

### **Faculty Development Beyond Subject Area Expertise for Racial Equity**

I want to begin my remarks today with a brief history lesson. I am a humanist by training, and this leads me to the core belief that our histories, our stories, and our words matter. It is a great pleasure to be speaking to the select committee on the California Master Plan. When I work with colleges in California, I often tell a story about Clark Kerr, one of the key architects of the Master Plan. In 1978, he wrote about his vision for the relationship between the UCs and Community Colleges. He says in retrospect, “I considered the vast expansion of the community colleges to be the first line of defense for the University of California as an institution of international academic renown”.<sup>1</sup> When I think about the persistent opportunity gaps in our state’s higher education system, I always think about Kerr’s remark about the “first line of defense.” It means to me that The Master Plan was designed to *block* the vast majority of Californians from entry into the highest social goods provided by education. In the words of W. Edwards Deming, “every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.” And today, those results have racial implications.

The vast majority of California’s African American, Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander college students matriculate in California Community Colleges. These students are subject to disproportionate remediation and complete degree, certificate, and transfer goals at lower rates than their white and Asian peers.<sup>2</sup> At the Center for Urban Education, our research shows that these equity gaps are a problem of practice,<sup>3</sup> not deficits in the abilities of students<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Kerr, Clark. “Higher Education: Paradise Lost?” *Higher Education* 7 (August 1978): 261-278. Quoted in *The Contradictory College* by Kevin Dougherty.

<sup>2</sup> “In the community college system, certain student groups are much less likely to reach a defined end goal such as a degree, certificate, or transfer. Specifically, completion rates are lower among African-American students (36 percent), American Indian/Alaskan students (38 percent), Hispanic students (41 percent), and Pacific Islander students (43 percent), compared to stronger completion rates of Asian students (65 percent), Filipino students (57 percent) and White students (54 percent).” *California Community College Vision for Success* p. 12 <<http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/Reports/vision-for-success.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> See *Engaging the Race Question* by Alicia C. Dowd and Estela Mara Bensimon, pages 22-30.

So how do we improve practice? I am here today to talk about what our center is doing in the area of professional development to ensure that our higher education systems are serving minoritized racial groups equitably.

Faculty are subject area experts. Our professional identities derive from many years of enculturation into our academic disciplines. Despite expertise we gain as Chemists, Sociologists, Historians, we are rarely trained in the key competencies that will allow us to serve students in equitable ways. The most important take-away for faculty is that subject area expertise is insufficient to address the challenges we face in higher education. As faculty, we need to become institutional empowerment agents for students of color.<sup>4</sup> This means learning to teach in culturally sustaining ways, to build high levels of equity-minded data literacy, and to interrogate our taken-for-granted policies and practices that block African American, Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander students from educational opportunity.

Given the short time we have today, I want to talk about just one area where CUE is currently leading professional learning: equity in faculty hiring. Rather than providing best practices, we focus on best practitioners. We take into account the high levels of context-specific knowledge that faculty possess and provide inquiry protocols for faculty to look into their own practice and engage in ongoing learning across the professional lifespan.<sup>5</sup> It is widely acknowledged that faculty hiring in California is out of step with the demographic shifts we are seeing in students in our state. The Campaign for College Opportunity recently released a report

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<sup>4</sup> See Stanton-Salazar, Ricardo D. "A Social Capital Framework for the Study of Institutional Agents and Their Role in the Empowerment of Low-Status Students and Youth." *Youth & Society* 43(3) p. 1066–1109.

<sup>5</sup> See *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation* by Marilyn Cochran-Smith as Susan L. Lytle.

showing the disparities between student's backgrounds and the professionals, teachers, and leaders they encounter on their college campuses.<sup>6</sup>

Why is diversity in our current faculty ranks such a problem for the success of racially minoritized students? Here's what we know from the research: students of color experience better outcomes when taught by faculty of color and are more likely to identify with and approach faculty of the same racial/ethnic background.<sup>7</sup> Culturally responsive classrooms led by faculty of color have high expectations and favorable views of students of color,<sup>8</sup> utilize pedagogical approaches that are relevant to, and advance the learning of, students of color, and curb the "stereotype threat" experienced by students of color<sup>9</sup>. Faculty of color enhance the "sense of belonging" that students of color can feel on campus<sup>10</sup>. They promote positive, and curb negative, social outcomes for students of color. And faculty of color are more likely to advocate for, and build relationships with, students.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Left Out: How Exclusion in California's Colleges and Universities Hurts Our Values, Our Students, and Our Economy*. Released March 2018 by the Campaign for College Opportunity.  
<<http://collegecampaign.org/portfolio/left-out-report/>>

