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This chapter highlights the use of the Equity Scorecard with the Community College of Aurora. The Equity Scorecard is a theory-based strategy that assists community colleges in embedding equity into their institutional norms, practices, and policies.

Developing Agency for Equity-Minded Change

Eric R. Felix, Estela Mara Bensimon, Debbie Hanson, James Gray, Libby Klingsmith

The current urgency in increasing the productivity of higher education provides a political opportunity to make equity for racial and ethnic groups in community colleges a goal that contributes to the national agenda. The Center for Urban Education (CUE)¹ has pioneered the Equity Scorecard, a theory-based strategy consisting of tools, activities, and processes to assist campuses in embedding equity into their structures, policies, and practices. In our work in several states with colleges and systems² we have learned that under the right conditions, institutional actors will strive to learn how to change themselves and their own institutions to produce equity in educational outcomes. In this chapter we discuss and demonstrate the development of agency for equity-minded change among institutional actors by focusing on the Community College of Aurora (CCA) as an exemplar. The Community College of Aurora is one of three colleges that took part in “Equity in Excellence: Higher Education for Colorado’s Future”³ a CUE project in partnership with the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE).

Participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) is the underpinning of the Equity Scorecard’s theory of change and this chapter illustrates how its core method, practitioner-led inquiry into everyday routines, supports equity-minded organizational learning and change. Because participatory action research involves practitioners in the study of their own practices, it is an effective way of developing awareness of inequality in outcomes and learning to view inequality as a problem of practice, rather than as a problem of student deficiencies (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012).

The implementation of the Equity Scorecard is a joint effort between CUE researchers and a team of faculty, administrators, and staff. CUE's role is to create a structure, including tools and processes that enable insiders to take on the role of researchers and examine student data critically, identify at what points in the academic pathway there is evidence of inequality by race and ethnicity, and design a plan of inquiry to identify practices that have an impact on student outcomes directly (e.g., faculty expertise) or indirectly (e.g., faculty hiring practices).

A few notes about the organization and format of this chapter. The authorship models the collaborative on-the-ground research-practice approach of the Equity Scorecard. The first three authors, Felix, Hanson, and Bensimon, all from CUE, describe the Equity Scorecard process following the conventional academic third person or the collective "we"; James Gray and Libby Klingsmith, both from CCA, speak in the first person to describe how they experienced the Equity Scorecard and what difference it made personally and institutionally. Throughout the chapter, CUE's authors fill in the context that is necessary to give meaning to James's and Libby's comments in relation to the aims and principles of the Equity Scorecard.

Readers will notice that James and Libby's experience of the Equity Scorecard was very positive; as a consequence their commentaries may strike the reader as an "advertisement" for the Equity Scorecard. However, their comments represent "unprompted talk" (Pollock, 2001), culled from conversations, presentations they made to various groups within CCA as well as external audiences, and interviews conducted by CUE as part of our process of documenting the impact of the Equity Scorecard. The Equity Scorecard is a process that is respectful of practitioner knowledge and experience, and we believe it elicits positive responses because the inquiry activities create a sense of purposeful agency. As such, the Equity Scorecard may be welcomed as an antidote to policy reforms that are technocratic or that paint faculty as the obstacle to reform. The action research activities of the Equity Scorecard produce "aha" moments in practitioners that are eye opening as well as empowering when practitioners are able to see that they can change the outcomes of their own practices. These qualities of the scorecard methods increase the likelihood of it being experienced in the positive ways shared by Libby and James.

The Equity Scorecard: A Learning Process of Change

On most college campuses, despite the strong rhetoric on evidence-based decision making, data reports are difficult to decipher and not enough time is dedicated to reading the data, detecting patterns, or asking the next-level questions to dig deeper into the meaning of a number or percentage. The Equity Scorecard bridges the gap between data and action by engaging practitioners in a structured process of action research that involves two kinds of inquiry. First, quantitative analysis of data disaggregated

by race and ethnicity is used to identify equity gaps in basic metrics of student progress toward degree attainment. Second, qualitative analysis such as observations, interviews, and document reviews is conducted to investigate practices, structures, and policies through the lens of equity. Teams examine data that are organized into four kinds of educational outcomes: completion (e.g., accumulation of a minimum number of credits per semester), retention (e.g., pass rates in basic skills math courses), excellence (e.g., completing transfer requirements in science, technology, engineering, mathematics fields), and access (e.g., completion of prerequisites for admission into majors leading to high-paying fields). These types of measures are common in national policy- and accountability-oriented initiatives such as Complete College America. However, the important distinction between the Equity Scorecard and big data campaigns is that we put the data in the hands of practitioners and give them the tools to arrive at their own interpretations rather than being told what the data show.

