



Statement on

LATINO COLLEGE COMPLETION TOWN HALL

Before

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DAS WILLIAMS,

CHAIR OF THE ASSEMBLY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

and

SENATOR HANNAH-BETH JACKSON

By

Estela Mara Bensimon

Professor and Co-Director
Center for Urban Education

Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California

December 11, 2012

Assemblymember Williams and Senator Jackson, thank you for this opportunity to inform your deliberations concerning the issues of Latino college completion. I am honored to share my research findings and recommendations with you. You have asked me to describe, in particular, the Center for Urban Education’s model of involving practitioners as change agents within their own campuses.



Increasing the number and proportion of Latinas and Latinos who go to college, earn a degree, and have the credentials to pursue graduate education—particularly in fields that will experience the coming wave of baby boom retirements—is in California’s best interests. More college-educated Latinos and Latinas are imperative for the economic and social well-being of California.

More college-educated Latinos and Latinas are imperative for the economic and social well-being of California.



We have a system of higher education that until recently was held up as a model of access and excellence for all. Recent legislation to create a seamless path from community colleges to the California State University System campuses exemplifies the desire and the will to remove barriers to student success. Nevertheless we have a long way to go in order to achieve a Latino college educated population that is proportional to their representation in California. Unequal participation and outcomes for Latinos are evident throughout the three tiers of California’s public higher education system.



Substantial changes in student outcomes can’t be obtained if faculty, staff and educational leaders do not change their practices and beliefs.

The Center for Urban Education (CUE), located at the University of Southern California in the Rossier School of Education, works with campuses and systems to involve practitioners from across departments, divisions, and areas of responsibility in processes of deliberate examination of student outcomes data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Since its beginning in 1999, CUE has worked with over eighty institutions in ten states. I will first describe our approach, an outcomes based model of institutional change, known as the (Equity Scorecard) that we have implemented



in collaboration with large systems of higher education, universities, and community colleges in California, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Nevada (see Exhibit D for a description of the Equity Scorecard process and tools and Exhibit A and B for a list of CUE’s partners). I will conclude with recommendations to increase Latino college completion.

An Outcomes Based Model to Change Institutional Practices

Our research demonstrates that substantial changes in student outcomes will not be obtained, no matter how many policies are adopted or how many reports are produced about the educational status of Latinos, *if faculty, staff, and system and institutional leaders do not change themselves: their practices, their understandings of Latinos, and their beliefs about student success.* It is for

this reason that the Center for Urban Education engages practitioners in a facilitated action research process. Through our process, practitioners learn to reframe low rates of college completion as a problem of institutional effectiveness in serving students. By focusing on what they can and need to change in themselves and their institutions, rather than on the deficits that prevent Latinos from succeeding, it is possible for faculty, staff, and leaders to approach the challenge of improving Latino college attainment, as a *solvable problem of professional practice*.

• • •

By focusing on what they can and need to change in themselves and the institution, rather than blaming students, it is possible to approach Latina college attainment as a solvable problem.

When we work with campus practitioner teams we provide them with a set of data and inquiry tools that make the process of using data to achieve improved student outcomes real, manageable, and attainable. Our tools enable systems to gain a nuanced understanding of the barriers affecting student success, and to set long- and short-term goals for improvement tied to their strategic priorities. Our collaborative approach taps into the existing expertise of administrators, policymakers, faculty, and staff. It enables them to ask fresh questions, probe into why the data looks the way it does, and adopt specific benchmarks for improvement.

• • •

Participants involved in implementing the Equity Scorecard are actively engaged in finding solutions to practices adversely affecting student success that are grounded in their local context: they use their own data; investigate their own programs, practices, and policies; benchmark against their own strategic priorities; and develop interventions tailored to their own needs and institutional culture.

Student outcomes are shaped by the expertise, resources, and expectations of the professionals who teach, tutor, and counsel them. By involving professionals in a grounds-up and outcomes-based approach there is greater potential for deep and long-lasting change than the strategies that are typically deployed.

