**Summary of Findings**
**Partnership with CCEAL**
**January 29, 2018**

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning, in collaboration with the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) at SDSU, conducted a study to assess institutional efforts relevant to underserved students of color. Supported by the College's Student Equity Council (SEC), this three part assessment included student surveys (completed Fall 2016), student focus groups (completed March 2017), and faculty interviews (completed May 2017).

The following report provides a brief summary of methodology, notable findings, and recommendations from the three reports provided by CCEAL.

## Community College Survey Measure Results

In Fall 2016, the Community College Survey Measure (CCSM) was administered to 89 classes selected through stratified random sampling. The survey is designed to evaluate student success by looking at students' academic participation, campus involvement, and use of campus support services, especially for historically underserved students (e.g., male students of color). The purpose of the survey was to measure experiences and factors that influence student learning, success, retention, and completion to help improve student success and outcomes for disproportionately impacted students. These factors included: background factors, campus ethos, non-cognitive outcomes, student outcomes, and environmental factors. The survey was comprised of 130 close-ended questions covering demographics, student perceptions, and frequency of use of campus services. A total of 1,159 completed surveys were included in CCEAL's survey report[1].

| Gender | Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | African American | | Asian | | Latino | | White | | Multi-ethnic | | Other | | Total | |
| Men | 41 | 3.5% | 58 | 5.0% | 290 | 25.0% | 127 | 11.0% | 35 | 3.0% | 23 | 2.0% | 574 | 49.5% |
| Women | 29 | 2.5% | 81 | 7.0% | 278 | 24.0% | 127 | 11.0% | 35 | 3.0% | 35 | 3.0% | 585 | 50.5% |
| Total | 70 | 6.0% | 139 | 12.0% | 568 | 49.0% | 254 | 21.9% | 70 | 6.0% | 58 | 5.0% | 1159 | 100.0% |

** African American Women, Multiethnic, and Other respondents were excluded from further analysis due to low response rates.

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[1] White students with incomes higher than $20,000 per year were excluded from the final report.

- Background Factors (i.e., pre-college academic performance and demographic characteristics):

    o More than 70% of respondents were between the ages of 18 to 24.

    o African-American men were more likely to have served in the military than their peers from other racial/ethnic groups.

    o More than 70% of men and women from all racial/ethnic groups indicated that receiving a Bachelor's degree or higher was their primary degree goal.

    o Across all racial/ethnic groups, woman were more likely to have a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher, while Latinas were less likely than men and women from other racial/ethnic groups to have a college GPA of 3.0 or higher.

- Campus Ethos (i.e., students' perceptions of the campus climate and culture of the institution):

    o In general, respondents had high perceptions of belonging with faculty, felt welcome to engage in class, thought that advising and tutoring staff cared about them, and believed that campus services were easy to access.

    o However, respondents had low perceptions of having a personal relationship with faculty and staff validation.

    o African American men had low perceptions of faculty knowing their name (personal relationships with faculty) and that career counseling and transfer staff cared about them (staff validation) compared to other racial/ethnic groups.

    o Compared to other participants, a higher percentage of Asian men (24.2%) disagreed with the statement that faculty were genuinely interested in them, suggesting that a lower percentage of Asian men perceived that faculty were interested in them.

- Non-Cognitive Outcomes (i.e., students' affective perception and responses to their educational experiences):

    o Men across all racial/ethnic groups view school as a gender neutral domain, suggesting that the idea of attending school is not best suited toward one gender or another.

    o However, men across all racial/ethnic groups demonstrate low levels of comfort asking for, accepting, and following through on help, as well as low levels of perception that studying, being on campus, and being a college student are compatible with their role as a provider.

- o African American men, as well as Latino men and women, demonstrated higher perceptions of racial affinity compared to students from other racial/ethnic groups.

- o Across all racial/ethnic groups, women demonstrated higher action control (i.e., the energy and focus invested toward their academic endeavors), especially in regards to "putting forth best effort" and "drive to be successful".

- o Asian men demonstrated lower perceptions of intrinsic interest (i.e., interest as an internal drive) compared to men and women from other racial/ethnic groups.

- Student Outcomes (i.e., demonstrates students' levels of academic integration and engagement):

  - o Respondents reported low usage of campus services and low levels of engagement with faculty, and a low percentage of respondents reported that they are absolutely returning to campus next semester.

  - o Higher percentages of African-American men (91.3%) and White men (80.2%) and women (79.1%) indicated that they are on track to transfer to a four-year institution compared to Asian men (63.6%) and women (71.2%) and Latino men (74.7%) and women (72.3%).