We recognize that on most college campuses it would be nearly impossible to achieve equity without the engagement of practitioners, particularly faculty, in a deep and guided examination of teaching and learning. Too many change initiatives fail because they do not take into account the uniqueness of academic organizations, particularly those reform projects that overlook the primacy of faculty over just about everything that affects educational outcomes.

The Equity Scorecard frames the persistence of inequity in educational outcomes as a problem of institutional performance that calls for the remediation of practices (as well as structures and policies) from the standpoint of equity. This approach requires that institutional actors unlearn normative perspectives that explain academic success as an outcome of students' behaviors, motivations, goal orientation, and sense of self-efficacy (Bensimon, 2007). Instead, practitioners learn to reframe racial/ethnic inequity as a symptom of undetected and unintended institutional dysfunctions and they, individually and collectively, have the power to take action to remediate them.

Within the Equity Scorecard framework, practitioners (e.g., faculty, staff, leaders) are viewed as agents of their own change. The strategy to obtain self-change consists of action research activities designed to help practitioners see what is not working and change their practices to intentionally focus on equity. For example, later James will share what he discovered by pulling apart his hiring practices and how he changed them to be equity focused.

Inequalities in educational outcomes are treated as an indeterminate situation (Dewey, 1938) that calls for investigation. Practitioners actually study such things as how students are advised, analyze policies such as those that govern student eligibility for the honors program, and assess structures such as the transfer center and who is served by it. Inquiry serves as a catalyst for change in practitioners' mental schema. Participants

learn to ask: In what ways are my/our practices failing to produce success for such and such students, e.g., Latinos, Blacks, Asian Americans, or American Indians?

The processes through which the activities of the Equity Scorecard are implemented focus on three aspects of learning:

1. Collaborative Learning. Learning is a social act, facilitated by assisted performance, mediated by cultural tools and artifacts, and takes place in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Hence, the activities of the Equity Scorecard are carried out by an “evidence team.”
2. Double-Loop Learning. Organizational change that is enduring requires double-loop learning, meaning that instead of jumping into problem solving based on the assumption that a problem is understood, institutional actors have to acknowledge that the problem exists and that the reasons for its existence are unknown to them (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Bauman, 2005). Hence, in order to solve the problem of inequity, it must first be labeled as a “problem” that needs to be interrogated in order to craft appropriate solutions. Through a facilitated process, participants learn to resist their natural inclination to assume that they understand the problem in order to open themselves up to learn something new (Bensimon, 2005). Participants are encouraged to pull apart the problem and get to the underlying ideology or theory of the practice that underpins it.
3. Equity-Minded Learning. The eradication of racial inequality in higher education outcomes requires equity-minded practitioners. The characteristics of equity-mindedness are as follows: (a) being race conscious in a critical way, as opposed to color blind; (b) being cognizant of structural and institutional racism as the root cause of inequities as opposed to deficiencies stemming from essentialist perspectives on race or ethnicity; (c) recognizing that to achieve equity it may be necessary to treat individuals unequally as opposed to treating everyone equally; and (d) being able to focus on practices as the source of failure rather than student deficits, e.g., asking what is going on in the transfer center that might discourage African-American students from taking advantage of it, rather than assuming African-American students are not interested in transfer.

In the next section we illustrate how these types of learning are implemented through the Equity Scorecard.

The Equity Scorecard Phases

The Equity Scorecard is organized into five phases: *Laying the Groundwork*, *Defining the Problem*, *Assessing Interventions*, *Implementing Solutions*, and *Evaluating Results*. This chapter shares experiences from the first three phases, which focus heavily on data inquiry, identification of equity gaps,

and developing appropriate intervention points. Although the label for the fourth phase, *Implementing Solutions*, may make the Equity Scorecard appear to be a linear process that culminates with the implementation of solutions, in reality change or “solutions” develop continuously, from the very first phase because our learning activities prompt participants to immediately shift attention to their own practices and values. Our conceptualization of change distinguishes the Equity Scorecard from other data-based reform efforts. Accountability-based reform efforts in higher education frame change as a process of implementing technical or structural solutions, e.g., “accelerated remedial education” or “learning communities” to solve problems revealed by data metrics on retention and completion. In the Equity Scorecard, “data” are important not only for what problems they reveal, but also because the social process of making meaning of data is a powerful catalyst to practitioner reflection that leads to self-change. To put it more simply, in data-based initiatives, data are treated discretely from change-oriented solutions. In contrast, we view data-based inquiry as the strategy that makes change happen.

