The School Counselor and Equity for All Students
(Adopted 2006; revised 2012, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position
School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value all students and groups equally. School counselors advocate for the equitable treatment of all students in school and in the community.

The Rationale
According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2014, the number of students of color in U.S. public schools surpassed that of white students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). However, white students continue to graduate from high school at higher rates than black and Hispanic students (Kena et al., 2015). In addition, an achievement gap exists along socioeconomic lines.

Many minority, first-generation and low-income students aspire to college; however, the college application process can present significant obstacles (Page & Scott, 2016). Some students in schools report there is no adult in the school with whom they feel they can discuss these issues, and many of these students come from underrepresented social or cultural groups. These students cannot always rely on their parents for college information and must instead turn to their schools, where school counselors are in a key position.

Historically, underrepresented populations have faced barriers to participating in a rigorous curriculum and higher-level classes (Vazquex & Altshuler, 2017). School counselors, teachers, administrators and other school staff are involuntary gatekeepers of access to these classrooms. Research finds that when students and school counselors are able to connect, school counselors have the potential to become empowering agents (Emde, 2015). When students feel they are being treated in a biased or negative manner, they often exhibit self-destructive behaviors such as truancy, withdrawal, acting out and nonparticipation in class activities. Conversely, when students believe they are treated fairly, they are more likely to be engaged in school, talk about pressing issues and participate in class activities.

The School Counselor’s Role
School counselors develop and implement a comprehensive school counseling program promoting equity and access for all students. School counselors are mindful of school and community perceptions of the treatment of underrepresented groups and understand the importance of collaborating with school and community groups to help all students succeed. School counselors demonstrate cultural competence.

School counselors promote equitable treatment of all students by:
• Maintaining professional knowledge of the ever-changing and complex world of students’ culture
• Maintaining knowledge and skills for working in a diverse and multicultural work setting
• Informing school staff of changes regarding different groups within the community
• Promoting the development of school policies leading to equitable treatment of all students and opposing school policies hindering equitable treatment of any student
• Promoting access to rigorous standards-based curriculum, academic courses and learning paths for college and career for all students
• Developing plans to address over- or underrepresentation of specific groups in programs such as special education, honors, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate
• Creating an environment that encourages any student or group to feel comfortable to come forward with problems.

Summary
School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value all students and groups equally. School counselors promote the equitable treatment of all students in school and the community.

References