

Addressing Equity Gaps in Student Success
Measures: Interventions at Walter Sisulu
University(WSU)

NOLWANDLE NONGAUZA (ACADEMIC ADVISOR)

27 JUNE 2024



In pursuit of excellence

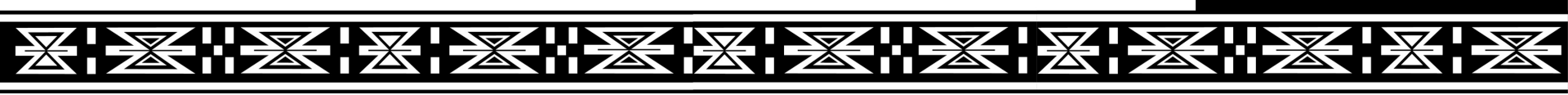


Overview of Walter Sisulu University (WSU)

Vision: To be an impactful, technology-infused African university

Mission:

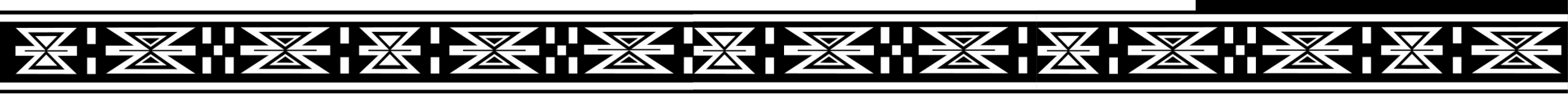
- Ethical responses to societal needs
- Scholarly approaches
- Sustainable practices
- Entrepreneurial initiatives
- Delivers future-ready graduates



Purpose of the presentation

Purpose of Presenting the Topic on This Platform

- Drive the conversation forward
- Mobilize resources
- Create a collective effort towards closing equity gaps
- Ensure that all students can succeed



Understanding Equity Gaps

Definition of Equity Gaps in Higher Education (Johnson & Taylor, 2023)

- Disparities in educational outcomes and resource access among different student groups

Based on:

- Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Socioeconomic status
 - Gender
 - Disability
 - Other demographic factors
- Manifest in:
 - Enrolment rates
 - Academic performance
 - Retention and graduation rates
 - Access to quality educational experiences and resources



Challenges Faced by Underrepresented Students at Walter Sisulu University (WSU)

First-Generation Students:

- **Lack of Familiarity with University Systems:** First-generation students lacked knowledge about university processes and resources, making it harder for them to navigate academic and administrative challenges. They also had limited access to guidance from family members who had attended university.

Students with Disabilities:

- **Accessibility Issues:** Students with disabilities often encountered physical and technological barriers within the university environment. Inadequate support and accommodations hindered their academic progress and inclusion in campus life.

LGBTQ+ Students:

- **Social Challenges:** LGBTQ+ students experienced discrimination and a lack of acceptance, affecting their mental health and academic performance. A lack of safe spaces and support services exacerbated these issues.



Objectives and Goals

Support First-Generation University Students

- **Objective:** Provide targeted support to first-generation students to help them navigate the university system.
- **Goal :**Develop mentorship programs, peer support groups, and comprehensive orientation sessions tailored to their needs.

Improve Accessibility for Students with Disabilities

- **Objective:** Ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to academic resources and campus facilities.
- **Goal:** Invest in accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies, and specialized support services.

Support LGBTQ+ Students

- **Objective:** Create a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ students.
- **Goal:** Establish LGBTQ+ support services, safe spaces, and anti-discrimination policies



Interventions Implemented by Walter Sisulu University

Mentorship Programs:

- **Purpose:** Provided guidance and support to students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping them navigate university life and academic challenges.
- **Example:** Implemented peer mentoring programs where senior students mentored first-year students, offering academic advising , social integration, and career planning.

Disability Support Services:

- **Purpose :** Ensured that students with disabilities had equal access to education and campus facilities.
- **Example:** Provided assistive technologies, accessible infrastructure, and tailored support services to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities.

Inclusivity and Diversity Programs:

- **Purpose:** Created a supportive and inclusive campus environment for all students, regardless of their background.
- **Example :** Conducted cultural sensitivity training, diversity workshops, and established support networks for marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ students and ethnic minorities..



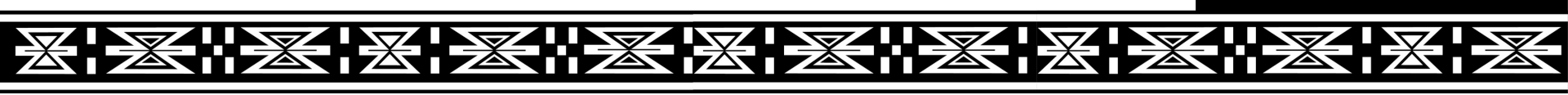
Future Directions

- **Sustainability of Interventions:**

- Ensure initiatives and interventions aimed at improving student success and promoting equity are sustainable long-term.
- Create robust frameworks for sustainability.
- Secure funding sources.
- Integrate efforts into the institutional moral belief.

- **Plans for Program Expansion:**

- Outline clear strategies for expanding successful programs and introducing new initiatives.
- Increase access to resources.
- Balance up support services.



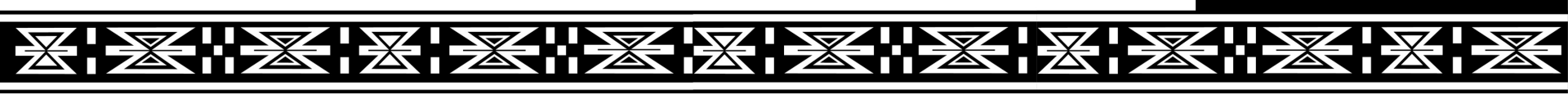
Future Directions (Continues)

- **Enhancing Equity:**
 - Develop concrete plans to address gaps in access, support, and outcomes among students.
 - Implement targeted recruitment efforts.
 - Employ culturally responsive teaching practices.
 - Establish inclusive policies.
- **Vision for Student Success:**
 - Articulate a cohesive vision for holistic student development.
 - Focus on academic achievement, career readiness, and overall well-being.
 - Align with the values and mission of WSU.
 - Respond to the evolving needs of students and society.



Conclusion

- Gaps based on race, socioeconomic status, and other factors persist in educational systems.
- These gaps impact student access to resources and opportunities.
- Addressing equity gaps is crucial to uphold principles of fairness.
- Ensuring all students have equal chances to succeed, regardless of background, is essential.
- **Stakeholders must implement policies such as:**
 - Equitable funding distribution
 - Culturally responsive teaching methods
 - Robust support systems for students
- This commitment enhances individual outcomes.
- It also fosters a more inclusive and productive society.
- Promotes a future where every student can thrive.



END OF PRESENTATION

THANK YOU

