

# Scalable Implementation of Culturally Responsive Practices



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**Raina Dyer-Barr:** Thank you for joining us today for this episode in our podcast series highlighting culturally Sustaining Practices and Guided Pathways. My name is Raina Dyer-Barr and I am the Assistant Director at the Office of Community College Research and Leadership, known as OCCRL. In today's episode, we're going to discuss two related topics.

The scalable implementation of culturally responsive practices and operationalizing racial equity and data disaggregation in ways that move us beyond metrics to action. These podcasts are made possible by generous support from the Lumina Foundation and are just one resource available to our partners within the REACH collaborative.

The Reach Collaborative is a network of teams from six states, California, Colorado, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Along with coaches, equity champions, and other intermediary partners whose goal is to strengthen credential pathways with the supports and curricular alignment that adult learners of color age 25 through 64 need to reskill and recover from the covid-19 pandemic.

The REACH collaborative helps to build the capacity and tools for equitable system change and improve adult student outcomes. Hopefully resulting in a 2% increase in credential attainment across 130 plus community colleges for racially minoritized adult learners via three main pillars: credentials to degree pathways, bundled and sequenced supports, and culturally sustaining practices.

In this series, we invited our equity champion consultants to talk with us more about culturally sustaining practices and Guided Pathways. Our panelists for today's discussion are Dr. Pam Eddy, who is a professor of higher education at The College of William and Mary and an affiliate faculty member at the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research, Dr. Mayra Padilla, who is the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Equity at Contra Costa College and Dr. Luis Ponjuan, who is an Associate Professor of Higher Education Administration and the Research Director of the Investing in Diversity, Equity, Access and Learning, known as IDEAL Research Project in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University.

Welcome everyone. It's very nice to have each of you on today to engage in this brief conversation about scaling culturally responsive practices and actionable ways to operationalize racial equity. So let's go ahead and get started with the first question. What are some examples of culturally responsive practices and actionable ways to operationalize racial equity?

And we'll start with Pam, Mayra, and then Luis.

**Pamela Eddy:** Great. Thank you very much. I think one of the things that I have seen most effective, as an example is work directly with faculty members so that when faculty members become exposed to ideas of inclusive teaching and working with adult learners, they're much more equipped to be able to work with a wide span of students to help move them along in a better way.

We often forget about the fact that faculty need to be continuous learners, and the more we find some focus on that the better we're seeing some outcomes.

**Mayra Padilla (she/her/ella):** I want to talk a little bit about a program that we instituted at Contra Costa Community College called Math Jam. And I'm speaking about that one in particular because we had a large number of our adult re-entry learners joining that program.

And so, one of the things that we did when we built that program, is that we wanted to start the semester early so that we could onboard students, especially reentry students, in a humanistic way where they would get to know the faculty early as people. So, they engaged in storytelling about who they were as a student and who the teachers were and their journey in higher ed. That really helped develop interpersonal relationships that helped the students feel more comfortable in the math learning spaces and be able to connect with the instructors when they had moments that were challenging in the course and needed additional support. One of the other practices we instituted was a social emotional skills building. And it was not just pointed at students, it was pointed at the math faculty as well. So, we embedded a counselor in the room who could talk about the skills necessary when we were in heightened bio-reactive modes. Especially when interfacing with subject matter that students were coming in with lots of trauma around from previous negative experiences in their educational journeys.

And so, trying to make math fun and trying to help them learn that when they were reactive what skills they could bring into the room. And giving faculty similar skills so that when students were in a bio-reactive state, they could address that by helping deescalate those emotions by giving them positive practices.

For example, they would bring music into the room before giving an exam. They would make their tests low risk so that they were assessing skills that wouldn't impact their grades, but then giving modules to help advance when there were particular skills that students needed to capture.

So, a lot of that work really helped because our racially minoritized students really appreciated the personal connection and understanding that there were different ways of being in the classroom were acceptable.

**Luis Ponjuan (he,him,el):** Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts today. I'm honored to be invited to this discussion because it highlights the critical need to have these conversations around what does racial equity mean and defined by the work that we do. Pamela mentioned a moment ago about focusing on the individual level.

Mayra focused on the component of at a programmatic level or group level. What I want to talk about a little bit is at a larger scale at, at the board of trustees level. Over the last year and a half, I've worked with the Texas Success Center. To address the issues of the role that Board of Trustees play in having a conversation around these issues.