Laying the Groundwork. The *Laying the Groundwork* phase involves CUE’s researchers meeting with campus leaders, typically the president and provost, to explain the process that will take place over 1 or 2 years. One of the most critical activities during this phase is the creation of a team.

Guided by CUE’s “Assembling the Evidence Team” tool, campus administrators select team members and leaders who collectively have the characteristics associated with “high learning” (Lorenz, 2012) and cognitively complex teams (Bensimon & Neumann, 1994). The tool helps campus leaders identify individuals who are likely to play one or more of the following roles: analysts, individuals who are good at interpreting data and seeing patterns; interpreters, individuals who will ask “How do we know that . . . ?”; and emotional monitors, individuals who can address the human, personal, and emotional aspects of the team. The “Assembling the Evidence Team” tool delineates ideal team leaders as individuals who are able to create a safe and friendly culture of inquiry, encourage questioning of taken-for-granted knowledge, do not allow individuals to dominate conversations, pose questions to encourage reflection, and are highly organized and task oriented. Institutional researchers are required to be part of the team as the Equity Scorecard relies greatly on numeric data. Institutional researchers who do well with the Equity Scorecard tend not to “get stuck on technical statistical issues, create an environment that allows people to ask seemingly “dumb” questions, and do not assume that everyone can read and interpret data tables in the same way he/she does (Dowd, Malcom, Nakamoto, & Bensimon, 2012).

Finally, “Assembling the Evidence Team” tool provides several prompts to assist leaders appoint individuals who are respected and have a reputation for leadership. Teams with the characteristics described previously are more likely to engage in the following actions: They prioritize data over anecdotal

knowledge, are open to the idea that achieving racial equity in educational outcomes is an important and appropriate goal, dig deep into data and know how to interrogate it, and are able to identify points of intervention.

Over time we have learned that the composition of the evidence team influences the extent to which the values, practices, knowledge, and competencies of the Equity Scorecard will become embedded into the campus culture. Our early experiences with the equity scorecard revealed that leaders, without greater guidance, were not as deliberate about the creation of the team, and often we found ourselves with teams of well-meaning individuals who cared deeply about students but lacked the power, influence, and institutional know-how that is necessary to create change from the ground up. We also encountered the all-too-common problem of leaders automatically categorizing the Equity Scorecard as belonging in the “diversity” sphere and thus creating a team of “diversity workers” who do not have the positioning or power needed to make change. The Equity Scorecard focuses on changes in practices, policies, and structures and, sadly, on most campuses, individuals who hold diversity-related positions do not hold academic appointments or are not part of the president’s or provost’s cabinets; thus they have limited power to make the kinds of changes aimed at by the Equity Scorecard.

The team at Community College of Aurora, which is led by coauthors James Gray, chair of the Mathematics Department, and Libby Klingsmith, coordinator of First Year and Transition Programming, meets the characteristics of an effective team in several ways. The other members of the team include three instructors, the dean of academic affairs, the assistant to the vice president of student affairs, the dean of student success (who early in the process was promoted to vice president of student affairs), the executive director of grants and planning, a career coach, and the director of assessment and institutional research. The team is also diverse in terms of racial, ethnic, and gender composition. Individuals in this team oversee important areas that affect the educational core of the institution as well as all those services that exist to support student success. These individuals have the positional authority and power to convene staff and spread the characteristics of equity-mindedness to campus-wide initiatives of which they are part, such as strategic planning, academic reform, and accreditation self-studies.

Listed next are some examples to illustrate how the CCA team was able to take the Equity Scorecard beyond their 11-member team, an essential element of successful implementation:

- As the chair of the Mathematics Department, James Gray was able to convene the math faculty and engage them in an examination of their syllabi using the Equity Scorecard’s “Syllabus Review” protocol. He also adopted the practice of disaggregating data by race and ethnicity to inform the redesign of developmental math courses.
- As coordinator of the First Year and Transition Programming, Libby Klingsmith was able to organize a review of the website and documents

related to advising and to interview advisors to learn how they consider race and ethnicity in their professional practice.

- James and Libby strategically used their institutional status to request time in the regular meetings of the president and her cabinet. They presented updates on the equity scorecard regularly and, through these updates, they introduced specialized language and concepts to institutional leaders. Language and concepts such as equity minded, race conscious, and structural racism are an essential tool of the Equity Scorecard because the attainment of equity requires that practitioners and leaders learn to understand and talk about race as a structural problem. The creation and use of a new language for equity, and what we refer to as “equity-mindedness,” is necessary because racial-ethnic inequities often seem natural, overwhelming, or the responsibility of other individuals or institutions (Dowd & Bensimon, 2014).
- They also ensured that the Equity Scorecard work and principles would be incorporated into institutional priorities. As a result, the Equity Scorecard has a strong presence in CCA’s new master plan.

