

# Democracy's College, Episode 75

## Flipping the Script to Improve Campus Systems for Student Success

With guests Courtney Luedke and Erick Montenegro and host OiYan Poon

**Sal Nudo:** Welcome to the Democracy's College podcast series. This podcast focuses on educational equity, justice, and excellence for all students in the P-20 educational pathways and is a product of the Office of Community College Research and Leadership, or OCCRL, at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Learn more about OCCRL at [occrl.illinois.edu](http://occrl.illinois.edu).

In 2022, Governor Pritzker signed a law requiring public community colleges and universities in Illinois to submit equity plans to the state starting in 2024. SUCCESS stands for [Supporting Universities and Colleges in Creating Equitable Student Success](#). These success podcast episodes are intended to encourage and support higher education leaders to keep the momentum going, from planning to implementation and learning, to improving and closing equity gaps in student success on their campuses. This series is part of a collaboration among OCCRL, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Illinois Community College Board.

**OiYan Poon:** Thank you [for] listening to the Success podcast today. I'm your host, OiYan Poon. In this episode, we'll be discussing the need for a cultural shift and how we frame problems that hinder students from achieving their academic goals. Too rarely, policymakers, institutional leaders, and educators take a hard look at how the ways our routines, rules, and daily operating procedures create unnecessary and unfair barriers to student success. As leaders in higher education, we need to focus our problem-solving energy on improving the *systems* that shape college student pathways, and whether they are more or less likely to achieve their educational goals.

I'm excited to introduce our guests today. They're two of our Equity Champions in this 2025-2026 year for the SUCCESS program. Doctora Courtney Luedke is a co-director of the Center for Urban Education Leadership, coordinator of the Urban Higher Ed Program, and an associate professor in the Educational Policy Studies Department at University of Illinois Chicago. Her research focuses on reimagining, validating, and inclusive educational environments. Courtney is an expert in providing leadership development across several areas, including humanizing approaches for inclusion in the classroom, supporting first-generation Latine and undocumented students, college access and transitions, and other

areas that center on creating environments for students to engage and persist through higher education. Welcome, Courtney!

**Courtney Luedke:** Hello, I'm happy to be here, really excited for our conversation today.

**OiYan Poon:** Yes. And Dr. Erick Montenegro is founder and director of [Insightful Conexión](#), where he helps colleges and universities, organizations, and communities use evidence to transform practices, shape policies, and fuel advocacy. He's also an adjunct faculty member at New England College and has taught graduate-level courses on college student retention and using data for action. His research focuses on equity-centered assessment, culturally responsive evaluation, impact measurement, and developing equitable career pathways for *all* learners. And, I might add, a graduate of the Ph.D. program in ed policy and organizational learning at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Welcome, Eric!

**Erick Montenegro:** Good morning. Thank you so much for inviting me. Excited for this conversation.

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah, *really* excited to have you both here to have this really dynamic conversation and important one. Both of you played the role of Equity Champions and partnered with several campuses across the state of Illinois to help with their equity plan implementation work here.

Courtney and Eric, can we start by talking about campus climate assessments—which was actually part of some of the framework guidance that the state provided IBHE and ICCB—provided to institutions as they were developing their equity plans and in their implementation work. Can you share what these survey tools are and how they can be helpful in shaping effective strategies to improve student success in strengths or asset-based ways?

**Courtney Luedke:** I can go ahead and start with that, a little bit about campus climate surveys, campus climate assessments. They're a really great opportunity for our campuses to learn from our students, our staff, and our faculty members regarding their experiences on campus, their sense of belonging, you know, what's contributing to or detracting from how they feel they belong on campus.

I think it's really important, I should say, to do campus climate surveys every couple, two to three years at least, to assess progress changes, account for changes in your student population, environmental changes that are impacting the campus experience.