And what we found as what I consider really powerful moments for change, is the recognition that Board of Trustees felt empowered to be in these conversations around these things. So, what does that actually mean? Will it suggest that board of trustees can understand that programs like Math Jam and, faculty professional development, like Pam had mentioned earlier, are initiatives that they have to not only understand, but recognize and support.

And I think one of the biggest, what I consider takeaways from working with the Board of Trustees Institute was that a lot of these board of trustees didn't understand in what ways can they contribute to advancing these ideals. It's important to recognize this because when we take a look at what's happened in

the last 18 to 24 months the pandemic has kind of shaken up our understanding of what it means to deal with the issues of racial equity when the pandemic amplified these disparities even further.

And so, when I've had the opportunity to talk to now, I've been to two and I'm going to a third in November. It really is a space for these leaders to have what I consider some brave conversations around the role that they play in addressing these issues through what I consider a leadership role that kind of in a direct or indirect way shapes the policies that are created, the programs that are supported and the trainings that are necessary for faculty to address this issue.

So, I want to believe that what we are talking about is the incredible power of board of trustees and presidents who are sitting at the table having conversations about this and their commitment to addressing this issue in new innovative ways without the fear or without the concern that this issue is going to simply go away.

They recognize that the pandemic has exacerbated this issue and that they can't continue not recognize the value that they bring to the table and moving these institutions forward whether at the community college or at the four-year institution. It's just an important element, or I would even argue aspect of higher education governance that allows programs like Mayra and what Pamela has talked about even feasible.

So it really has been a powerful reminder of the commitment that multiple shareholders invest in this work that is not just one group like faculty. It's not just one program that could be considered what we call boutique. It's really this widespread institutional systemwide community college system wide commitment to addressing the issues of racial equity.

**Raina Dyer-Barr:** Great. Thank you. Have any of these practices that you all mentioned been scalable? If so, which ones and how? If not why do you think that is? What are your thoughts on what might be hampering institution's ability to scale up these very important practices that we're talking about?

And we'll start with Luis and then Pam, and then Mayra.

**Luis Ponjuan (he,him,el):** Thank you. I wasn't thinking I would go first, but okay, I appreciate that. I think that the reality is that when we talk about scalable initiatives and things of that nature it leads me to reflect on the conversations I've had with the board of trustees. Again, I'm talking at what I can say the macro level. And one of the really powerful, what I think, takeaways of that is the critical need to leverage student data in ways that allow institutions to understand this issue of equity in a disaggregated way. What do I mean by that? I think one of the biggest challenges of talking about how do we make things scalable, why things don't take off or gain traction or gain momentum is the fact that a lot of folks don't recognize that this issue really is affecting different groups in different ways.

And so, what I mean by that is that I've had the opportunity to talk to community colleges that were taking a look at the issues around first semester withdrawals. And the challenge has become, well we had a lot of students withdraw, and I said, well, did you disaggregate the data of who withdrew to try to understand the demographic profile of who withdrew?

And I think when the board of trustees started to recognize that minoritized student groups who are adversely affected from the pandemic and withdrawing, it really opened their eyes, it really described to them a real true problem. And I think the challenge that most leaders face is the fact that these problems are ill structured and if you can provide a clear picture of the scenario or the situation, you're in essence are creating a clear target on how to scale things.

And I have found that board of trustees are more willing to take action when they see policies that are going to directly affect groups because the initiatives that are being created are directly related to specific groups by disaggregation of the data. So, I have found that scalable initiatives all begin with a clear understanding of the way that we use student data. And when things don't work out or things don't gain traction, things don't execute well, I think often is that we end up creating a one size fits all approach to the initiatives that we talk about and not really addressing the specific needs of disaggregated data that will tell us that we're noticing a specific group is flailing in these areas. And yet again, board of trustees are really open to the idea when we present it in that way, rather than creating these monolithic terms to say we need to address student retention.

**Pamela Eddy:** Well, that segues well into some of my comments about data and desegregation thinking about faculty as leaders. When we expose faculty to looking at course level data and they're able to recognize that not all their students are achieving in the same way, it has a very similar type of an outcome. That they're able to then look and understand how do I need to approach my teaching in a different way?

Where I have seen this at a level of scale is when you get a group of faculty that are really buying into that in a department or a unit and then they're the ones that are leading professional development for their peers across campus and conducting workshops. They're able to then look at ways in which their syllabus is being off putting to students and not being attainable in terms of feeling like it's welcoming.

