UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND FOR INCLUSION

Today, the demand for inclusion in undergraduate science education is situated within a shifting sociopolitical context that is: (1) increasingly complex and global, (2) influenced by an increasing number of confounding variables, (3) continuously redefined by the changing nature of the problems at hand and the criteria by which we define successful solutions, and (4) undergirded by the troubling history of race relations in America. This contemporary reality requires that we boldly embrace a more dynamic conceptualization of excellence in undergraduate science education—one that advances innovation and rightfully positions inclusion as its necessary precondition.

While this course of action includes uncertainties, the contextual truths of our day—diminishing quality of life, widening educational divides, and waning US preeminence in science and technology—make those risks minimal compared to the cost of maintaining the status quo.

RECONCEPTUALIZING EXCELLENCE, WITHOUT PAST LIMITATIONS

For centuries, the historical norms and values of scientific discovery and innovation have shaped the definition of excellence. However, such conventions have often limited our capacity to cultivate and harness creativity from the widest possible range of perspectives, worldviews, and disciplinary expertise. Because undergraduate science education has been contingent upon these conventions, its definition, too, has been limited to the kind of traditional thinking, static explanations, and short-sighted enterprises that have misguided contemporary conceptions about what really constitutes excellence.

Reconceiving excellence in undergraduate science education, then, demands that we transcend any outcome, discrete status, or mastery of initiatives or interventions. At its core, excellence in undergraduate science education must represent a dynamic stance whereby an