Defining the Problem. In the *Defining the Problem* phase, the evidence team participates in a 2-day event organized by CUE’s researchers and project specialists to introduce the evidence team to the scorecard’s specialized language (e.g., equity-mindedness), its principles and theory of change, and the meaning of equity and what makes it different from diversity and equality.

The team members participate in a variety of exercises to learn how to interrogate numeric data and, most important, how to interpret data from an equity perspective. Using CUE’s Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool (BESST), the CCA team reviewed data on completion, year-to-year retention, enrollment and success in gatekeeper courses, and timely credit accumulation. Among the things they learned was that full-time African-American students, compared to other groups, had a lower rate of degree or transfer attainment within 3 years of enrolling.

To illustrate the role disaggregated data play in shining the light on equity gaps, we draw on reflections from coauthor James Gray, who is the chair of the math department as well as the co-team leader of CCA’s Equity Scorecard team.

James: When I looked at the retention and completion data by race and ethnicity, it was a “big surprise.” As chair of the Mathematics Department, I had always felt a sense of pride in our success. The year before we started the Equity Scorecard, we became part of the National Community College Benchmark Project,⁴ which is still ongoing and includes 200 community colleges. Our department placed in the 90th percentile of community colleges in college algebra success rates. But when I looked at the disaggregated data it was a punch in the gut when we got the results back and saw that African-American

students in developmental courses were not passing; were overrepresented in remedial courses, underrepresented in college algebra, and their overall success rate in developmental math was under 50%.

Even though James is the chair of the math department he had not had an opportunity to look at data disaggregated by race and ethnicity and when he did, he realized that there were serious problems. Not having access to student performance data disaggregated by race and ethnicity is not unusual because disaggregation by race and ethnicity is not a standard operating procedure on most colleges campuses. Often colleges aggregate all students of Color into a single category such as “non-White,” which is just as problematic as not disaggregating because it hides interracial differences in outcomes. For example, if CCA had aggregated all students of Color into underrepresented minorities, they would have not realized that African-American students were experiencing the greatest inequities in basic indicators of academic progress.

Prior to the Equity Scorecard, the disaggregation of data had not been done routinely at CCA. Consequently, discussions about the “color” of student success were not common. Libby Klingsmith, coauthor and co-team leader, shares how the availability of disaggregated data encouraged new and necessary conversations based on evidence.

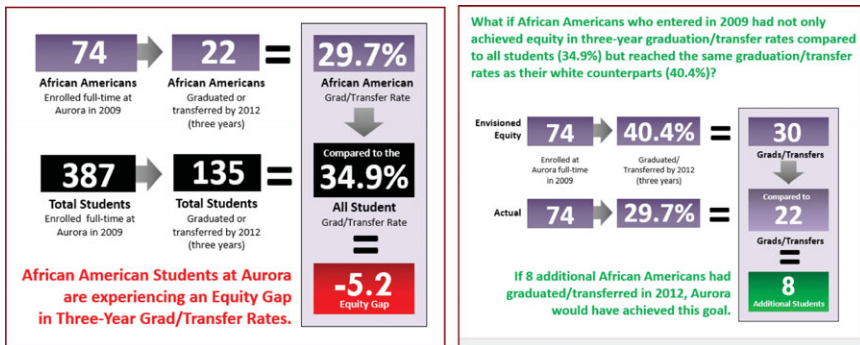
Libby: I came here 3 years ago; nothing like this had happened on campus. To be able to discuss student success in terms of race and ethnicity, moving from an emotionally charged conversation to a discussion based on disaggregated institutional data.

Another obstacle to meaningful use of data is the ways in which it is organized and communicated. Institutional research offices spend a great deal of time preparing compliance reports such as for the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), leaving them with little time to create reports that are user friendly and conducive to critical discussions. Another problem is the lack of time and assistance to make sense of data. For example, Libby observed: “We don’t often take the time to have very deep and meaningful conversations about data. When we do look at data, it tends to be very quick because we are trying to make decisions.”

Numeric data are used in the Equity Scorecard to uncover fine-grained racialized patterns of inequality that help participants make decisions on where to intervene strategically. However, on most college campuses we have found that participants, from presidents to counselors, tend to skip problem defining and jump directly into solutions. Again we turn to Libby,

Libby: There is a tendency for people to quickly go into solutions and not stay in the inquiry phase. As a team leader, keeping colleagues rooted in the data rather than jumping to a solution was a challenge.