They're also able to serve as peer leaders, which has a different type of an effect versus thinking it's always a top down, you need to do this. And once they can see the results themselves, when they've begun using more culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom, they become believers in the process and are then able to share that with others?

Well, yes when I first tried this, I didn't see the results immediately, but then I tweaked it and did X, Y, or Z. And making it so that type of progression is possible really helps with spreading it in a widespread way across an institution. And so having sort of this two-prong work with, as Luis is talking about the boards of trustees and then down to the faculty level really is something that helps scale the change.

**Mayra Padilla (she/her/ella):** That's a really great segue. Thank you, Pam and Luis for that. I want to talk about how we were able to embed Math Jam modules and culturally relevant practices into our math co-requisite courses. And so, the strategy there was very much what Pam and Luis shared making sure that faculty were really well informed about the data and the positive impact that the practices were having on student outcomes. And not just the traditional core success and retention metrics, but looking at self-advocacy, looking at future pointing behavior for students their positive affect and their confidence in math. And when they saw all of those metrics together, they could see the value of the practices that they were implementing.

And so, we went from a really small cohort of faculty taking on the practices to having the entire department really take ownership of the program. And one of the things I want to encourage folks is to bring these culturally relevant practices into institution-wide conversations like Guided Pathways, like the AB 705 implementation.

Because what that allowed us to do is to think really creatively. We were doing the Math Jam program on the front end of the course, right? The summer or before or during the inter-session. But once we shifted, and we saw the opportunity that co-requisite courses could offer us, the math faculty were really encouraged to bring those in as modules into their teaching.

And so, thereby scaling the program into the entire math curriculum across all of the introductory math courses so the students could get through transfer level math within the first year. And one of the things I will say is that during the pandemic we have had to really learn about how to change those practices into a remote structure. Really thinking about students who are not in face-to-face settings, how do we build community and build processes that allow different ways of being to be expressed in the classroom and to have diverse ways of assessing competencies? And so, that's an area where we're growing into but much of it was seated with those practices that we implemented in the original Math Jam model.

**Raina Dyer-Barr:** Excellent. Let's shift gears a little bit, not too much because all of this is interrelated. What does it mean to operationalize racial equity? How would you describe what that looks like? And we'll start with Pam and then Luis and Mayra.

**Pamela Eddy:** I think when we think of the operationalizing equity, we have to think about what it means in terms of language and shared terms.

So, we did a national survey of college leaders, both presidents, vice presidents, as well as mid-level leaders. And what we were seeing in that data is that the top-level leaders, the presidents were believing they had opportunities for dialogue around social justice on campus, but mid-level leaders were not seeing the space for these kind of safe dialogues to occur.



And we're all finding on campuses people at different starting points, so that as we're trying to have a common understanding of equity, it's really important to realize we have the starting points that are different, as well as the context of regions. So, we see regional differences with this based on historical context et cetera and trying to come up with some shared definitions.

What does it mean to have diversity, equity, inclusion and justice on a campus? How does that become apparent for my particular campus so that we have an understanding of what that means? It also means trying to address instances where individuals will have some colorblind ideologies that are about, well, everybody has an equal chance, everyone should do this, which ignores some of the structural issues that are really apparent and are not making for a level playing field. So, the more we can have these kind of conversations around shared definitions, the easier it will be to have it more pervasive across the campus. And having those places where you can have that safe dialogue is really important. And not having individuals that are from racial minoritized populations always feeling like they have to be the educators as we're moving forward with thinking about equity on campus.

**Luis Ponjuan (he,him,el):** Pamela, thank you for that, that really underscores and highlights the incredibly complexity of this issue. And it really, in my mind, provides yet again another opportunity to talk about how we put our thoughts into words into addressing these issues. And what it really highlights is this idea that not only do we need to have, what I would consider, operationalizing what racial equity means. I want to point out two, maybe three things that I think are essential to advancing this conversation that really dovetails nicely to what you've said.

The first is the fact that there is an incredible need for leaders to recognize the complexity and the heterogeneity of the groups that we are addressing. When we think about the complexity of identity being visible and invisible, identity-based traits, racial equity really has a nuanced way of understanding of the students that community colleges serve.

