**SREB Doctoral Scholars Program Regional Advisory Committee**

**Critical Considerations in the Current Political Climate**

**Discussion Guide**

The higher education landscape is experiencing unprecedented shifts affecting doctoral education and research support:

* Multiple executive orders affecting DEI initiatives and federal funding
* Temporary pause on NSF and NIH grant reviews
* Closure of diversity offices at postsecondary and federal institutions
* New restrictions on cultural and diversity-related events at institutions
* Changes to institutional policies and programs across multiple states
* Legal challenges to minority-focused academic programs

**Priority Discussion Areas**

**1. Immediate Scholar Support & Protection**

* *What immediate measures can be implemented to protect currently funded scholars?*
* *How do we ensure continuity of support for scholars with federal funding?*
* *What institutional resources can be mobilized to bridge potential funding gaps?*
* *How can we support international scholars affected by new federal policies?*

**2. Program Sustainability**

* *How can institutional partnerships be strengthened to ensure program continuity?*
* What modifications to program structure might be necessary while maintaining core mission?
* How can we diversify funding sources beyond federal grants?
* What state-level funding mechanisms could be developed or expanded?

**3. Legal, Strategic and Compliance Framework**

* ***What is our current strategic position regarding new federal guidelines?***
* How do state-specific regulations interact with federal changes?
* What proactive measures should be taken to ensure compliance while protecting scholars?
* How can we maintain program integrity within new regulatory constraints?

**4. Research Continuity**

* ***How do we support scholars whose research areas may be affected by new policies?***
* What guidance should be provided regarding grant applications and funding?
* How can we protect academic freedom while ensuring compliance?
* What alternative funding sources exist for affected research areas?

**5. State-Level Response Strategies**

* ***How are different SREB states interpreting and implementing federal guidelines?***
* ***What state-specific protections or challenges exist?***
* ***How can states collaborate to protect scholar interests?***
* ***What role can state higher education agencies play?***

**6. Institutional Support Networks**

* How can partner institutions maintain support under new constraints?
* What institutional policies need review or modification?
* How can institutions collaborate to create safety nets for scholars?
* What alternative support mechanisms can be developed?

**7. Strategic Communication**

* *What messaging best addresses scholar concerns while maintaining confidence?*
* How do we communicate program changes to stakeholders?
* How should we engage with institutional and state leadership?
* What public advocacy role, if any, should the program take?