I think an important consideration in thinking about campus climate assessments is, like, their design, who's involved in the design. Some campuses are hiring external consultants to facilitate this process. Other campuses are perhaps creating their own campus climate

assessments and surveys. And so, thinking about, like, who's involved in the design of those surveys. How are you capturing all the voices? Are you engaging administrators? Are there administrators represented on that committee? Are there faculty members, staff members, and of course students? It's really important to have the student voice as a part of that process. It's really important also to think about just like the folks that you're tapping to be involved in that, like who has expertise in different areas that can support the development of the surveys as well as after the survey has been completed, you know, getting folks involved in the process of analyzing the data and thinking about how that data is used to inform practice to inform some changes of program creation and shifts along that area.

**OiYan Poon:** So Erick, I know you're an expert in this area too, right? Culturally responsive assessments and evaluation. What would you add or what are your insights?

**Erick Montenegro:** Yeah, and that is a very holistic explanation of what these things are. There's a lot of streams of work that are accompanying these that Courtney mentioned that can't be skipped, right? Like it is a very holistic endeavor.

But I view campus climates as kind of like a valuable preventative measure. Like they're a *great* first step once you're here with a crisis, right? A lot of institutions engage in these once they know that they have a problem, but we shouldn't wait until that point. To Courtney's point and doing them every two, three years, making them as an embedded part of campus procedures is really important because they help us to truly understand whether students and staff are having an experience that's living up to both *their* expectations and also *our* expectations. Most, if not every single campus leader, will probably say that they welcome all kinds of students on their campus, but do all students actually *feel* welcome once they walk through the doors? Which ones might be experiencing a cold campus, for example, and why might that be?

Campus leaders just don't know what they don't know. Colleges and universities aren't mom and pop shops. It's hard to really have your finger on the pulse of every single student that comes through the door, especially if campus leaders aren't taking active steps *to try* and understand that experience. We all want to assume that our house is in order, that every student is in a position to succeed, every staff is in a position to succeed, and that things are going great. But unfortunately, for many campuses, we don't get hit with that reality that everyone's not having a good time until it's too late. Retention, persistence, completion rates fall, dissatisfaction grows among students and staff. And now it's a crisis, right? *Now* we have to correct things. But if we start to engage in this repetitive process that Courtney mentioned, it can be a preventative measure, right? Kind of thinking about our own health. Like we want to address problems before they take root and grow bigger.

**OiYan Poon:** What I'm hearing is it's kind of like a methodical vibe check, if you will (laughs), on campus.

**Courtney Luedke:** A routine vibe check.

**Erick Montenegro:** Love that.

**OiYan Poon:** A routine vibe check! Okay. But not just like, here's the vibe for the whole campus, but it's also, what I'm hearing from you is like doing the routine vibe check for like different folks on campus, whether they're stakeholders or across the various diversity of folks that come to our campuses and everything that they bring.

**Courtney Luedke:** Yeah, I think it's really important that a lot of times our focus, and of course our, definitely our focus, we want to keep our focus on students, but a strong campus climate is also going to assess like how staff members are experiencing the campus, how administrators are experiencing the campus. So, like, it's getting an assessment because if our, like, staff members aren't in a good place, then, like, how are they going to be interacting with our students? Like if they're not feeling like they belong, that they're not being supported in the roles, it's like that's going to influence the way that they support our students. So it's really an important opportunity to assess how everybody's engaging and feeling about campus.

One thing I forgot to mention before in the intro, I talked about, you know, including a wide variety of folks in the representation of designing the survey. Or if you're working with a consulting agency, like, designing particular questions that are specific to *your* campus. You definitely want to take a generic approach, like a one-size-fits-all. Oh, this survey is going to do everything you need to do because those external folks aren't going to know your campus and your students.

**OiYan Poon:** Right.

**Courtney Luedke:** So one thing I think is really important is, you know, when you were doing my introduction, you mentioned, you know, me being a faculty member. I'm a faculty member in urban higher education, literally studying higher education organizations, our students' experiences. Several of our campuses across the state of Illinois have higher education student affairs programs. These folks are experts in the student experience. They're familiar with best practices in campus assessment, even if it's not their particular area of research, they know where to go to get support to support their campus in doing that. I feel like a lot of times our higher ed faculty across the country are really underutilized and untapped when it comes to supporting some of these campus-wide strategic efforts. So campuses that have higher ed student-affairs programs, I encourage you all to, like, engage those folks. You know, many of us, we *want* to support our campuses in these

efforts, but sometimes there's not always a space for us to do that. And if your campus doesn't have one, reach out to the other campuses and see how you might be able to collaborate and have support from experts that we have right here in Illinois.