Specifically, when you're talking a transgendered male who's over the age of 30 and is a first-generation student. Racial equity really is important to understand

that it's not a monolithic term, that it represents the complexity of the individuals that community colleges serve, so that's the first thing.

But the second thing I think is even more critically important in addressing the issue. Not only do we have to think about the ways that word is being defined and used? But more importantly, we also have to recognize that the importance of using an asset-based narrative, and what does that suggest? That suggests that when we are adopting an equity minded agenda, we need to have a commitment to an asset-based narrative that places the onus on the community college to bring a proactive and a better attuned understanding of what it means to being an institution that's ready to meet the needs of our diverse racial ethnic minoritized student groups.

And when we think about that asset-based narrative, I think some folks kind of don't really understand what that may suggest. And what that really suggests is that we can often put the onus on the students say they need to be ready to attend college, and they need to be prepared and be geared up for whatever brings them.

Mayra's work with mathematics education is a classic example of that. But when we meet with the conversations around operationalizing racial equity, so often we use a monolithic term, we use a deficit-based narrative. And I think the other component is that really makes it really critical to understanding this notion of operationalizing is that this isn't just the purview of one officer one group. This is really a commitment that is not just the chief diversity officer or the president, this is, I would make the argument that I have worked with community colleges over the last 10 years about this commitment and understanding of the role department chairs play in this.

The department chairs play a critical role in educating faculty about what it means to dealing with racial equity and what does that look like? So, in every level, in every position that we talk about this work, it's so important to understand that there are different players that have different understandings of this, and that it takes more than just one person in one office to advance this notion of operationalizing, it takes more than just a narrative, it takes an asset-based narrative. And finally it takes more of an understanding this is not a monolithic term that students who are coming into our communities are very complex in

their way they understand and see themselves and community colleges need to be more sensitive in understanding those unique learning needs.

**Mayra Padilla (she/her/ella):** Wow. That was awesome. I feel like we planned all the responses because exactly. The point that you are making, Pam and we are dovetailing so well with my ideas and some of the work that we've been doing. And so, yes, understanding frameworks, having common language is really important in terms of guiding our efforts.

And this piece around complexity of identity and having an asset-based approach is critical. And so, for me that really is about as educators and whether you are staff, faculty, administrator, or a student worker, right? Anyone that's interfacing with our students really needs to have some cultural competency and humility around the work that we are doing. And understanding that when we have an asset-based approach to the work it really is about for me, what Sean Wright [sp] talks about is shifting the narrative, about asking our students what's wrong with you? Or what happened to you? To what's right with you?

What are the assets that you're bringing into this space? And having us help them polish those to become the diamonds that we know are there. And so, really important, this understanding that cultural competence and humility are not just skill sets that we're asking for our faculty to have, but this is board of directors, presidents, vice presidents, all of our deans and middle managers and our staff at large. And I think that is because we have such complex identities and so as we're thinking about our intersectional identities the cultural relevancy needs to be refined.

And we need to understand that there is going to be diversity in our learning spaces, which means that it's asking us to be dynamic educators. To not have a one size fits all approach, but to really be present in the room and to understand what the need of the student is and what the assets of the students are so that we can respond in an appropriate way.

I also just want to share that because we're talking about data. For me it's really important that the institutions begin to measure institutional facing metrics. And so, looking at in our accreditation documentation, are we talking about racial equity and how do we assess how we're doing in our program reviews?

How are we talking about racial equity and are we measuring what practices we are using and what frameworks the departments or areas are using? And when we're looking at large institution-wide initiatives, where is the racial equity conversation? And how are we really bringing in our equity goals into those spaces so that we are really holding ourselves accountable as educators for our learning and for our change in practice and change in policy?

**Raina Dyer-Barr:** Wow. Thank you Mayra. That actually leads us pretty nicely into our next question where we just want to talk a little bit more about why data disaggregation is so important and kind of hear your thoughts on, whether there are specific areas that require special attention when we're talking about disaggregating data? And we'll start with Luis and then Mayra, then Pam.

**Luis Ponjuan (he,him,el):** Thank you. I want to reiterate what I said earlier, but I really want to add a little bit more nuance to that conversation earlier about the importance of disaggregated data. I think when we get into these conversations about the importance of creating organizational change, is that we often lose sight of the change and how metrics are used.

