calumet College of Saint Joseph (n.d.) creating a community that is founded on inherent dignity of all people creates a space for students to grow in every sense of who they are, as a person and as a leader. Leadership capacity is important within this domain as well. Also, at Calumet College of Saint Joseph (n.d.), their social justice projects are specific spaces dedicated to traits, skills, and ability development which students will take with them long beyond the project. Finally, leadership efficacy is a primarily internal process (the belief in one’s self to succeed), much like this domain. This dimension focuses on “the internal processes individuals use to understand and make meaning of their realities and concepts like diversity, equity, and inclusion” (Guthrie et al., 2021, p. 67). Those internal processes and the meaning making that occurs are critical for positive and sustainable leadership efficacy development.

### **Implications**

Social justice educators and leadership educators must come together to ensure we are making culturally relevant leadership spaces on college campuses. Chunoo et al. (2019) “believes leadership for a socially just society requires commitment to culturally relevant pedagogies and the advancement of perspectives that confront power and interrupt oppression in systems” (p. 87). As evidenced by this study, it is important to have that

## **Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements**

commitment to social justice in institutional mission statements and also essential to show a commitment to cultural relevance throughout the campus culture, including but not limited to through the five domains explicitly explored in this study. While inclusion of social justice language in an institutional mission statement is not the sole medium an institution can use to express their commitment to social justice work, it is a powerful tool to align the guiding documents of the institution clearly stating social justice work is an aim of the institution. Beatty and Guthrie (2021) stated, “Leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy development is the *what* of our interrogation of CRLLE” (p. 22). It is essential to focus on leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy development because together, they describe “a student’s way of understanding self as an agency of change through interpersonal and intrapersonal development” (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016, p. 12). Therefore, as a result of this study of 40 institutions who explicitly expressed their commitment to social justice in their institution mission statements, several implications for practice became evident around leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy development.

### **Leadership Identity**

Guthrie et al. (2013) defined leader identity as who you are as a leader. Social justice and leadership are key components of one’s practice when they identify as a socially just leadership educator. As authors, we posit that leadership educators must be social justice educators. They are not separate identities, but rather should be interwoven praxis. Teaching at the intersection of leadership and social justice allows for learning to occur with positive change towards equity at the heart of everything. This intersection of socially just leadership education should be integrated throughout all curriculum and co-curricular learning. Institutions need to use the five domains presented above to craft environments for leaders to learn, grow, and develop in ways that respect, cultivate, and honor their identities and lived experiences, as both people and as leaders. This is essential for institutions with commitments to social justice and leadership development.

### **Leadership Capacity**

Capacity is the “integration of students’ knowledge, attitudes, and skills that collectively reflect their overall ability to behave effectively in the leadership process” (Bertrand Jones et al., p. 14; Dugan, 2011). Leadership capacity is the *doing* of leadership (Owen et al., 2021). In socially just leadership education work, it is building the skills needed to practice and promote socially just leadership. Institutions, as organizations, demonstrate what they value in mission statements and what they intend to commit to *doing* as leaders. For capacity, socially just leadership capacity must go beyond the statement into structures, policy, compositional diversity, and inclusive spaces where leaders can develop their traits, skills, and abilities to be successful leaders. A shift from an administration driven framework to an educator framework at every level of an institution, in all capacities, would drastically shift the culture around institutions who are committed to socially just and culturally relevant leadership learning. Making key changes in all five domains to align a commitment to socially just and culturally relevant leadership learning as an institution is a profound act of leadership capacity work.

**Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B.**

### **Leadership Efficacy**

Guthrie et al. (2021) defined leadership efficacy as “our belief in our ability to effectively engage in the process of leadership using our knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes we have learned” (pp. 11-12). Efficacy is a phenomenon that is built over time and through constant practice. For socially just leadership educators, this means continuous practice and development. Socially just leadership must become every educator’s responsibility and the work must become integral to campus culture. Social justice is dedication to equity and justice for all. That is ongoing and continuously developing work, much like leadership efficacy development. Leadership efficacy in regard to socially just and culturally relevant leadership learning will likely not be stagnant, nor only increase. The complexity of leadership efficacy is it developmentally evolves based on experiences, knowledge, and practice. Therefore, continuing to engage in this important work is important and necessary.