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah, I think the other day you and I were tallying up the higher ed graduate programs and faculty crews across the state of Illinois. And we're like, oh, that's the majority of the public universities. And then of course, so many of our public universities then partner with local community colleges. And so, I think you're absolutely right. We do have a really great asset here in the state in terms of expertise and leadership and that untapped note that you brought up. I'm like, I feel that deeply, Dr. Luedke (laughs).

**Courtney Luedke:** And it's also, like, in addition, if your campus doesn't have higher ed programs, oftentimes there's folks, like, in psychology and sociology whose research revolves around the student experience. There are more than likely other folks in your campus who have this expertise or their, like, expertise in survey research. You know, all of us higher ed faculty, we all have doctoral degrees. We've all been trained as researchers. So there's a lot of talent on our campuses that we can build from.

**OiYan Poon:** Absolutely. Eric, did you want to add something else to this?

**Erick Montenegro:** I want to point back to the data piece because I think a lot of campuses that engage in this, particularly if it's kind of like your first go around, you get *a lot* of information from these surveys. Right like it can be a little bit overwhelming to figure out what to do with these and how to really utilize the data for those next steps. Turning to other institutions can also be really useful for benchmarking, to really put into place what your results mean with peer institutions. Take that next step to use that as a launching point of what have they done to correct similar findings that you have? How far should you go into the disaggregated results to figure out, really, which populations you should start with? Because if you have a lot of areas of opportunity to implement any changes, you can't be expected to do every single thing at once, but you do need to have a concerted step to work towards highlighting some of those pieces that were found.

Some of the hesitation when campuses think about these climate assessments is the fear of the unknown, right? Like, because finding these answers can be scary. Like, if you find that something's not working, but you thought everything was great, that can be a little heartbreaking.

**OiYan Poon:** You mean like the results aren't what you anticipated?

**Erick Montenegro:** Yeah, what you expected or what you experienced. But again, if we take the time to really dive into those results, right, with a little bit of intentionality behind it, and know that the results themselves *aren't* the end goal, that once you get your results, the job

is not done. There's still kind of this feeling where, we got my results, and it's kind of like a check engine light comes on in your car, right? Check engine light comes on, you know you have a problem, you go and get it diagnosed. The result of that diagnosis is *not* the solution. Now you gotta go get it fixed. You gotta come up with a plan. How are you gonna start? How can you improve it? It's the same thing with these campus assessments. The results themselves are not the end goal. It's what you *do* with them.

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah, that's actually where I wanted to go next in our conversation is like, what are some steps that people can take to go from, all right, here's the results of our assessment, routinely, and it's like, there's this one area that keeps showing up as something that *needs attention*. How do you go from ugh, this is frustrating to, like, figuring out your action plan? How do you decide, you know, what's the *right* direction and not get stuck in what I like to think of as, like, analysis paralysis?

I appreciate you mentioning, Dr. Montenegro, that, like, sometimes there's just mountains of data, right? Like, oh my gosh, the results are *so many*. So then I feel like, I'll just speak for myself, when I get a *whole lot* of results, I'm like, I don't know where to *go next* or, like, what to *do* with this. What are some steps that folks can take to *not* get stuck in that analysis paralysis?

**Erick Montenegro:** This is such a great question, because as much as we want to have a roadmap on how to do this every single time it comes up, there isn't one universal thing that will solve the problems affecting students. But there certainly are commonalities across some of the leading practices that we can lean on. And one that I will *heavily*, heavily push on is embedding culturally responsive approaches, definitely within the classroom. Like, I always encourage every single faculty to embed teachings of Dr. Ladson-Billings, right, in culturally responsive pedagogy, because it really is just good teaching.