And I think in the era of accountability, metrics have become a calling card for institutional effectiveness. And I think the reality is, is that when we have these discussions around what racial equity means, and how do community college influence, and we talk about the 2% increase. It really is important to recognize that the institutions sometimes have a very myopic understanding of the use of disaggregated data to recognize their ability to move the needle on these issues.

I suggest that when we have these conversations the disaggregated data is viewed in very more nuanced ways. What do I mean by that? Well, we recognize that I mentioned a moment ago that we have individuals with very unique identities, but I also highlight the importance of using data to be a starting point for, and this is the way I frame it, because when we talk about disaggregate data, I think a lot of institutions want to use that as a way to feel guilty or feel bad about themselves. And I say, let's not use data as a billy club, let's use data as a flashlight of pinpointing the way we address the issues that need to be addressed. And I think too often we take this approach of when we use data and we use the conversation around data, is that we assume that the famous phrase of rising tides raise all the boats and I say, well, some boats have holes in them. And I don't

care how much you affect providing programs that affect all students, it may be ineffective for others. And that's where disaggregated data really provides that I believe the really powerful magnifying glass around the issues that are being able to address with rather than a dull butter knife, but with a scalpel of using disaggregated data to pinpoint issues that we believe are essential. Mayra mentioned a moment ago about the importance of looking at data and understanding how faculty on some level look at their ability to help students succeed and Pamela talked a little bit about understanding that. I think disaggregated data is one way to address that when we take a look at what I call gateway courses, and when we think about that is we recognize that there are a lot of students have aspirations for addressing where they want to graduate in and what they do.

And I make the challenge to ask institutions to say, how do we know by disaggregated data, what are the top five programs that your students that are identified as being your primary group, what majors are they getting into? And then more importantly, what majors do they complete in? And take a look at the gateway courses that derail those aspirations with a disaggregated lens. It's using data in a more nuanced, more strategic way allows institutions to recognize that you can't use a one size fits all approach to address the issues that these student policies try to address.

**Mayra Padilla (she/her/ella):** Thank you Luis. I want to maybe come into this question from some practical experience that I've had, and I want to use the example of looking into our tutoring practices. So, at our institution we were using peer led team learning models. We were using embedded tutor SI model, and we were doing drop in or appointment-based tutoring.

And when we looked at the success aggregating the data, it seemed like the group tutoring was the best option. However, when we disaggregated and disaggregated by ethnicity, we were able to see a really clear differences between the preferences of our Latinx students and our African American students.

Our Latinx students preferred the group tutoring session, and our African American students preferred the appointment base one-on-one tutoring experience. And so, this goes back to the point that I was making earlier, in order

to be culturally relevant, we have to be dynamic educators. We have to have multiple options that meet the needs of our diverse student populations.

And so, when the institution is thinking about how to invest, we need to be able to look at disaggregated data to see where our students have the largest disproportionate impact, because those are the areas that are pointing to us that show where we're not really serving them in the ways that they need to be served. And so that's one example I wanted to use.

Another example is we were looking at Early ESL AB 705 data and our White student population kept coming up and it was unusual because we don't have a lot of Eastern European students in our ESL program. And so, we had to do a little bit of digging and it turns out our Yemenis populations were filling out forms and saying they were white.

And so, we had to then do some disaggregation to begin to think in what ways are we serving this population. So, disaggregating data is really, really super important, it allows us to look deeper at subpopulations because oftentimes the way our large ethnic groupings happen don't allow us to see the nuances.

I'm going to give two more quick examples. Another example I want to give is when we were looking at culturally relevant transfer practices, our college invested in HBCU trips, get on the bus, get on the plane, and when we look at our equity data, our African American students do not show a disproportionate impact in transfer. And so, helping the college see that the investment in a culturally relevant practice is really important is part of the disaggregating agenda. So, it's not just looking at the student facing data, but it's pairing it with different practices and looking at how those practices are culturally relevant.

Similar, we had a couple of HSI STEM grants at the institution that allowed us to create Latinx focus retention interventions. And when we looked at our retention data for our equity plan our Latinx students were not disproportionately impacted. And that's because the institution was able to invest specific dollars into culturally relevant practices to help support those students. So, I just want to make the case that yes, disaggregate, disaggregate around the ethnic groups and pair it with the understanding of what practices particular areas are using that are culturally

relevant, so that you can then share with the institution what has worked for different populations.