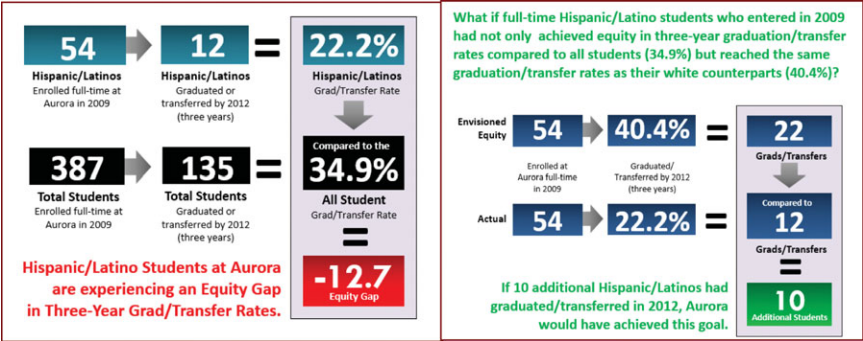
Figure 3.1. African-American Equity Gaps and Goals from CCA’s Equity Scorecard Report. The lefthand square shows the 3-year graduation/transfer rate for full-time African-American students who entered CCA in 2009. The righthand square shows how many additional African Americans would graduate/transfer if their success rate went up from 29.7% to 40.4%, which was the graduation/transfer rate for the highest performing group.



Source: “Community College of Aurora Equity Scorecard Report for Retention and Completion,” by the Community College of Aurora Equity Scorecard Evidence Team and Estela Bensimon, 2013. Used with permission of the authors.

The *Defining the Problem* phase culminates with the selection of a focal effort. In CUE’s language “focal effort” refers to identifying a specific student population, their equity gap, and the performance level they must reach to achieve equity. The specificity of the focal effort avoids the tendency toward abstract goal statements such as “improve the success of all underrepresented students” that are too often found in strategic plans. Selecting a focal effort requires that the evidence team name the additional number of students from their selected group that would need to succeed in order to achieve equity (as shown in Figures 3.1 and 3.2). The focal effort is written out in detail for two reasons: first, so that the team members are able to speak about it knowledgeably and second, so that anyone who reads the report is not left confused or guessing about the goals moving forward. Although the written version, provided in Table 3.1, may strike some as simplistic, we have learned that translating a data table to a written statement is often a challenge for participants who are not accustomed to articulating the story that is represented by numeric data. Furthermore, it is difficult to make the transition from seeing the data as numbers and figures on paper to understanding that they represent actual students that faculty and staff interact with daily. By naming the number of focal effort students needed to achieve equity, the team is creating a new “story” about the future they would like to construct. The two figures are excerpted from CCA’s Equity Scorecard report along with their written explanation.

Figure 3.2. Hispanic/Latino Equity Gaps and Goals from CCA’s Equity Scorecard Report. The lefthand square shows the 3-year graduation/transfer rate for full-time Hispanic/Latino students who entered CCA in 2009. The righthand square shows how many additional Hispanic/Latinos would graduate/transfer if their success rate went up from 22.2% to 40.4%, which was the graduation/transfer rate for the highest performing group.



Source: “Community College of Aurora Equity Scorecard Report for Retention and Completion,” by the Community College of Aurora Equity Scorecard Evidence Team and Estela Bensimon, 2013. Used with permission of the authors.

Table 3.1 Text Descriptions of African-American and Hispanic/Latino Equity Gaps and Goals from CCA’s Equity Scorecard Report.

Equity Gap: Of the 74 full-time African Americans who enrolled at Aurora in 2009, only 22, or 29.7%, earned a degree, certificate, or transferred by 2012. In comparison, the all student average graduation/transfer rate for the same cohort was 34.9%; and for Whites, the highest achieving group on this metric, it was 40.4%. The difference reveals a –5.2 and –10.7 percentage point gap respectively.

Equity Goal: By 2017, African Americans’ 3-year graduation rate will be 40.4%, which is equal to the graduation/transfer rate for Whites.

Equity Gap: Of the 54 full-time Hispanic/Latinos who enrolled at Aurora in 2009, 12, or 22.2%, earned a degree, certificate, or transferred by 2012. In comparison, the all student average graduation/transfer rate for the same cohort was 34.9%; and for Whites, the highest achieving group on this metric, it was 40.4%. The difference reveals a –12.7 and –18.2 percentage point gap respectively.

Equity Goal: By 2017, Hispanic/Latinos’ 3-year graduation rate will be 40.4%, which is equal to the graduation/transfer rate for Whites.

Source: “Community College of Aurora Equity Scorecard Report for Retention and Completion,” by the Community College of Aurora Equity Scorecard Evidence Team and Estela Bensimon, 2013. Used with permission of the authors.