But revisiting our assumptions, I think, is the first steps, right, about the students that are in our classrooms, how appropriate are examples, case studies that we choose to use in the classroom environments, our assumptions about who our students are and what they need, what they know, and what their goals are. Because a lot of our assumptions are from a very specific perspective, right? And unless we challenge it and view things more holistically, we're not going to implement different tactics, especially since college enrollment changes every year, sometimes every semester, yet we keep the same assumptions about who's actually in our classrooms.

**OiYan Poon:** Even though the world is changing all the time, right?

**Erick Montenegro:** All the time. Yeah.

**OiYan Poon:** Like, and there's just significant *events* and that's gonna shift things too, right? Not just the students changing. So yeah.

**Erick Montenegro:** Yeah. Feelings. Like, we're talking about vibes. Vibes change. Almost bimonthly (laughs). So, we do have to keep a pulse on that as well.

**Courtney Luedke:** Something, as you're talking about, like, in the classroom, you know, I'm a faculty member, and so everybody does some kind of introductions at the beginning of the class. And I've moved to like positionality presentations that every student does at the beginning, like a couple minute presentation to share a bit about them, their background as it relates to the course, like any connections that they have to the course, material, content, what they're most excited about learning in the course. This really gets everyone in the class to learn more about one another and, like, where we are in terms of the course content.

And I also share, like, a little handout in the beginning that they can fill out privately. Like, what do I have going on outside of class? What other responsibility do I have? Like, what should I, as the instructor, know about your learning styles and preferences? And I know this isn't possible for folks who teach, like, 200, 300, 400 student courses, but those who are teaching 20, 30 students, like doing a 10-minute one-on-one Zoom check-in with students the first couple weeks of class is a really great way to say, hey, let's get to know each other a little bit more. Like, I'm not a scary professor. Like, I'm here to support you. Like, what can I do to support you? I think there's a lot of ways to really kind of break down some of those barriers to get to know what's going on in students' lives outside of class and, like, to be able to account for that in the classroom environment I think is really important.

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah.

**Erick Montenegro:** I think those things are, like they're not considered as impactful, but they really are. Like when we do program implementation evaluations, sometimes the way that students and staff are greeted when they walk through the door is a huge determinant of how they're going to experience the program. And we just gloss over those small things.

**Courtney Luedke:** Mm-hmm.

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah, I just saw a student panel yesterday from City Colleges of Chicago and some of the questions we asked the students were, like, what would make you and your peers feel more *engaged* on campus? And I think everyone was surprised when to a T, all five of them said like, say hello (laughs). I was like, wait, is it that simple?

**Courtney Luedke:** (laughs)

**OiYan Poon:** And they're like, you know, there's just so much technology and just *inhuman* contact that just having someone at a front desk to greet you is *huge* these days. And I'm like, *wow*.

**Courtney Luedke:** Back to, like, you know, taking it out from the classroom to like a program level, you know, kind of in between the institution and, like, the individual student is we always do like an annual, like, alumni survey of our students each spring that are graduating to get a pulse on, like, how are things going in the program, you know, reflecting on, like, their learning, what do they wish would have been included in the curriculum that wasn't included, and just thinking about, like, getting that feedback on how are we incorporating it.

So a couple of years ago we started doing a professional development series for our students of, like, oh, there's these things missing from the classroom that students are saying that they want to get. We can't create a new course on that, so let's create, like, a workshop to do this. And we would have them at noon or 4 p.m., right before our 5 o'clock classes because we figured students could join on their lunch hour. And we would have a hybrid, like, in-person, or you could join on Zoom. Or a 4 o'clock, maybe folks would leave work a little bit early and come to it. And unfortunately, despite having these really amazing sessions planned, we had really low engagement and attendance in them.

So we didn't decide to just, like, scrap the program. We were just, like, going back to the drawing board. Well, what can we do? We know we want to get some of this information to the students. So we started deciding to embed some of the workshop series, like the speakers into the classroom. So instead of having it as a time outside of class, we built it into the curriculum. So we would have a speaker come at 5 o'clock at the start of class. And so we know we're going to have a targeted audience of at least those 25 students in the program are going to get this content. We would also promote it and open [it] up to any other students in the program to be able to come and attend that part of the class to also receive that material. So part of it is, like, how are we rethinking, like, some of these other, like, wraparound supports or services for students? It's not something that they have to go out and do something extra to get, but how can more of it be embedded in our curriculum?