Engaging Practitioners to Re-mediate Practices

It has been our experience, in California, Wisconsin, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, that practitioners often fault students for their low retention and graduation. For example, data showing that Latino students have low rates of success in mathematics may elicit comments such as “they are underprepared” “they don’t know how to study” “they don’t know how to manage their time” “they have jobs and work too many hours” and “they don’t seek help.” I don’t dispute the truth of these statements. However, faculty and others also need to understand that those Latino students who lack the skills to navigate college are likely first-generation students who have not had the same exposure to college as students with college-educated parents or relatives. Other well prepared Latino students may be turned off from college when they encounter faculty, administrators, or staff members who treat them with stereotyped

assumptions. While these points may seem at odds, they are both true because the Latino population is at the cusp between access and success. To address this seeming contradiction, practitioners must approach their Latino students with an openness to learning about their family background and individual goals.

We talk about remediation for students who come to college needing to improve their academic preparation, so the notion of "re-mediating" practices supports our emphasis on institutional responsibility for students' success. But when we use the term re-mediating practices we in fact mean something very specific: changing the tools, vocabulary, and routines that mediate how higher education professionals do their work so that we can support them in becoming more aware of and intentional about equity.

One of the aims of CUE's approach is to engage faculty and others in a process of inquiry that leads naturally to remediating their own practices. So instead of expecting students to know "how to be students" practitioners learn to assist students in becoming successful.

Keeping a Focus on Equity

Our research shows that even those faculty members and staff who truly care about producing good results, and proudly embrace the diversity of their student body, do not, as a matter of habit, examine the racial/ethnic patterns that give shape to structural inequality. As teachers of English or Mathematics or as directors of academic support services, these practitioners take their work very seriously and invest themselves in doing the right thing by their students. Their efforts may not always meet with success; not because they are ineffective, but rather because institutions of higher education lack the structures, expertise, and tools to intentionally examine racial/ethnic patterns within classrooms, departments, and institution-wide.

Moreover, on most campuses there is an inexplicable apprehension about speaking directly and openly about institutional effectiveness in relation to Latinos, or African Americans, or other racial and ethnic groups that have been labeled as 'at-risk.' Notably, California has the largest number of community colleges and public and independent colleges designated by the US Department of Education as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) because they meet the threshold requirement of Hispanics being at least 25% of their total undergraduate enrollment. However, the great majority of these institutions do not publicly claim their identity as Hispanic Serving.

Leaders embed specific values into their organizations through what they measure, talk about, and reward. Therefore, to re-mediate practices to obtain better outcomes for Latinos and other underrepresented groups, presidents and trustees must routinely monitor the status of Latinos on critical indicators of student success, identify equity gaps, and establish goals and benchmarks to eliminate equity gaps. To re-mediate practices to obtain better outcomes for Latinos and other underrepresented groups, practitioners should habitually examine racial/ethnic patterns on indicators of academic success, such as grade point distribution, results in quizzes and exams,

frequency of interactions outside the classroom during office hours, usage of academic support services, and completion of milestones leading to certificates and degrees.

Realizing equitable college completion for Latinos requires that every member of every college campus has the evidence to determine who *is* and who *is not* benefitting from the college's educational resources.

The action research strategies we have developed, implemented, and studied in collaboration with scores of campuses have the objective of embedding a culture of equity-minded inquiry that starts from a difficult question: Why are my/our practices not producing successful outcomes for Latino (or African American, Hmong, American Indian) students?

Needless to say, accepting and then investigating why the way one teaches, counsels, and advises is not working equally well for all students is not a simple matter, particularly for educational professionals with advanced degrees and strong disciplinary identities.

Recognizing that practitioners' taking the role of objective inquirers to study the practices they and others enact day after day is a big challenge, CUE has created a variety of tools to facilitate the process. These tools help teams of faculty and staff approach familiar processes such as the ways in which the assessment office works, or artifacts such as a course syllabus, and analyze them based on standards of quality, equity, inclusiveness, and cultural responsiveness.

• • •
Investigating why their methods of teaching, counseling or advising are not working equally well for all students is not easy for educational professionals with strong disciplinary identities.

• • •

CUE's Approach as an Intervention to Improve Latino Higher Education Outcomes

Community colleges are the most common point of entry into higher education for Latinos, thus a strategy to improve Latino higher education outcomes has to start with improving retention, graduation, and transfer preparation in community colleges.