CCA selected two focal efforts to improve 3-year graduation/transfer rates for African-American and Hispanic/Latino full-time students using 2009 as their baseline year. The focal efforts were selected through a collaborative decision-making process based on campus context at the time of the scorecard process, as well as considering the institution's strategic plan and state's completion initiative. In the figures, the left-hand squares show the 3-year graduation/transfer rate for full-time students who are African American (Figure 3.1) and Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3.2). The right-hand squares show how many more African Americans (Figure 3.1) and Hispanic/Latinos (Figure 3.2) would graduate/transfer if their success rate went up from 29.7% and 22.2% respectively to 40.4%, which was the graduation/transfer rate of the highest achieving group.

CCA's team decided to set the equity goal for African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos to 40.4%, the rate for Whites, rather than to 34.9%, the average rate for all students, because by setting a higher goal all students would benefit. Although the Equity Scorecard focuses on racial/ethnic equity, the goal-setting process as demonstrated for this metric benefits all students because it builds an expectation that all full-time students will achieve at least a 40.4% completion rate within 3 years. The team acknowledged that a 40.4% completion rate is still below optimal performance; however, in the pragmatic spirit of the Equity Scorecard it was important to set a goal that the team felt was attainable and more likely to motivate action than a goal that is perceived as wishful thinking.

When viewing gaps such as the ones depicted in the figures and table, it is a challenge to keep team members from getting into a "problem-solving" mode. Double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1996), one of the aims of the Equity Scorecard, requires that practitioners focus on understanding how practices that are taken for granted are often racialized in their impact. However, double-loop learning is difficult and requires tools and coaching. To facilitate double-loop learning evidence team members move into the third phase of the Equity Scorecard, labeled *Assessing Interventions* and learn, both for themselves and on behalf of their institutions, by becoming researchers of their own and the campus practices. The next section describes the implementation of this phase.

Assessing Interventions. The term "interventions" is used to refer to institutionalized structures, systems, practices, and policies such as tutoring centers, early alert systems, first-year experience, learning communities, and mandatory assessment in basic skills. Even though such structures are not typically viewed as "interventions," we label them so to underscore that their purpose is to mediate student success. The problem is that they do not always "intervene" in culturally responsive ways to support student success and, if left unexamined, often, even though without intention, reproduce inequality. Therefore it is important to ask: How does such and such program, office, or policy work? Who benefits? Who is disadvantaged?

Thus when assessing interventions the evidence team identifies institutional resources that exist on campus that have the potential of ameliorating the equity gaps represented in the focal effort(s) identified in the *Defining the Problem* phase, but rather than assuming these resources work equally well for all students the team members develop an inquiry plan to pull them apart and learn in what ways they work for African-American, Latino, or Hmong students, for example. The purpose of inquiry is for practitioners to “walk” through the structures, programs, and various offices and try to experience them from the standpoint of first-generation students from marginalized communities. The CCA team first had to consider what “interventions” might have the greatest impact on improving 3-year graduation outcomes for full-time African-Americans and Latino/a students.

Wanting to further unpack the inequities in mathematics found in the previous phase, the team was compelled to focus on Math-121-College Algebra. The course was known to be a barrier to transfer and graduation. The decision to focus intervention efforts in mathematics addressed both the disparities in educational outcomes locally while incorporating the state’s large goal of improved completion. The inquiry activities that were carried out to assess how “mathematics” at CCA works in general and how they might be experienced by African-American and Latino students more specifically are described next.

Developmental Math Courses. Using CUE’s Syllabus Review Protocol, the evidence team assessed course syllabi, asking: What do the documents intentionally or unintentionally communicate to students? What is the tone of the document? Is the information communicated clearly? Does it make assumptions about what students should know? The evidence team learned how a syllabus can affect, either positively or negatively, students’ beliefs about their capacity to succeed. Although all syllabi had positive aspects, each also had room for improvement. The team members noticed that syllabi tended to have hidden assumptions, unclear expectations, technical language, and a disengaged tone.

An example of a finding is the statement, “As a college student you need to accept the responsibility for your own learning.” Although this statement was written with the positive intention of motivating students to be proactive in their learning, it could be interpreted as though the instructor is not responsible for engaging or providing them with the tools to learn. The team member who reviewed this syllabus commented, “This statement made me feel like I did something wrong before the class starts.” Moreover, the wording of the statement makes the assumption that the student has an equivalent understanding of what it means to be a college student, which disproportionately affects first-generation students and hence students of Color. In addition to finding that the language in syllabi was often not student friendly, there was “little to no mention of diversity, inclusiveness, or empowerment” in the syllabi.