**OiYan Poon:** You're just integrating it, right?

**Courtney Luedke:** Yeah.

**OiYan Poon:** And just kind of redesigning your service delivery, so to speak –

**Courtney Luedke:** Yeah.

**OiYan Poon:** ... to just meet students where they *literally* are.

**Courtney Luedke:** Yes, literally.

Another thing we did is, like, we learned from that survey that students wanted to learn more about, like, preparing for the job market, specifically, like, negotiating as they're going to be graduating. A lot of folks, it's like an uncomfortable topic for some. And I'm like, you all need to be learning about this. You need to talk about it. And so we worked with our career services on campus and brought in a speaker. Again, it was actually on one of the days when our class was going to be asynchronous, folks have that evening open.

So again, it's just thinking about, like, how are we being more *proactive* in bringing resources to students as opposed to saying, oh, go over to the office across campus. But what are ways where, like, even bringing the librarian into a class to do like a session in the library services. Not only does that make them feel more comfortable, like, oh, I know someone there in the library, like, these are the different ways they can help me, as opposed to just saying, like, oh, this is a resource listed on the syllabus. It's just how can we be more proactive in, like, getting students more comfortable with some of the supports and resources that we have across our campuses?

**OiYan Poon:** So as you're trying these new things, you can also then go back to those routine kind of assessments to be like, okay, the culture is shifting, clearly because you've *done* something different.

**Courtney Luedke:** Yeah. And kind of like you said, because it's an annual, in our case for the program level one is annual, it's a smaller survey. But when those bigger campus assessments, if you're doing that every other year, you're going to get that regular feedback of the changes, the new programs, how are they impacting students and, like, what adjustments might need to be made.

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah. Eric, do you want to chime in on this?

**Erick Montenegro:** Yeah. Your point about the role of technology and how it's just taken away the human factor, that's also affecting program design and program launch on, like, supplemental supports and resources for students.

We know that food insecurity and basic needs are *huge* areas of concern. But there is some stigma attached to those. However, because a lot of information now is shared through social media, text messages, emails, rather than person to person, these aren't talked about with enough care, right? And if programs don't create, these programs aren't created and created in a careful manner where it's *empowering*, right? There's agency being provided to students who need these resources. And it really leads to see them as a

*positive* that they *want* to use them. They're not going to have the desired effect. Simply creating a food pantry isn't enough at times.

**OiYan Poon:** Right.

**Erick Montenegro:** How it's marketed, how we communicate it, the *tone* and language we use when we tell students about it. How many times have we seen well-intentioned programs just fail because of poor execution? There's not many staff who design programs with lack of care. Quite the opposite. But the way that we talk about it from a human-touch and perspective really does matter how well they're going to be used. And we know that student success depends on so many of these things. It's not just about student capacity and capability.

To Courtney's point, we have to make sure that they have contacts in the library, that they know where the career center is. We can't just rely on them, think they're going to look it up on Google Maps or something and find their own way there.

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean, this is bringing me back to, you know, how sometimes we fall into these patterns of talking about students and their behaviors being the problem or their choices or their lack of awareness as the problem. You know, how we talk about where and what the problem is, is going to determine what we can actually do to make improvements.

I'm sure you've heard this too, where it's like, oh, students are just not coming to this program that I designed, my team and I just designed this amazing program, but they're not coming to this program. And it's very uncomfortable to say maybe there's a program design element that is flawed because I'm like, I put so much heart and time and effort into designing this thing. And now you're telling me that it's not working because students are not coming to this. It can't be *me*. It can't be my design approach. It has to be, right, like, I mean –

**Erick Montenegro:** Yeah.

**OiYan Poon:** ... obviously we're not saying this, right? But essentially the deficit *lens*, right? Oh, students are not showing up to class. It must be because they just don't care, right? And when we know at the end of the day, that's absolutely just *not true*, right?