### **Conclusion**

The intersections of social justice and leadership education within higher education institutions are complex, dynamic, and diverse. Although many institutional mission statements are decades (or even centuries) old, the operationalization and implementation of socially just and culturally relevant leadership education continue to evolve in new and innovative ways. As educators continue their ongoing commitments to socially just and culturally relevant leadership learning on college campuses, it is critical to have ground the daily work within institutional commitments, whether it be mission or vision statements, strategic plans, institutional values, or something else entirely. It is no longer enough to voice a commitment to socially just and culturally relevant leadership on campuses, institutions must create structures, practices, and places for this work to happen every day.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest to be cited here.

### **Funding**

The authors received no financial support for this research.

### **Human Participants**

There are no human participants in this research. Other ethical considerations are observed in alignment with the authors’ institutional policies as well as JHEPALS ethical guidelines.

### **Originality Note**

The authors confirm that the manuscript is their own original contribution and that all external sources used have been properly cited or quoted.

## Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements

### References

- Adams, M., & Bell, L. A. (2016). *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315775852>
- Adler University. (n.d.a.). Mission. <https://www.adler.edu/about/#mission>
- Adler University. (n.d.b.). Our Commitment to Diversity. <https://www.adler.edu/commitment-to-diversity/>
- American Baptist College. (n.d.). Vision & Mission. <https://abcnash.edu/about/>
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.  
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573>
- Beatty, C. C., & Guthrie, K. L. (2021). *Operationalizing culturally relevant leadership learning*. Information Age Publishing.
- Beatty, C. C., Irwin, L., Owen, J. E., Tapia-Fuselier, N., Guthrie, K. L., Cohen-Derr, E., Hassell-Goodman, S., Rocco, M. L., & Yamanaka, A. (2020). A call for centering social identities: Priority 1 of the national leadership education research agenda 2020-2025. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 14(3), 39-44. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21719>
- Bertrand Jones, T., Guthrie, K. L., & Osteen, L. (2016). Critical domains of culturally relevant leadership learning: A call to transform leadership programs. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2016(152), 9-21. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20205>
- Calumet College of Saint Joseph. (n.d.). About. <https://www.ccsj.edu/about-ccsj/>
- Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science. (n.d.). Mission, Vision, & Values. <https://www.cdrewu.edu/about/mission-vision-values/>
- Chunoo, V. S., Beatty, C. C., & Gruver, M. D. (2019). Leadership educator as social justice educator. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2019(164), 87-103.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20360>
- Denzine, G. (1999). Personal and collective efficacy: Essential components of college students' leadership development. *Concepts & Connections*, 8(1), 1.
- Devies, B., Arias, V., Brown, O. F., & Foreman, E. J. (2023). Social justice and its role in mission statements: Voicing commitments to social justice and implications for student affairs professionals. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies*, 4(1), 142-151.  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.52547/johepal.4.1.142>
- Devies, B., & Guthrie, K. L. (2022). What mission statements say: Signaling priority of leadership development. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies*, 3(1), 91-107.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.52547/johepal.3.1.91>
- Dugan, J. P. (2011). Research on college student leadership. In S. R. Komives, J. P. Dugan, J. E. Owen, C. Slack, W. Wagner, & Associates (Eds.), *The handbook for student leadership development* (2nd ed., pp. 59-85). Jossey-Bass.
- Dugan, J. P., Kodama, C., Correia, B., & Associates. (2013). *Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership insight report: Leadership program delivery*. National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.
- Gonzaga University (n.d.). <https://www.gonzaga.edu>
- Guthrie, K. L., Beatty, C. C., & Wiborg, E. R. (2021). *Engaging in the leadership process: Identity, capacity, and efficacy for college students*. Information Age Publishing.
- Guthrie, K. L., Bertrand Jones, T., Osteen, L., & Hu, S. (2013). *Cultivating leader identity and capacity in students from diverse backgrounds: ASHE Higher Education Report*, 39: 4. John Wiley & Sons.