<sup>7</sup> See Dee, Thomas. "Teachers, race, and student achievement in a randomized experiment." *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86.1 (2004), p. 195-210.  
<<http://faculty.smu.edu/millimet/classes/eco7321/papers/dee01.pdf>> and Fairlie, Robert et. al. "A community college instructor like me: Race and ethnicity interactions in the classroom." *The American Economic Review*, 104.8 (2014). P. 2567-2591. <<https://people.ucsc.edu/~rfairlie/papers/published/aer%202014%20-%20minority%20instructors%20and%20community%20college.pdf>>

<sup>8</sup> Ulrich Boser et. al (2014). *The power of the Pygmalion effect: Teachers expectations strongly predict college completion*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.  
<<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2014/10/06/96806/the-power-of-the-pygmalion-effect/>> and Villegas & Irvine. "Diversifying the teaching force: An examination of major arguments." *Urban Review*, 42 (2010).175-192. <[http://www.montclair.edu/profilepages/media/439/user/Villegas\\_%26\\_Irvine--2010.pdf](http://www.montclair.edu/profilepages/media/439/user/Villegas_%26_Irvine--2010.pdf)>

<sup>9</sup> Benitez, Michael et. al. "Someone who looks like me: Promoting the success of students of color, promoting the success of faculty of color." *Liberal Education*, 103.2 (2017), 50-55.  
<<https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2017/spring/benitez>> and Steele, Claude. "A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance." *American Psychologist*, 52.6 (1997) Pages 613-629.  
[http://users.nber.org/~sewp/events/2005.01.14/Bios+Links/Krieger-rec5-Steele\\_Threat-in-the-Air.pdf](http://users.nber.org/~sewp/events/2005.01.14/Bios+Links/Krieger-rec5-Steele_Threat-in-the-Air.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See Chapa, J. (2006). "The educational pipeline and the future professoriate: Who will teach California's and the nation's Latino and African American college students?" In G. Orfield, & C. L. Horn (eds.), *Expanding opportunity in higher education: Leveraging promise* (pp. 243-259). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

<sup>11</sup> Levin, John et, al (2013). *Community colleges and their faculty of color: Matching teachers and students*. Riverside, CA: California Community College Collaborative, University of California at Riverside.  
[http://c4.ucr.edu/documents/GSP2report\\_C4finalJuly152013.pdf](http://c4.ucr.edu/documents/GSP2report_C4finalJuly152013.pdf)

CUE has convened over 40 California Community College campuses to look into their faculty hiring processes. Teams of 10 look at data about how candidates proceed through the hiring process and identify the precise points when a pool becomes less diverse. They look into the language of their job announcements to see how their college is presenting their values around racial equity to potential hires. The teams work together to learn about implicit bias and build interpersonal strategies to disrupt explicit bias in hiring committee meetings. We are already seeing widespread changes in job announcements used across the state after one year of engagement in this important topic. In our work, we convene faculty from across campus to engage deeply in discussions of racial equity and then become researchers into their own practice and change agents willing to advocate for their racially minoritized students.

To conclude, I want to restate the importance of faculty development outside of their subject areas. The state should fund more programming for faculty to come together across disciplinary areas and learn how to bring critical race consciousness into their practice. One action the state can take that does not require funding is to shift policy language. It is crucial that we stop talking about the achievement gap as a problem of student motivation or preparation and insist in no uncertain terms that our institutions are the source of the inequities we see. This reframing has two benefits: the first is to acknowledge and attempt to correct government-sponsored educational injustices from Jim Crow segregation to Native language eradication. The second benefit is to reframe educational inequity as a problem within the sphere of influence of our faculty; a problem with a solution that we can achieve through reflection and professional learning. We will not achieve the aims of a just and equitable system without deliberate dismantling our euphemistic language of racial injustice, our myths of meritocracy, and the taken-for-granted practices of our higher education systems.

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