But yeah, can either of you share from your perspectives and experiences about how do we even just take a look in the mirror and check that notion and how do we flip it around so that we can actually focus on the systems, the locus of control that *we have* to reshape the systems and programs that we're leading?

**Courtney Luedke:** It's just making me think about my transition to UIC, actually. You know, it's a commuter campus. And I was formerly, for nine years, a professor at an institution that was predominantly residential. And so just very different student bodies. And so, I talked about, like, that workshop series we wanted to start, like, my first year here. I was like, oh, I did something like this at my previous institution. Like, this is going to be really helpful for our students. And, like, when we had that low attendance, it was like, oh, we thought that doing it at lunch would work. We thought, like, coming a little bit early to class. But just thinking about, again, our students are commuting from across the city. And I'm teaching in a graduate program, so our courses are all in the evening. So many of our students are working full time. But if they're not working here at UIC, they're working at one of the other campuses, one of our city colleges or other four-year institutions across the city, like, it's quite a bit of a commute. So, like, the time they would have to leave to get here on time, to be here at 4 o'clock. And then, you know, it's trying, like, okay, what if it's just like online as opposed to the in-person?

But just like, you know, engaging those conversations. It's like we need to do better. Like, we need to rethink how we're creating opportunities for students. And that's, you know, how we came to, like, let's embed it in where the students already are. Like they're already coming to class, so let's make it as a part of the class curriculum. So that was just like a discussion process that we had internally, but a part of that leads to is like how is it that you're really getting to know, like, your campus, *your* student body, because a lot of the different kinds of programs and things that we want to put on are going to be shaped by our specific campus, environmental factors that we have, our student body.

So those are a few just kind of some of my initial thoughts –

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah.

**Courtney Luedke:** ... on that process because I had to go through that myself during my transition here because it is a different student body. It is more of a commuter campus here, and we had to make adjustments based on that. Now many more of our students are gaining access to that content that we previously had, like, as an outside-of-class experience.

**Erick Montenegro:** Unfortunately, we see this all the time in evaluation, where we design something that we think is *amazing*. It's so intentional. We're going to have a lot of diverse perspectives and we're really in tune with what we think the community, the program, the stakeholders need. And then we start to deploy it and it's just falling flat. People are not participating. They're not sharing honest opinions. They're not finding utility. We're, like, seeing resistance at all points. And that's when you definitely have to look in the mirror.

Because you can't keep moving forward with something that you think is great if the end goal is to support students, stakeholders, communities, and improve. You can't just try to force something that *you* feel married to. Like, and it can be *humbling*. Because this is my baby. I thought about it. Why don't you, what do you mean you don't like it? What do you mean it's not working well?

**OiYan Poon:** (Laughs) Can't be me, it's you! I am not the problem.

**Erick Montenegro:** Yeah, yeah (laughs). But we have to listen, right? Sometimes a survey is a quick and easy tool to fire off, but it's not gonna capture things as in depth as we need them. A lot of –

**OiYan Poon:** And like even asking questions of, like, how, maybe even asking people, like, why didn't you come to this program, using Courtney's example?

**Erick Montenegro:** One thousand percent.

**OiYan Poon:** Because sometimes we just assess and survey people who were *in* attendance, but what are we missing when we don't ask people who *didn't* come?

**Erick Montenegro:** And it takes work to *find* those people. The louder voices in the room are always going to be the people that are super happy about something or super angry about something. You have to really go and put your work in to find as much [from] a presentation as you can. Listening isn't enough. I call these deep listening sessions.

**OiYan Poon:** Mmmm.

**Erick Montenegro:** When you ask the why questions *repeatedly*. Where you make sure that the voices that are at the table all feel empowered to talk and be honest. And that takes work. One session is often not going to be enough, right? Because it's going to be a little bit of an angst. You've already designed a program that I don't like. Why should I trust you? So you *have to* now build that rapport twice as much.

**OiYan Poon:** What I'm hearing is also learning to both understand but also appreciate the conditions that our students are experiencing and what they gain from, right? Because they're obviously, like, in your example, Courtney, these graduate students are working all day. They're bringing a lot of assets to our classrooms and insights they can contribute. But also that comes with, like, they're very busy people. And so maybe having lunchtime sounds like such a good possibility, but you found that it didn't work. And so how do you then adjust to not assuming, like, oh, this program isn't something of interest or students just don't want to learn this, but maybe thinking of different possibilities and assumptions.