The California Community Colleges Task Force on Student Success has adopted a set of Student Success Outcome Metrics, such as the numbers of degrees and certificates earned and the number of students who successfully transfer to four-year institutions. In March 2013, the Chancellors Office of the California Community Colleges (CCCC) will release a new accountability scorecard revealing indicators of student success to the public for all 112 California community colleges. It is encouraging that the task force is considering progression metrics and that these measures, along with student outcomes, will be disaggregated by race/ethnicity. The Center for Urban Education has been a long-time advocate for the

disaggregation of data on community college outcomes and we are pleased to see that it will be put into effect. We congratulate the Student Success Task Force for making this happen.

Our extensive experience in conducting CUE's Equity Scorecard with public systems of higher education in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Nevada, as well as individual colleges in California, Colorado, Indiana, and New York lead us to predict that the CCCC Scorecard will not motivate the desired improvements in college performance and productivity in the absence of supports to involve practitioners in the use of the scorecard data to examine their practices.

Implicit in the Student Success Task Force's recommendation is that more and better data will achieve desired outcomes. But data alone, or intermediate measures of student progress that indicate probability of success, will not help colleges accomplish the goals motivating the use of the four metrics¹ of student success recommended by the Task Force. These data and metrics are akin to a thermometer, they show the "temperature." But just as a thermometer cannot change the temperature, data are not self-acting².

Moving from data reporting to analysis to targeted actions that result in measurable improvements requires specialized expertise, tools, structures, and cultural practices—all of which are not common in most colleges and universities.

• • •
The CCCC Scorecard will not motivate the desired improvements without practitioner involvement in examination of their own practices.

Recommendations to Engage Practitioners in the Re-mediation of Practices that Disadvantage Latinos

1. Allocate resources to develop systemic and institutional capacity to engage practitioners in a structured and facilitated process of data analysis and inquiry activities to study teaching, curricular, assessment, and student support services.

• • •
2. Provide colleges with models for setting cohort-based outcome goals, by race and ethnicity, to continuously monitor the status of students in key pathways to successful completion: a) progression through basic skills courses; b) progression through courses required for transfer; c) progression to degree attainment within a specified time period; and d) progression through requirements for high value degrees and certificates (e.g. in STEM fields).

¹ The Task Force recommended defining success using the following metrics: 1) Percentage of community college students completing their educational goals; 2) Percentage of community college students earning a certificate or degree, transferring, or achieving transfer-readiness; 3) Number of students transferring to a four-year institutions; and 4) Number of degrees and certificates earned.

² Cohen, D. K., Raudenbush, S. W., & Ball, D. L. (2003). Resources, instruction, and research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(2), 119-142.

3. Produce an annual report on the state of equity, by campus, for Latinos, African Americans, and other racial and ethnic groups that represent at least 15 percent of the total student body.

Based on my experience doing the Equity Scorecard with thousands of people at over eighty colleges and universities in the United States, I am aware that there are good ways and bad ways to use scorecard data.

The following are best practices for using scorecard data for institutional accountability:

- Do make clear who is included in the data and who is excluded
- Do report data in rates, shares, and counts (raw numbers)
- Do disaggregate data by race and ethnicity
- Do discuss specific racial ethnic groups (e.g. African Americans, Black, Hispanic, Latino) with language agreed upon by participants
- Do create settings for all participants to express their interpretation of the data
- Do discuss the meanings of access, equal opportunity, equity, and merit
- Do focus on the data at hand before collecting more data
- Do acknowledge areas of institutional strength as well as areas for improvement
- Do treat the review of data as an opportunity for professional development
- Do make data public and prepare people in administrative, faculty, and, staff roles to explain their meaning and improvement processes that are underway

The following are practices to avoid:

- Don't treat the review of scorecard data as a time for placing blame
- Don't dismiss groups with small numbers (small "Ns")
- Don't use highly aggregated data or groups (such as "underrepresented minorities") that obscure differences among groups
- Don't try to discuss all groups at once

To sum up the College Completion Agenda for California will be in danger of receiving a grade of "Incomplete" as long as degree attainment goals are not set by race and ethnicity. Other states are setting specific goals for underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups. For example, the 14 universities comprised by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education have engaged in the Equity Scorecard process to set goals to better serve African American students. Their effort is also linked to the state's performance funding goals to close equity gaps in access and graduation. If states that are not experiencing our enormous demographic changes are paying attention to racial and ethnic equity, most certainly we should do no less.