The inquiry activities brought into greater awareness ways in which the disciplinary culture of math might reinforce students' feelings of inadequacy as mathematicians. Admonishing students by telling them "you should know this" seemed a common practice. The language of syllabi at times felt as if the instructor was "screaming" at students even though that was not the instructor's intent. Being cognizant that the tone of the syllabus may be different from the tone in which a faculty member discusses it, the team followed up the syllabi review with observations of how math instructors talked about the syllabus during the first day of class.

Using CUE's Observation Protocol, members of the evidence team visited a few math classrooms on the first day of the semester to learn how faculty members communicated with students, how welcoming the classroom was to students, what was discussed on the first session, and how academic norms were established through the introduction of the syllabus. The team members saw how much impact the first day of class can have on students' beliefs that they are capable of being successful. The instructors whose syllabi were negatively reviewed tended to deliver information about the course in general terms or to gloss over information students would need to "accept responsibility for their own learning" as many instructors seemed to expect.

The observations produced an unexpected "aha" moment about the racial disadvantages imposed by the math instructional approach used by CCA instructors. CCA's math faculty members use a procedural teaching approach in developmental courses. It just so happens that the procedural approach is also used by the math instructors at CCA's predominantly White feeder high school; however, at the predominantly minority high school math teachers use the conceptual/discovery approach. This finding helped team members see how "race" is implicated in the curriculum and pedagogy and how it may be contributing to lower rates of success for African Americans and Latinos who are unfamiliar with the procedural approach.

The Value of Guided Inquiry

In reflecting about the use of formal protocols to examine practices, Libby said, "These protocols make things that you had never seen before so obvious. You find yourself looking around and asking, why was I unaware of this?" The inquiry activities enabled a new perspective on student success. As James shared, "[Inquiry] gets you to come from a completely different point of view, and it gets you thinking about your students in a complete different way. Protocols for observing, studying the syllabus, analyzing the website help participants see in very concrete ways the changes that are within their power to make."

At its most successful, guided inquiry helps practitioners change themselves. Inquiry enables practitioners to see, for example, their syllabus from the perspective of a student and when they realize that the syllabus

communicates more effectively all the ways in which the student can fail rather than succeed, it is far more likely that the practitioner will change it than if they went to a workshop where they heard someone lecture about the elements of a good syllabus.

In the case of James the inquiry process made him realize how implicit bias shaped his hiring practices.

James: The process led me to face the fact that over a 10-year period I had never hired an African-American adjunct to teach College Algebra, something I found very difficult to be confronted with. It became clear during a review of the hiring practices of full-time and part-time faculty that the strategies used to recruit faculty disadvantaged candidates of Color. As an example, a recruiting strategy for both full-time and part-time faculty has been to contact department chairs from CCA's sister community colleges for referrals. Although this strategy met the needs of finding faculty to fill positions, the strategy all but ensured the pool would not be diverse.

James's realization led to concrete changes in recruitment as well as in the interview process. For example, he conducted many more screening interviews. Candidates who were invited to campus had to demonstrate how they would explain the syllabus on the first day of class. The syllabus inquiry activity had helped him and his colleagues see the importance of the syllabus as a cultural practice that influences how students feel about the class, the faculty member, and their likelihood of success. These changes helped them identify candidates who were able to show they cared for students and took their success as a personal responsibility. African-American and Latino faculty have been added to the math department since the implementation of the scorecard.

Becoming Equity Minded

Developing the schema of equity-mindedness is the ultimate objective of the Equity Scorecard; however, this is one of the most challenging aspects of CUE's work because it requires that practitioners, the majority of whom are White, engage the "race question" and the privileges and power derived from their own racial identity (Dowd & Bensimon, 2014). On most campuses "color blindness" is the status quo and most find it more comfortable to talk about diversity as an institutional asset or to focus on low income, rather than race, as a source of inequity. Equity-mindedness requires that practitioners accept that higher education as an institution is racialized and that structural racism is produced by everyday practices that are grounded, as James indicates, on norms and rules that privilege Whites.

In the excerpts that follow James and Libby discuss their own evolving equity-mindedness. In the first excerpt James relates what he learned by

observing a class taught by an African-American faculty member who was also in the Equity Scorecard evidence team.

James: In doing the Equity Scorecard I realized that there is an expectation that everyone function according to the norms and rules of White dominant culture. In my view, this manifests itself most strongly in communication style. The dominant culture highly values the individual, and as such avoids directives that may appear to take away individual liberty. For example, I now see that it is common for a White teacher to talk about homework using language such as, “if you want to do well in the course, you must do your homework.” In other words, homework is a choice with consequences. An instructor of Color is much more likely to use language such as, “I expect you to do your homework,” and to follow up with the student who does not complete it. Therefore, when I work with faculty now, we talk about strategies specific to race and ethnicity. It is important for faculty to get out of their comfort zone and set a direct expectation, and then to follow that up with appropriate support.