**Courtney Luedke:** I was just, were you asking me? I thought that you were posing it as a question of, like, how do we make those adjustments? And it was –

**OiYan Poon:** Yeah.

**Courtney Luedke:** ... just what you all were saying of like talking to the students who *didn't* go like just, you know, I'm the coordinator of the program and I'm teaching some of the courses. So then opening up to class, like, you all know I've been working on putting these PD series together. Like, why is it difficult to come? Like because you all said you wanted these things. So like how can I make sure that you're getting them?

**OiYan Poon:** Mm-hmm.

**Courtney Luedke:** And just when you have that good relationship, like, they're just gonna like keep it real with you and share their feedback. And so, again, it's creating that opportunity. It's the deep listening like Eric said. And I think a lot of times to get those folks that *didn't* attend the things to want to talk to you is, part of that is like finding folks who have those relationships with students who have that *in*, who are gonna be able to, like, ask those questions and the students are going to engage as opposed to some random person they don't know or have a connection with and then they're less inclined to –

**OiYan Poon:** Mm-hmm.

**Courtney Luedke:** ... share their experiences with them.

**OiYan Poon:** That's awesome. Thank you so much, Dr. Courtney Luedke and Dr. Erick Montenegro, two amazing national Equity Champions in higher education, for sharing your insights and leadership wisdom on this episode of the SUCCESS podcast.

So if listeners want to learn more about these topics and issues, what are some resources that you would recommend and how might listeners reach you?

**Erick Montenegro:** I just want to double down on the idea of reaching out to other higher education departments, to other faculty-staff that can shed a light on some of these problems. I think we're our biggest resource, but it can feel really daunting to just send a cold e-mail. But most of us are willing to help. Most of us are willing to sit down and listen and just share our experience and hopefully a couple of our practices can be used by others.

In terms of reaching me, my virtual door is always open for faculty, staff, and campus leaders who might want to partner, seek guidance, or just reach out, again, to just be of service. I encourage them to visit our website, [insightfulconexion.com](http://insightfulconexion.com). Conexion is [the

word] connection in Spanish. It's spelled C-O-N-E-X-I-O-N. Or e-mail insightful.conexion@gmail.com.

**OiYan Poon:** Thank you. Dr. Luedke?

**Courtney Luedke:** Yeah, so also echoing, you know, reach out to our higher ed folks across campus, tap *your* experts on campus, your student affairs folks, your higher ed faculty if you have them, other folks who are experts in the field.

I think another great organization is [NADOHE](#), the National Association of Diversity Offices in Higher Ed[ucation]. That could be a great resource. They have a, you know, a conference. There's a lot of ways to learn through that organization outside of like NASPA, ACPA, which many of our campuses are members of and regularly attend.

In terms of reaching me, you can find me on my website, which is [courtneylluedke.com](#). Exact spelling, courtneylluedky.com. And then my LinkedIn also is just Courtney L. Luedke. So you can reach me in either of those places. Find me on UIC's website, our cool website, the [Center for Urban Education Leadership](#) at UIC that we call ourselves cool because we're pretty cool. So you could reach me through that website as well. But it was really great engaging with you all. I love this conversation and I hope it's useful to our *listeners*.

**OiYan Poon:** Absolutely, mic drop right there at the end. Thank you both so much and thank you all for listening.

**Erick Montenegro:** Thank you.

**Courtney Luedke:** Bye. Have a great day.

**Sal Nudo:** Tune in to the next Democracy's College podcast when Dr. OiYan Poon discusses with guests Dr. Robert Brown and Dr. Sara Furr how higher education leaders can sustain their work to improve institutional performance in serving all students in an equitable manner, even when there are political threats hovering over the public mission of higher education. Topics on the show will include how we can lead with hope and how higher education leaders can hold onto a critical sense of hope in order to sustain themselves and their teams to keep doing the vital work for equitable student success.

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