

OPENING STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH S. BOYLAN, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES' COMMITTEE ON "CLOSING THE EQUITY GAP:
REVITALIZING STEM EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAMS
IN THE NATION'S MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS"
APRIL 10, 2017

First of all, congratulations and best wishes to the chair, Dr. Kent McGuire, and study committee members who will, I am sure, focus their critical minds carefully and thoroughly on the significant questions posed as the rationale for this National Academy of Sciences study. Representing one of the sponsors of this study, I am very pleased and proud to be able to provide a few comments and context as the work of the committee formally begins. I regret that I cannot offer these remarks in person and share in what I anticipate will be an energetic and far-ranging discussion.

The Foundation can trace its history of grantmaking for diversity and inclusion efforts back to the days when Mr. Sloan was president, from the time of the Foundation's founding in 1934 until he stepped down as its president in 1962. We know from his writings and his actions that he cared deeply about strengthening colleges and universities whose primary mission was to educate underrepresented minorities. Under his leadership, significant funding was awarded to HBCU's and to the United Negro College Fund to build their endowments and fundraising infrastructure. The current president, Paul L. Juskow, devoted his President's Letter in the most recent Annual Report to a history and analysis of the Foundation's efforts to diversify the nation's higher education systems and the STEM workforce. You may download the essay here: https://sloan.org/storage/app/media/files/annual_reports/APS-2015-Presidents-Letter.pdf.

Our current funding priorities are aimed at improving the quality and increasing the diversity of higher education in STEM. Most of our awards support scholarships for underrepresented minority graduate students, though we have interests in the entire higher education ecosystem. Through the grant for this study committee, we are agreeing that there is much to be gained by studying both the obstacles faced by minority-serving institutions and the practices that have enabled them to support the ambitions of their very promising students.

As your study director, Tom Rudin, knows well, the Sloan review process for all proposals is a searching one that involves many drafts and high expectations. We want you to be successful, and as a means to that end, have worked with Tom to develop a list of specific metrics of success that will be used by you and us to measure the impact of the committee's work. These range from the specific deliverables of x meetings and focus groups and y briefings to longer-term outcome metrics on impact. These are important now to help you construct your vision and develop your plans. I would also like to argue that it is also very important at this stage to set limits, to articulate clearly priorities among your target constituencies, to establish the most pressing common problems they share, and to develop workable strategies to effect the changes you envision.

You have agreed to a grand challenge. If the issues were easily attainable, they would have been solved already -- and decades ago. The country needs your commitment and creativity. I am proud that the Sloan Foundation is joining in your efforts that resonate well with Mr. Sloan's own interests and values to increase equity and decrease racial injustice in American higher education. Onward!