At first glance, James’s realization of differences in communication styles and his conclusion that faculty of Color are more direct about their expectations than Whites may sound essentialist. Needless to say, directive language is not a natural attribute of people of Color. However, faculty of Color may have greater awareness that caring is communicated by creating a structure that communicates clear expectations and substantive support. James’s noticing of directive vs. nondirective language calls attention to the importance of awareness of meaning in what faculty say and how they say it. Context and identity are also important elements of meaning making. The directive language noticed by James is mediated by the racial identity of the instructor and the cultural practices of that particular classroom. James’s new awareness of the silent expectation that everyone function according to the “norms and rules of White dominant culture” signifies the development of equity-mindedness and his evolving identity as he likes to put it, “a first-generation equity worker.”

Another aspect of demonstrating equity-mindedness is by considering how one’s position and power can be used intentionally “to ingrain more institutional members with a sense of *agency* for equity” (Bishop, 2014, p. 208). A semester into the process, Libby and James decided to hold an All College Forum with over 80 campus members. During the event they presented on conceptual aspects of the scorecard process, specifically discussing equity-mindedness. As facilitators, they were intentional in designing an event to be dialogue based. Not everyone was comfortable at the start of the event. For example, rather than talking about racial inequities, someone wanted to spend time talking about reverse racism. A few people brought up color blindness as a better way to work with students.

James: Looking back on our meetings, I'm really proud of what our college was able to accomplish and my own professional growth. Knowing that you must be a leader on a highly charged discussion of racial bias creates a lot of anxiety, but I've learned that doing it well is just like anything else; it takes practice. To get that practice meant the leadership of our college allowing us to be put in challenging circumstances where we were likely to offend people. My wish for others in this process is that they may experience the same expectation being such a leader.

Earlier we mentioned that a challenge to equity-mindedness is the lack of structures and competency to engage in “race talk.” James’s observation that “it takes practice” to be equity minded makes sense and the Equity Scorecard is an effort to create a process that routinizes race talk through the engagement of practitioners in the study of how they and their institutions go about the everyday performance of higher education.

So What? Does the Equity Scorecard Make a Difference?

Although the Equity Scorecard has been very successful at CCA, there have been instances of pushback from faculty and others who question the focus on racial equity. Precisely because “race talk” was rare at CCA, early in the scorecard process Libby and James noticed a hesitancy—sometimes outright resistance—to treat race as a central issue of teaching and learning. There was also a resistance from campus practitioners to disaggregate data based on race and ethnicity when examining student success metrics. Although the ambivalence about race talk has not been fully resolved, there are signs of important changes, including: all data are now routinely disaggregated, equity goals by race and ethnicity are transparent, diversity in hiring is a stated priority, and three of the five new math faculty hired are people of Color.

We are often asked, what evidence do you have that changes such as those made by CCA will close the equity gaps experienced by Latinos, Blacks, American Indians, and Asian Pacific Islanders? And of course we are not able to claim having “moved the needle” in small or big ways. However, we can point out that Equity Scorecard campuses like CCA are engaging in two essential equity practices that are not common on most campuses: they set clear and measurable goals by race and ethnicity and they disaggregate their data routinely (Witham, Malcom-Piqueux, Dowd, & Bensimon, 2015). Institutional actors pay attention to what is measured and reported publicly; thus, at a minimum these two measures create the conditions for equity as an indicator of accountability and overall institutional performance.

Finally, the CCA engagement with the Equity Scorecard demonstrates that when practitioners are empowered with language to talk critically about race and given the tools to shift to equity-minded action, they can

bring about the kinds of changes that cumulatively transform the teaching and learning environment in ways that are more responsive to the success of historically marginalized students.

Notes

1. For additional information on our research and publications, see <http://cue.usc.edu>.
2. The Equity Scorecard has been implemented in the University of Wisconsin System, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, and individual campuses in California, Colorado, Nevada, Indiana, and New York.
3. Equity in Excellence was made possible by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
4. For more information on the project, visit <https://www.nccbp.org/>.

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ERIC R. FELIX is a doctoral student in the Urban Education Policy program at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education

ESTELA MARA BENSIMON is a professor of higher education and codirector of the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the USC Rossier School of Education.

DEBBIE HANSON is a project administrator in the Center for Urban Education at the USC Rossier School of Education.

JAMES GRAY is the chair of the Mathematics Department at the Community College of Aurora.

LIBBY KLINGSMITH is the associate dean of Early College High Schools at Aims Community College.