**Guthrie, K. L., & Devies, B.**

- Guthrie, K. L., Bertrand Jones, T., & Osteen, L. (2017). The teaching, learning, and being of leadership: Exploring context and practice of the culturally relevant leadership learning model. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 11(3), 61-67. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21547>
- Guthrie, K. L., & Chunoo, V. S. (Eds.). (2018). *Changing the narrative: Socially just leadership education*. Information Age Publishing.
- Guthrie, K. L., & Chunoo, V. S. (Eds.). (2021). *Shifting the mindset: Socially just leadership education*. Information Age Publishing.
- Harper, J., & Kezar, A. (2021). Leadership development for racially minoritized students: An expansion of the social change model of leadership. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 20(3), 156-169. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.12806/V20/I3/T2/full/html>
- Hollis University (2020, October 28). Campus Life, Diversity and Inclusivity, Special Events. <https://www.hollins.edu/one-small-step-on-that-journey-of-transformation-hollins-holds-its-inaugural-leading-equity-diversity-and-justice-day/>
- Hsieh, H-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Jones, S. R. (2016). Authenticity in leadership: Intersectionality of identities. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2016(152), 23-34. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20206>
- Jones, S. R., & Abes, E. S. (2013). *Identity development of college students: Advancing frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751>
- Maia, A. C. (2022). *Educating culturally relevant leaders: Experiences in leadership identity, capacity, and efficacy development in college students*. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida). <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/9792>
- Meacham, J. (2008). What's the use of a mission statement? *Academe*, 94(1), 21-24. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ785381>
- Metropolitan College of New York. (n.d.). President's Welcome. <https://www.mcnyc.edu/about-mcnyc/presidents-welcome/>
- Milem, J. F., Chang, M. J., & Antonio, A. L. (2005). *Making diversity work on campus: A research-based perspective*. Association of American Colleges and Universities. [https://web.stanford.edu/group/siher/AntonioMilemChang\\_makingdiversitywork.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/group/siher/AntonioMilemChang_makingdiversitywork.pdf)
- Owen, J. E., Devies, B., & Reynolds, D. J. (2021). Going beyond 'add women then Stir': Fostering feminist leadership. In K. L. Guthrie, & V. S. Chunoo (Eds.), *Shifting the mindset: Socially just leadership education* (pp. 89-99). Information Age Publishing.
- Pacific Oaks College. (n.d.a.). Facts about Pacific Oaks. <https://www.pacificoaks.edu/about/facts-and-figures/>
- Pacific Oaks College. (n.d.b.). Pacific Oaks' leadership. <https://www.pacificoaks.edu/about/our-community/leadership/>
- Prins, E. S. (2002). The relationship between institutional mission, service, and service-learning at community colleges in New York State. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 8(2), 35-49. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0008.204>
- Roger Williams University. (n.d.). Embedded Equity. <https://www.rwu.edu/who-we-are/diversity-equity-inclusion>
- Schnaubelt, T., & Statham, A. (2007). Faculty perceptions of service as a mode of scholarship. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 14(1), 18-31. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0014.102>
- Taylor, B. J., & Morphew, C. C. (2010). An analysis of baccalaureate college mission statements. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(5), 483-503. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-010-9162-7>
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

## Social Justice & HE Leadership: Mission Statements

---

**Dr. Kathy L. Guthrie** is professor in the higher education program, director of the Leadership Learning Research Center, and coordinator of the Undergraduate Certificate in Leadership Studies at Florida State University. Kathy's research focuses on leadership learning, socially just leadership education, and professional development for student affairs professionals in leadership education. Kathy has developed and taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership and higher education. Kathy has authored/co-authored over 100 publications and has co-edited 5 issues in the *New Directions* series and 4 symposiums in the *Journal for Leadership Studies*. She co-authored *Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning, Engaging in the Leadership Process: Identity, Capacity, and Efficacy of College Students*, and *The Role of Leadership Educators: Transforming Leadership*. Guthrie has served on several editorial boards and is currently the editor of the *New Directions in Student Leadership* series.

**Dr. Brittany Devies** serves as the Program Manager for Leadership Studies and Development at the University of Maryland, College Park, focusing on academic and co-curricular leadership education initiatives. She is an affiliate graduate faculty member at UMD within the Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special Education. She also serves as an adjunct faculty member at Florida State University, teaching in their undergraduate leadership studies certificate and serves as a research associate with the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at Florida State University. She has authored and coauthored more than 30 book chapters and journal articles on leadership education and learning. She received her Ph.D. in Higher Education from Florida State University, her M.S. in Higher Education from Florida State University, and her B.S.Ed. in Early and Middle Childhood Studies with a minor in Leadership Studies from The Ohio State University.



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0) which allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.