Exhibit A: CUE's Tools

Vital Signs

Exhibit A.1 Full-Time (FT) Enrollment, Current Year

ACCESS PERSPECTIVE Institution's Name

Table A.1.1 All students, FT Enrollment, Current Year

| Student Groups, by Race/Ethnicity | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|------------|-------|----------|---------|-------|
| African American | American Indian | Hispanic/Latino | Asian | Black/Pace | White | Internat | Unknown | Total |
| # | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 24 |
| % | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 100% |

Source:

Table A.1.2 Male students, FT Enrollment, Current Year

| Student Groups, by Race/Ethnicity | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|------------|-------|----------|---------|-------|
| African American | American Indian | Hispanic/Latino | Asian | Black/Pace | White | Internat | Unknown | Total |
| # | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 24 |
| % | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 100% |

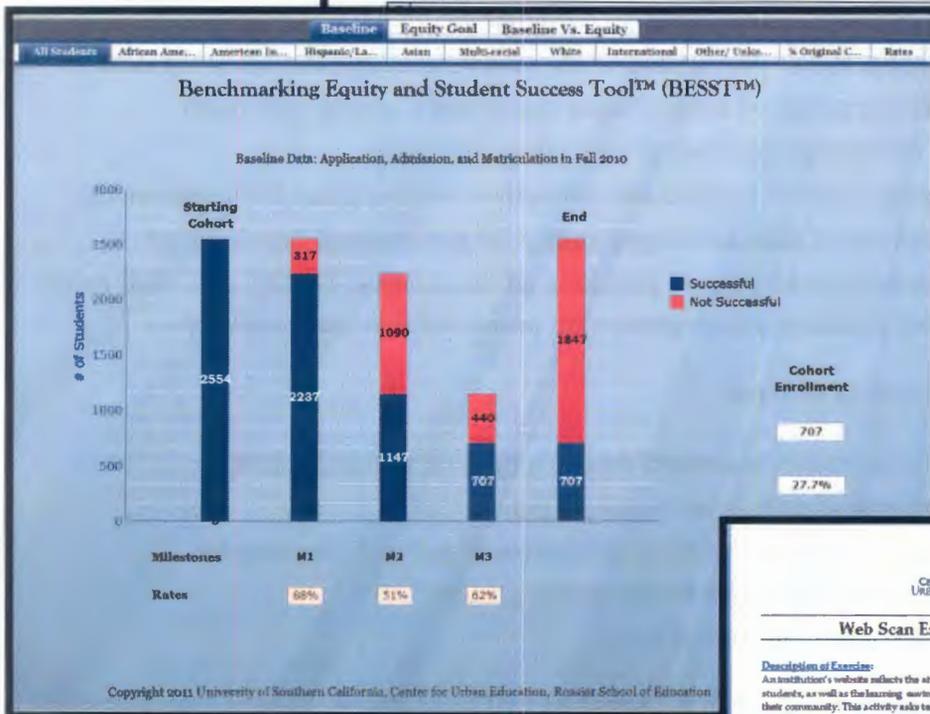
Source:

Table A.1.3 Female students, FT Enrollment, Current Year

| Student Groups, by Race/Ethnicity | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|------------|-------|----------|---------|-------|
| African American | American Indian | Hispanic/Latino | Asian | Black/Pace | White | Internat | Unknown | Total |
| # | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 24 |
| % | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 100% |

Source:

State Notes:



BESST

Inquiry Protocols

Center for Urban Education

Web Scan Exercise Summary for Access

Description of Exercise:
An institution's website reflects the attitudes, assumptions, and expectations that are placed on students, as well as the learning environment that the institution strives to create for the members of their community. This activity asks team members to imagine themselves as prospective students, particularly underrepresented Latino/a, African American, and Native American students, experiencing the institution's website for the first time. It guides team members to consider what kinds of cultural assumptions are being communicated that might discourage potential applicants. This Web Scan Exercise is completed by following 5 steps:

- Step 1: Establish a "Student Lens"
- Step 2: Review and Answer Equity Questions
- Step 3: Select Team Members and Develop an Inquiry Plan
- Step 4: Visit Your Website
- Step 5: Write Your Reflections and Team Observations

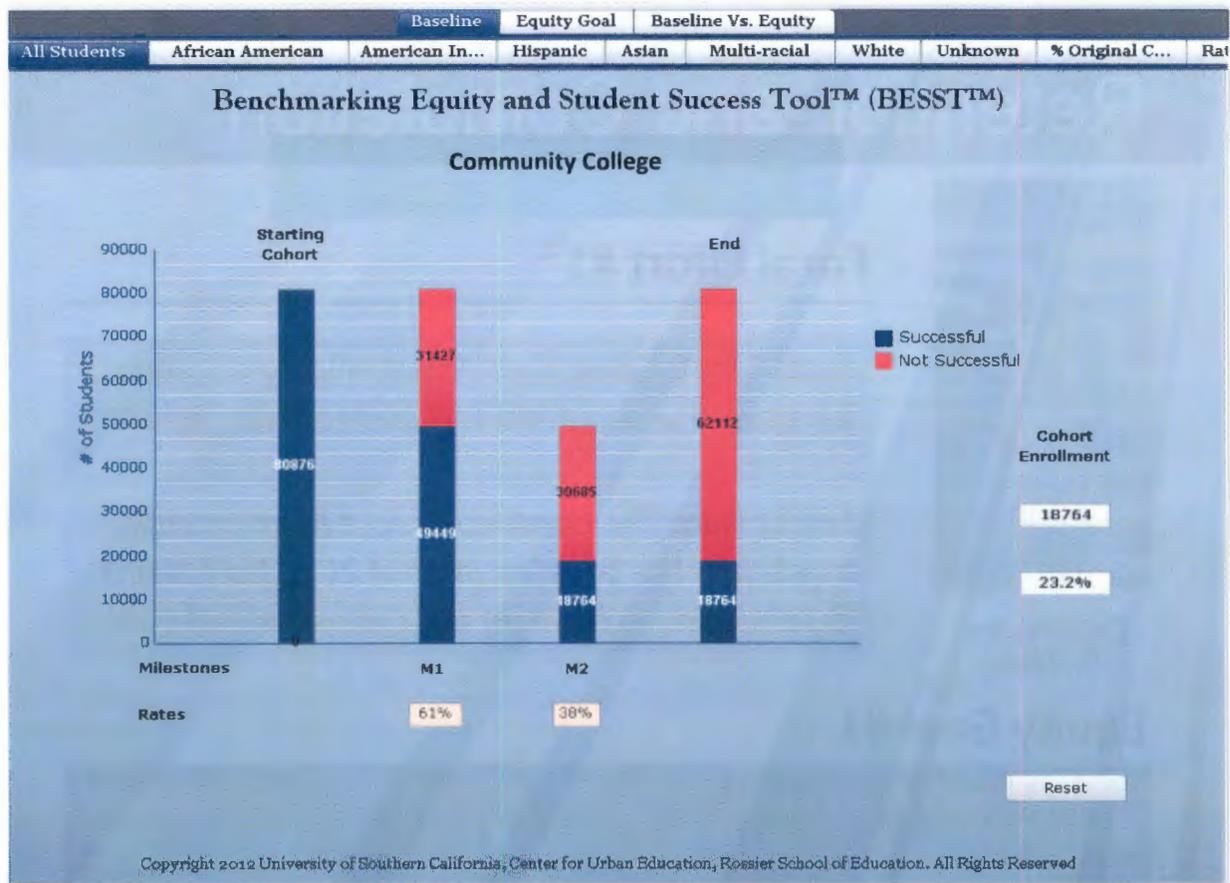
Completing the Exercise
Reflecting on your institution's website gives you a way to generate dialogue with your evidence team and the college at large about the information that is communicated to potential students. This exercise asks that your team consider how the institution's website may be connected to the equity gaps identified in the institutional data. Teams may follow the 5 steps, outlined below, to complete the web scan. If questions arise in the process, please contact your CUE Project Specialist.