- Environmental Factors (i.e., factors external to the institution that have an impact on student success in college):

  - o Asian men (50.0%) and women (55.4%) were less likely to work off campus (i.e., worked zero hours per week) compared to men (71.4%) and women (74.3%) from other racial/ethnic groups.

  - o A higher percentage of African-American men (82.8%) identified as varsity athletes compared to men and women from other racial/ethnic groups.

  - o More than 25% of respondents reported struggling with a place to live, with the highest percentages including Asian women (45.8%), White women (43.3%), and African-American men (41.2%).

  - o White men (19.0%), Asian men (14.5%), and Asian women (12.0%) reported struggling with hunger in the past two years.

  - o Between 24% - 34% of respondents reported struggling with stable employment.

## Student Focus Groups Findings

Student focus groups were conducted in March 2017. A total of 59 students (30 men, 29 women) who identified as "students of color" participated in one of eight focus groups (5 male, 3 female).

The students' conversations were audio recorded and transcribed for further qualitative data analysis. Three overarching questions guided these conversations:

1. What are the salient challenges that students of color experience at Palomar College?

2. What factors situated within the campus context enable students of color to persist at Palomar College despite the challenges they face?

3. What factors external to the campus context enable students of color to persist at Palomar College despite the challenges they face?

From the qualitative data analysis, six overarching thematic categories were salient across the student focus groups:

- Student motivation and resilience – "Just stay positive and keep going"

  o Many factors motivate students to pursue postsecondary education and persist in that education, including: aspirations to create a college-going legacy in their families, social and job mobility, and escaping poverty and violence by building credibility.

  o However, these students also face challenges that make it necessary to have resilience and grit, which was especially notable among women of color. These women discussed "staying positive" and "not giving up", as well as a sense of responsibility to persist and be successful to avoid disrespecting the women of color who paved the way for their education.

- Lacking a sense of belonging – "I don't feel like I belong here"

  o For students of color establishing a sense of belonging was a prominent challenge, influenced by perceptions that peers held negative stereotypes about them and negative interactions with faculty and staff at the campus.

  o Men of color also reported a heightened awareness that the student body lacked same racial representation, making them less likely to stay on campus after their class had concluded.

- Navigating challenges with finances and financial aid – "No money, more problems"

- o Students reported finances and balancing work with school commitments were often overwhelming challenges. In some cases, students were unable to purchase the textbooks and materials necessary for class or pay bills.

- o The students, who were mostly working full-time, had competing priorities with work, studying, and attending classes.

- o Many students had difficulties with getting financial needs met and navigating the process of applying for financial aid. There was dissatisfaction with the support and remediation offered by the Office of Financial Aid, where the process was considered confusing and sometimes overwhelming.

- Experiences with racial and gender 'battle fatigue' – "You did better than I thought you would"

  - o Students participating in the focus groups, regardless of gender or racial/ethnic group, shared their experiences with racial and gendered microaggressions from their peers and agents of the institution.

  - o Male students of color were faced with microaggressions involving ascription of intelligence (i.e., perceiving and assigning the intelligence of a person of color based on their race) and assumption of criminality (i.e., presumptions that a person is a criminal or dangerous based on their race).

  - o Women of color had to negotiate the added physiological and psychological strain associated with their identities as women of color, adding additional stress and anxiety to the pursuit of their academic goals.

- The role of faculty validation and support – "You're meant to be here"

  - o Students in the focus groups shared how faculty validation and support influenced their experiences at Palomar. This included instances where participants felt connected with faculty, received affirming messages, or felt as if the faculty cared about them.

  - o Students who had validating relationships with faculty tended to seek help and engage one-on-one both inside and outside the classroom. Spontaneous interactions outside the classroom left a positive impression on students, making them feel acknowledged, welcomed, validated, cared for, and seen.

- Campus safety concerns among women of color – "I don't feel safe here at night"

  - For women of color, in particular, on-campus safety, especially at night, was a very salient concern. There were indications that campus safety officers were not readily visible at night and that these students felt threatened and unsafe walking between their classrooms and the parking lots or Sprinter station.

**Faculty Interview Findings**

Faculty interviews took place in May 2017 in order to address faculty members' experiences teaching students of color and with the use of equity-oriented practices and policies in their classrooms that support disadvantaged students. A total of 11 faculty members (9 men) participated in the interviews. The majority of these faculty members were full-time, and they represented a wide range of disciplines (e.g., math, ESL). Conversations were audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Inquiry was guided by a primary question and a series of secondary questions:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of educators who teach and serve students of color at Palomar College?

