

Minnowbrook 50 Social Equity Manifesto

August 2018

In 1968, the United States was grappling with a number of tumultuous social and cultural changes. After the passage of civil rights legislation, a group of public administration scholars met to reflect on the implications of the social and environmental circumstances for our discipline. At the Minnowbrook I meeting, social equity was introduced as a concept that should be embedded as a value in public administration. Fifty years later, in 2018, a re-examination is needed in order to achieve the original goal of including social equity as a central principle in public administration. As a discipline and practice, we have failed to anchor social equity to the foundation of public administration and thus a call to action is warranted. Our call to action is clear and intentional—focused on ways to intersect and integrate social equity in the research, teaching, and practice of public administration. Below are a set of principles that seek to move public administration toward making social equity an embedded value and practice in the field:

- I. **Social equity is a foundational anchor, not just a pillar, of public administration.** There is a responsibility to promote social equity in our roles as researchers, teachers, and practitioners.
- II. **Our commitment to the field of public administration requires us to stand up for good governance, social equity, and strong communities.** As scholars and practitioners, we must be open to professional development opportunities that challenge conscious and unconscious bias, be willing to engage in difficult conversations with colleagues and constituents, and commit ourselves to be life-long learners as a way to incorporate the values of social equity and cultural understanding as part of our daily process.
- III. **A goal of social equity is to eliminate inequalities of all kinds. This requires a commitment to structural, institutional changes and deep personal work on behalf of public administration scholars and practitioners.** As academics, we support social equity in our instruction, in the hiring and promotion of our colleagues, in our research, and in our service to the field. As practitioners, we support social equity in the development, implementation, and evaluation of managerial practices and public policies.
- IV. **Research needs to be utilized as a tool for examining whether social equity goals are being realized.** As researchers, we can use equity frameworks, such as Representative Bureaucracy and Intersectionality, to inform the questions we ask as well as broaden our methodological choices to incorporate more qualitative work. Representative bureaucracy can demonstrate the effectiveness of equity-based approaches to hiring and promotion.
- V. **Violations of equity are contrary to democracy.** As researchers, we should be more conscious of the questions we ask, the paradigms/frameworks/theories we use and propose, and the implications of our research as it pertains to equity. As practitioners, a democratically responsible administration includes passionate action that is equitable, inclusive, intentional, person-centered and encapsulated by an ethos of care.

- VI. **As a whole, academic programs of public administration are not currently equipping or preparing the future of public administrators for the practical work of equity in public service.** Public administration programs need core courses focused centrally on equity that are not relegated to “special topics” courses or electives. In addition, equity concepts, processes, issues, and outcomes should be incorporated within every core class in public administration curricula.
- VII. **Practitioners are fundamental actors in extending democracy and promoting equity.** Administrators must be committed to and manifest the ideals of democracy, justice, and equity for all citizens through their actions, professional development, and engagement with all individuals and communities. As practitioners, the upper levels of management with promotion authority need to create pipelines to promote social equity at the higher levels of government.

In light of the current state of affairs across the globe, those who make up the field of public administration, both practitioners and scholars, must engage in intentional, active and ethical efforts in order to serve and safeguard all people, especially the most vulnerable in our society. No longer can we engage in functional activities that do harm, nor can we passively stand on the sidelines. We know the path that we must take. This is a defining moment that will reveal what we value. To paraphrase Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence and lack of intentional action of our friends.

Signed:

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