**Pamela Eddy:** This segways really nice into some of my comments as well. I come out of economics, so I've always liked numbers, and I think what happens on campus is that not everyone has that same kind of approach to data. So, some of the disaggregation is a matter of educating about rationale for this and why it's important.

And as we think in particular about adult learners, it's important to look at some of these data points based on age so that we're seeing if there are disproportionate effects based on an age base as well. So how do we understand that when we're looking at the intersections? I would hope someone listening to this podcast today really comes away the perspective that this is complex and that you can't reduce things to a single data point. And so, the way Mayra was just able to explain some of the examples really highlights the nuance and complexity of it to be able to understand how to interpret that data. And I would argue that coming to Luis's points about the boards is that we need to be really good at telling the story that the data highlights for us. So that if some of these practices are resulting in some of these positive effects, we need to be able to draw the line between effect and cause with this so that we can advocate better for some of these attention to particular programs and understand better where we're getting the biggest bang for the buck to meet the student needs with this.

**Raina Dyer-Barr:** And Mayra already Gave us several examples, but are there any other examples that you all can share of effectively moving from metrics, you know, the measurement of things to actually taking action on those things that you've measured? We'll start with Luis and then Pam, and then Mayra.

**Luis Ponjuan (he,him,el):** I apologize. I am so thankful for really providing what I consider, a critical often less discuss concept of how do you move from awareness to action? I think it's so essential to have a conversation about this because it illustrates the incredible need to not just say a committee meeting having conversations around the data, and then walking away and not having what I commentate on is this idea that we need to move beyond just talking about it, right? And so, I want to highlight what I consider three critical steps in thinking about what we need to do. What we're talking about is incremental steps to

organizational planning and I think too often that a lot of these communities engage in these conversations and want to move the needle immediately. And I make the argument that we didn't get into this right away, we're not going to get out of it anytime soon without a long-term vision. And so, I say that because when we're looking at the data from fall of 2020, it is abundantly clear that communities of color have systematically withdrawn from community colleges at the largest numbers in any other group.

That being said, we have to have a long-term strategic plan to address this issue when we look at disaggregated data when you take a closer look at that, you realize it's men of color who are more likely to not return to college or community college for that matter. So, when we think about that we need to recognize that they need to address the issues with this commitment to understanding.

We can't try to resolve all the problems, but we can try to focus our energy on one aspect and really try to invest in that specific laser focus to allow institutions to understand that they will do their best to address the folks who are in the most need. I say that because too often, we often lose sight of the importance of recognizing who's at stake here.

I say that because I've been working with the state of Kentucky which is predominantly a White community meaning that there's about 87% White, but these students are also very diverse in the sense that they have an incredible poverty level in addressing the needs of these students who are from poverty.

And so, I talk a lot about how do we have an equity minded agenda for a predominantly White student body, and what is an equity agenda look like for predominantly Latino population that I work with in South Texas. So, I think the role that we have to take is recognize that community college leadership needs to embrace and promote this equity minded agenda on these specific groups.

They need to publicly endorse and support these incremental changes to advance this agenda. But more critically, I'm going to close with this, which I think is the most important part. I think we, and Pam, love what you said because it's so important to we are scholars and people who listen to this podcast are very committed to having what I consider intellectual discussion.



But I'm going to be completely honest about what I'm about to say and the way that we need to think about this. We can be as smart as we want, we can be as committed as we want, but at the end of the day I think the most important part or the important element that fuels all of that is that we have to have courage.

Courageous leadership in these moments will require us to take initiative and disrupt institutional complacency. Meaning that there's some institutions that are complacent with 75% of their student population is part-time, but after six years, only 25% of part-time students actually complete a degree, we have to address this complacency.

And not to say that people are not committed or not hard working, but sometimes it's going to take some courageous efforts to address this issue and it has nothing to do with intellectual capacity or ability, it just means that you're going to be courageous to be, this is the best way I think about it, we have to be unapologetic.

We have to be unapologetic about what we're trying to accomplish because we recognize that these institutions sometimes need outside community members, outside folks, who can come in and say you have a blind spot and that requires some courage to recognize that blind spots do exist. And not to say that these institutions aren't committed, it's just that sometimes they lose sight of what they're actually trying to do when they're trying to see the forest rather than the trees.

So, I think it's important to have courage in these moments because that's what's going to effect change from awareness to action.

**Pamela Eddy:** Well, I'm going to go down a little side path given your conversation before I get to your prompt about the metrics to action. I think one of the things that is highlighted in Luis's comments is trying to remember that students don't come to community colleges without prior experiences.