Step One: Envision a "Student Lens"
In order to make the most of the web scan exercise, we recommend that team members try to view the website through a student's lens. This "lens" allows teams to gain new insights that might be lost if they looked at the process from their own point of view. As a team use the following questions to talk through and understand a "student lens" perspective. Below are some questions to guide your thinking:

- What are prospective students thinking about or looking for when they go to your institution's website?
- What might their anxieties or concerns be while looking at your institution's website?
- What might students already know or not know about your school?

© 2012 University of Southern California. All rights reserved.

Exhibit B: Sample BESST: Basic Skills Placement (all races/ethnicities), Fall 2010



| | Definition | Success rate for milestone | Percent of original cohort | Number of students who successfully reach milestone |
|-----------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Starting Cohort | Placed in math two levels below transfer | -- | 100% | 80,876 |
| Milestone 1 | Completed math two level below transfer | 61% | 61% | 49,449 |
| Milestone 2 | Completed math one level below transfer | 38% | 23.2% | 18,764 |
| End | Eligible for transfer level math | 38% | 23.2% | 18,764 |

How to Read the BESST Baseline Tab:

Starting Cohort: A total of 80,876 students were placed in developmental math two levels below transfer in Fall 2010.

Milestone 1: Of the 80,876 students who were placed in math 2 levels below transfer, 49,449 (61%) passed.

Milestone 2: Of the 49,449 students who passed math 2 levels below, 18,764 students passed math 1 level below, which represents 23.2% of the original 80,876 students who were placed in developmental math, and 38% of the students who passed milestone 1.

Exhibit C: Completed Page of the Equity Scorecard Report for Downtown Community College

Retention and Completion



Defining the Problem

Focal Effort #1

Focal Effort: Close Equity Gap in Latino Student Successful Completion of Intermediate Algebra.

Equity Gap: The completion rate in intermediate algebra in the baseline year of 2010 for Latinos is 36%, compared to an all student rate of 61%.

Equity Goal #1

| Evaluation Indicator | Baseline Fall 2010 | Goal 1 Fall 2014 | Goal 2 Fall 2016 | EQUITY <small>(same as all student average) Fall 2020</small> |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| Latinos Completing Intermediate Algebra, by PERCENT | 36% | 46% | 56% | 61% |
| Latinos Completing Intermediate Algebra, by NUMBER | 4,003 | 5,045 | 6,142 | 6,691 |
| | | Number of Additional Students: 1042 | Number of Additional Students: 2139 | Number of Additional Students: 2688 |

Links to the [Access Perspective Vital Signs](#), [BESST data](#), and your Evidence Team's [findings](#) about equity gaps in Access on your campus.

Exhibit D: Description of the Equity Scorecard process and tools

EQUITY SCORECARD



The Center for Urban Education’s (CUE) Equity Scorecard™ is an organizational learning and change process designed for use in schools, colleges, and universities. Its purpose is to enhance equity in educational outcomes among racial-ethnic groups. In the postsecondary context, the Scorecard has four perspectives:

access, retention, excellence, and completion.

Evidence Teams made up of faculty, student affairs professionals, and administrators conduct action research using data reflecting the status of racial-ethnic equity along each of these perspectives. The action research facilitates a cycle of inquiry in five phases: **laying the groundwork, defining the problem, assessing interventions, implementing solutions, and evaluating results.** The activities and findings of the Evidence Team are documented and shared with the broader campus community through the Equity Scorecard Report, a visible symbol of the campus’ commitment to equity. The Equity Scorecard Report features equity goals, interim benchmarks towards equity, and an action plan for achieving those goals.

● ● ●

Laying the Groundwork: Align the Equity Scorecard with existing campus efforts and identify faculty, staff, and administrators to lead the work.

Defining the Problem: Identify equity gaps in educational outcomes using tools that make the data real and actionable, conducting inquiry by asking additional questions.

Assessing Interventions: Inquire into instructional and academic support practices around identified focus areas and gaps.