2. What patterns of engagement have educators observed among students of color in their classes and departments?

3. What strategies have educators found helpful in facilitating student success among students of color?

4. What challenges do educators experience in facilitating student success for students of color?

From the qualitative data analysis, five overarching themes emerged:

- Conceptualizing [In]Equity

  - Many of these participants have lived experiences that helped them develop equity-minded teaching and learning practices. These included personal connections to diverse backgrounds and identities (e.g., immigration status, interracial marriage, activist work) that engendered a sense of empathy and compassion regarding the barriers that threaten success for underserved students.

  - Faculty participants recognized both institutional barriers and systemic factors (e.g., poverty, implicit bias) that can hinder students' success. They employed

various methods (e.g., affirming students, sharing resources, flexibility) to help support these students, while resisting deficit perspectives.

- o Participants who embraced equity-mindedness believed that reducing inequities helps, not only the impacted students, but society in general.

- Faculty perspectives on barriers to student success

  - o Faculty identified different factors that negatively influence students' academic success, including poverty and financial pressures and help-seeking challenges.

  - o For students of color, poverty and financial pressures (e.g., purchasing textbooks, paying rent) directly impact the academic engagement and success of students of color. These difficulties present as food and hunger insecurities, education vs. survival, and housing insecurity.

  - o Men of color, especially, have challenges in regards to help-seeking. In other words, men of color are less willing and less likely to seek support compared to other students. Faculty participants suggested that the best way to alleviate this issue is to offer help before it is needed, but caution that it is hard to find a balance between being supportive and intrusive.

- Examining faculty's teaching philosophies

  - o Faculty members shared their teaching philosophies in regards to working with students of color. Two ideas emerged that guided their principles and beliefs: "firm, but fair" and "prepare students for real life."

  - o Faculty suggested that it was important to strike a balance between assignment guidelines and extenuating circumstances that can interfere with academic success. This perspective of being firm in deadlines, but fair when things came up, was considered a way of preparing students for life. Faculty also believed that their teaching practices needed to extend beyond the classroom.

  - o Faculty participants shared that their engagement with students is not just about teaching them course content, but preparing them for life. This latter responsibility includes providing students with life skills (e.g., help seeking, responsibility).

- Building relationships to facilitate success

- In order to facilitate the success of students of color, faculty participants indicated that building relationships were essential. The methods to intentionally build these relationships included:

    - Establishing trust and rapport by learning students' names and taking a personal interest in their culture and community.

    - Validating students' experiences by encouraging them to believe in themselves and their ability to succeed and letting them know their value in the classroom, campus, and community.

    - Engendering a sense of belonging in the classroom, allowing students to be comfortable, authentic, willing to take risks, and to have confidence during challenging learning experiences.

- Employing culturally engaging teaching and learning strategies

    - Faculty participants discussed the culturally engaging teaching practices that they employed in their classrooms, including:

        - Connecting course content to students' lived experience by making the content "culturally relevant" and providing positive images of themselves in the curriculum.

        - Using inclusive learning assessment strategies that allow students to contextualize learning by connecting content to lived experiences (i.e., personal narratives instead of multiple-choice exams).

        - Inviting students to take ownership of the course by inviting feedback and perspective on what is taught and how it is taught allows students of color to see themselves as leaders who are responsible for shared learning.

**Recommendations from CCEAL**
- Offer comprehensive professional development to all faculty (including part time and adjunct faculty) to address validation, sense of belonging, culturally relevant teaching, micoraggressions, and intrusive practices.

- Use the Community College Instructional Development Inventory (CC-IDI) and the Community College Staff Development Inventory (CC-SDI) to engage in a deeper assessment of faculty and staff professional development needs.

- Develop a comprehensive plan to address acute food, housing, and transportation amongst students.

- Consult with the Office of Financial Aid to address the concerns students raised about the timeliness of their disbursements and to devise strategies to meet students' acute financial needs.

- Implement a book rental or loan system to make course materials temporarily available to students during the early weeks of the semester.

- Dialogue with campus police to address the campus safety concerns raised by the women of color about being more visible on campus during the evening hours, and men of color about assumptions of criminality.

- Initiate a support group for women of color to address concerns related to stress and anxiety.

- Employ counseling-based interventions to address hegemonic masculinity, notably "breadwinner" orientation and lack of help-seeking behavior.

- Faculty should try to proactively engage students outside of the classroom, especially on "non-academic" matters.

- Faculty should employ intentional practices to build students' confidence in their abilities to succeed (self-efficacy) and to increase intrinsic interest.