So, as a result of that, we really need to be thinking of partnerships and understanding for those that are traditional age that are coming from a K-12 setting, what does that mean in terms of preparation for that? What does it mean in terms of opportunities for employment when students are going through this?

I've spent my morning looking at transcripts at rural community colleges about equity issues, and what we see in some of these areas is that for African American males in particular, is the desire to have a living wage and not seeing the benefit of college coming in these rural areas because there's not employers.

So, in the same ways that the data is complex, trying to think of the solutions is also going to take partnering with others. And we need to think, what does that mean, how do we look at that? So, my little side editorial there, we could also have an entire podcast just on leadership, which I can see as a very strong undercurrent of this conversation today.

What I think about is, as a prime example, I'll come back to what I started with thinking about faculty development. We ran a national program for a series of five years with trying to look at professional development of faculty to include not only cultural relevant types of pedagogies, but just basic good teaching as well, which cuts across active learning, et cetera.

Looking at course level data over the time of participation, we saw a statistically significant increase for minoritized students in terms of success rates in those classes because you have faculty feeling like they're invested in the work that they're doing, they have a skill set to apply to these classrooms, and they're looking at their course level data in this disaggregated way, which makes them have to ask the kind of questions, what have I assumed about my students? And taking that asset-based perspective versus that deficit of saying it's a student's fault. In a student focus group I conducted, I remember a student clear as the day coming in from an exam that they had just received out of a math class, so they need to go to move to your school I think Mayra. And this faculty member in this other class, who is not part of our program I'd like to say, essentially told the entire class the reason you all failed is your fault, you didn't study hard enough, you didn't prepare hard enough. And this student was really at a loss saying, well I actually did study. And so that faculty member, instead of taking that as an opportunity for reflection to say, what could I be doing differently in my teaching to get these concepts across?

Took the blame game approach instead, which is not going to serve us in increasing any kind of success for students. So, empowering our faculty to be able to do some of this important work is one step in moving us in that direction.

**Mayra Padilla (she/her/ella):** Thank you. I'm going to follow suit and go off the question and talk a little bit, I think around systems change.

So, when we begin the conversations around racial equity, we began them facing students and are catching up now and facing the institution and I think the next iteration is going to be really looking at the entire system. And what I mean by that is we hire educators to teach, however we often as a minimum qualification don't expect them to have a strong understanding of pedagogy.

We are hiring them subject experts and not as expert teachers. And so, I think to Luis's point around how do we engage boards in this conversation is those kinds of policy changes really need to happen at the national level. The U.S. is falling behind in all of our higher ed attainment because our values are around the subject matter expertise, and we have an entirely diverse student population that are requiring us, are demanding from us, right? They're voting with their feet, they're not showing up because we are not teaching them in ways that feel relevant to them, we're not speaking to their current set of goals, and we have a very antiquated system. And so, as we're thinking about the evolution of racial equity in higher ed I really do think that to Pam and Lisa's point, we really have to think about the systems.

And so, thinking about how are we writing job descriptions and what are the competencies we want our faculty, our administrators to come in with. Pam, you talked about leadership, it's so important when you have a transition in leadership at any institution, that really sets back the racial equity agenda because building trust and developing campus wide momentum takes time.

And if we are having leaders come in who are culturally competent and humble, who understand that we have not just from a neurodiversity perspective, from a cultural diversity perspective, multiple complex needs on the campus, then having those conversations with our leadership at the institution can move the agenda much more quickly.

And then the last piece I'll say is that at community colleges are older re-entry, non-traditional students are more and more coming in with the need to have these micro certificates. They're coming in thinking about doing community

college part-time on the weekends in the evenings, and how we schedule those programs is super important.

And so, again, back to the systems question. The restructure cannot just be taking place at the institutional level, it has to be taken place at the national systems level. And so hopefully those of you listening will take that conversation forward because I really think that's the next evolution of racial equity in our country.

**Raina Dyer-Barr:** Awesome. I think we'll leave it there. I want to thank our panelists for joining us. I really appreciate your time and the excellent and thought-provoking insights you've shared with us. I'd also like to invite our listeners to visit OCCRL's website, [occrll.illinois.edu](http://occrll.illinois.edu) to access links to REACH collaborative resources. And thank you again for joining us for this conversation today.