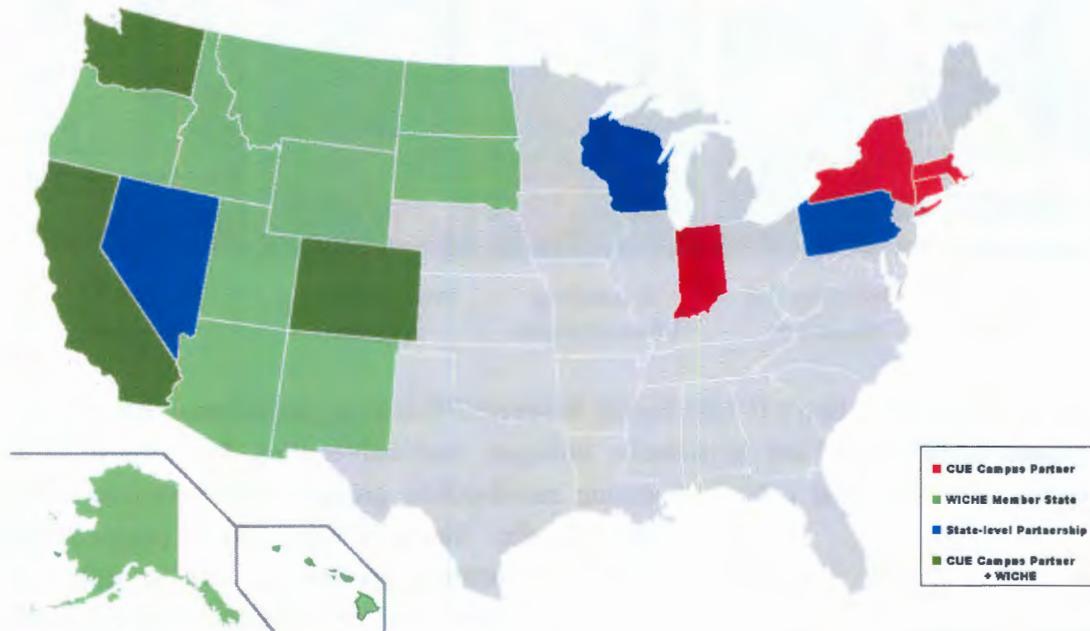
Implementing Solutions: Make purposeful changes based on the results of systemic inquiry, setting goals for improved equity and effectiveness.

Evaluating Results: Evaluate the effectiveness of changes and creating long term plans to reach equity goals.

● ● ●

Exhibit E: CUE's Partners

The Center for Urban Education (CUE) seeks to increase equity in higher education by partnering with individual institutions and state systems to engage in data analysis and inquiry activities about academic outcomes for students of color. Since its beginning in 1999, CUE has worked with over eighty institutions in ten states. Over forty colleges, universities and state systems have also partnered with CUE to undertake the full Equity Scorecard™ Process.



California:

Dominguez Hills
Fullerton
Los Angeles
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
Cerritos College
College of Alameda
DeAnza College
Evergreen Valley College
Fullerton College
Hancock College
Hartnell College
Long Beach City College
Los Angeles City College
Los Angeles Southwest College
Los Angeles Valley College

Los Medanos College
Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles
Merritt College
Mount Saint Mary's College
Mount San Antonio College
Occidental College
Rio Hondo College
Riverside Community College
San Joaquin Delta College
San Jose City College
Santa Ana College
Santa Monica College
University of La Verne
University of Redlands
Whittier College

Colorado:

Fort Lewis College at Durango
Metropolitan State University at Denver

Connecticut:

Trinity College

Indiana:

Purdue University at West Lafayette

Massachusetts

National College Access Network (NCAN) and
Boston Public Schools (Community Academy of
Science and Health and East
Boston High School)

Nevada:

Nevada System of Higher Education
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
(WICHE)

New York:

Vassar College

Pennsylvania:

Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

Bloomsburg
California
Cheyney
Clarion
East Stroudsburg
Edinboro
Indiana
Kutztown
Lock Haven
Mansfield
Millersville
Shippensburg
Slippery Rock
West Chester

Washington:

Washington State University

Wisconsin:

University of Wisconsin System and campuses at:

Eau Claire
Green Bay
La Crosse
Milwaukee
Oshkosh
Parkside
Platteville
River Falls
Sheboygan
Stevens Point
Stout
Superior
Whitewater

University of Wisconsin Colleges

*Wisconsin Technical College System and campuses
at*

Fox Valley Technical College
Madison Area Technical College,
Milwaukee Area Technical College

