All Talk, No Action: How to Foster “Real” Conversations in Achieving Student Equity Goals

Dr. Edward Bush
President
Consumes River College
Past President, A²MEND

Dr. Dyrell Foster
Vice President, Student Services
Moreno Valley College
President Elect, A²MEND
Our Assumptions

• Disparities are often created and maintained inadvertently through institutional policies and practices

• Color Brave…Not Color Blind

• Race Matters

• It’s possible to close equity gaps by using strategies determined through an intentional focus on race
Equality vs. Equity

Source: Out Front Minnesota
www.radicalscholarship.wordpress.com

Equality = SAMENESS
Equality is about SAMENESS, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.

BUT it can only work IF everyone starts from the SAME place, in this example equality only works if everyone is the same height.

Equity = FAIRNESS
EQUITY is about FAIRNESS, it’s about making sure people get access to the same opportunities.

Sometimes our differences and/or history, can create barriers to participation, so we must FIRST ensure EQUITY before we can enjoy equality.
The Current Landscape
Why it’s Difficult…

Video:
The R-Word (difficult to talk about race)

http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/g65t3j/the-r-word
Why is it so difficult to talk about race?

• Thoughts, reactions, & experiences
Setting the Tone

Video:
Tim Wise on How White America Talks About Race

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IV3m-2utW10
Why it’s Difficult…

- Personal (defensive and angry)
- Lack the skills and practice
- Different perceptions of racial progress
- Even well-meaning people may experience some unconscious bias
- Fear of being labeled/judged as being racist
- It’s uncomfortable…
Courageous Conversations

What is a Courageous Conversation?

- An open, authentic, truthful dialogue, in an atmosphere of trust and respect

Reference: http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/
Effective Planning Process: Preparing for the Conversation

- Leverage the state mandate as a catalyst for dialogue and change
- Introduce literature or studies that can help frame the conversation
- Bring key stakeholders to the table early
  (If people don’t weigh-in they don’t buy-in)
- Pay for participation
- Instructionally heavy representation
- Develop guiding principles
- Assess previous planning efforts
- Inventory and evaluate existing student success programs/intervention strategies
Courageous Conversations begin… but it doesn’t start with data

- Cultural competency
- Talk about race
- Skillful facilitator(s)
- A safe space
- Common understanding/agreement
- Passion
- Practice
- Speak your truth
- Experience discomfort
- Stay engaged
- Have an outcome in mind
The Data:
Courageous Conversations Continue…

- Avoid paralysis by analysis
- Walk through the data
- Talk data before you talk strategies
- Look for trends
- Ask the why questions
- Eating the elephant
- Identify the bottlenecks
- Align with college specific indicators
Institutional “Hiding Places”

- Underprepared students
- Work ethic
- Work/family responsibilities
- Lack of cultural values around education
- Socio-economic status
To what degree do you and your institution have the will, the skill, the knowledge, and the capacity to understand and address issues of race as they relate to addressing existing racial achievement disparities?

What is it that educators should know and be able to do to narrow the racial achievement gap?

How will educators know when they are experiencing success in their efforts to narrow the racial achievement gap?

Questions/Comments

Thank you

A²MEND
www.a2mend.org