

# UC Davis

## UC Davis Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

The Experiences and Perspectives of Latinx California Community College Presidents in Implementing Equity in Hiring at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0rs2c2tt>

### Author

PATTON, ABIGAIL G

### Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

The Experiences and Perspectives of Latinx California Community College Presidents in  
Implementing Equity in Hiring at Hispanic Serving Institutions

By

ABIGAIL GARCIA PATTON  
DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Educational Leadership

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

Approved:

---

Marcela Cuellar, Chair

---

Cassie Hart

---

Patricia D. Quijada

Committee in Charge

2024

Copyright @ 2024  
Abigail Garcia Patton  
All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

Of

### THE EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF LATINX CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS IN IMPLEMENTING EQUITY IN HIRING AT HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

BY

Abigail Garcia Patton

Latinx students constitute the fastest and largest growing segment of the population in California community colleges (CCCs), with roughly 45% of students identified as Latinx. Yet Latinx representation among faculty and administrators lags behind, with very modest gains in representation in the faculty and academic administrator ranks (Bates et al., 2018; Contreras, 2017). Utilizing qualitative methods, through elite interviews, this study delves into the perspectives and experiences of Latinx presidents in enhancing diversity in hiring practices at HSCCs.

Findings revealed the unique challenges Latinx presidents encounter in advancing equity in hiring initiatives and highlights opportunities for transformative change. By amplifying the voices of Latinx presidents, this research addresses a critical gap in the existing literature, moving beyond mere strategies to operationalizing experiences in navigating institutional politics to promote equity in hiring. The study underscores the importance of Latinx presidents in shaping and implementing diversity initiatives, offering valuable insights into their racialized experiences as candidates and as leaders.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the representation of Latinx faculty and administrators in CCCs. By centering the perspective of

Latinx presidents, this study offers actionable strategies for fostering greater inclusivity and representation within community college settings.

*Keywords:* equity in hiring, Latinx presidents, community college diversity, diversity in hiring, Hispanic-serving institutions

## DEDICATION

Primero Dios! Segundo, Papí y Mami, espero que los haya hecho orgullosos de mi.. Papí, me acuerdo cuando recibí mi maestría, que el orgullo se le saltaba de la camisa. Fue una de las primeras veces que lo vi llorar. Aunque no esté usted físicamente aquí, usted fue mi primer maestro y cargó sus enseñanzas siempre cerca del corazón. Mami, su vida no ha sido fácil pero su ternura y amor que nos brindaba a todos ha sido lo que me ha abierto puertas. De usted he emulado en todos mis espacios de liderazgo ser buena persona, compasiva...y un poquito cabrona.

To my siblings Mike, Joe, Jr., Elva, and Janet, I love you all with all my heart and you each have all served and fueled my fire in different ways, that I've used as inspiration in my life. Janet, you are the real MVP in my book...always. Thank you, sis, for holding it down and for putting everyone else before you. I hope to repay you someday for all the burdens you've carried to let me get to where I am today. My nieces and nephew, Tabitha, Samantha, Jayda, and Delko, I can only hope I can serve as an inspiration to you to dream big. You are all gifted in so many different ways, and I will always be your number one cheerleader.

Finally, to the loves of my life ... Quame and Rozcoh, thank you for letting me miss movie nights and family days to pursue this dream. Quame, I could not have done this without you. It all started as an idea on the balcony, and you have supported me through and to. You have my heart, and I am so thankful every day that you've made it your priority to take care of Rozcoh and me. Rozcoh, everything I do is for you. You are my greatest gift, and I am so eternally blessed to be your mommy. You two are my greatest teachers' day in and day out.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a dream to be part of the best CANDEL Cohort, Cohort 17! The collegiality, wisdom, and support of our cohort members have pushed me through the finish line. To all the CANDEL faculty, thank you for sharing so much of yourself and your life's work.

A special shout out to my sorority sisters, who have served as role models and teachers in life since 2001 and have cheered me on every step of the way. Para las chicas del coro, mis primas y amiguchas del alma ... thank you for believing in me.

My Chabot colleagues and friends, I am incredibly grateful for the supportive environment that allowed me to do this work. Thank you to all for your encouragement and patience, especially when my study was all I could talk about. The community college students, my K–12 students, first-generation students and Latinx professionals have inspired this study. You all have left an indelible impression on me.

Thank you to the COLEGAS leadership for guiding me through this process and for providing the access, knowledge, and exemplary leadership needed to complete this study. I am blessed to serve on this board with truly transformational leaders and am indebted to the incredible leaders who graciously agreed to participate in my study.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my dissertation committee—Dr. Hart, Dr. D. Quijada, and Dr. Cuellar—for your unwavering support and guidance throughout this journey.

A heartfelt thank you to Dr. Cuellar, whose dedication to my work, words of encouragement, and invaluable guidance, have been instrumental. From the moment I attended my first class with you, I've felt a profound connection to your educational journey. Throughout this process, you've exemplified what it means to be a femtor and someone I admire as a strong and empowered Chingona.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
List of Tables .....	x
List of Figures.....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Purpose.....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
Co-ethnic Racial Representation of Latinx Faculty and Senior Leaders .....	7
Trends of Latinx Students, Faculty and Administrators Demographics.....	7
Impact on Student Success.....	11
Attitudes and Experiences of Faculty and Administrators in Higher Education .....	13
Faculty Attitudes and Teaching Approaches at HSIs .....	13
Latinx Faculty and Senior-Level Administrator Efforts to Increase Retention.....	16
Experiences of Latinx Faculty and Senior Leaders in Hiring.....	18
Existing and Promising Equity in Hiring Efforts in Higher Education .....	24
Shifts in Policies and Programs That Promote Equity in Hiring .....	25
Theoretical Framework.....	29
Conceptual Framework.....	34
Chapter 3: Methods.....	36
Setting.....	38
Research Design.....	39
Participants.....	43
Data Collection .....	44



Data Analysis .....	46
Trustworthiness .....	47
Positionality .....	48
Limitations .....	50
Chapter 4: Findings.....	52
Empowerment Through Identity.....	52
Personal Connection to the Work .....	53
Representation Mattered .....	58
Setting the Conditions for Equity in Hiring.....	60
Strong Heart and Thick Skin.....	61
Equity in Ethos of the College .....	63
Cultivating Culture Shifts .....	73
Strategies for Diversifying the Workforce.....	86
Failed Searches as a Tool for Advancing Equity in Hiring .....	86
Embracing an HSI Identity to Increase Diverse Pools.....	90
Acculturation of New Hires to Campus Culture.....	96
Summary.....	99
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	100
How Do the Educational and Professional Experiences of Latinx Presidents Shape Their Commitment to Equity and Equity in Hiring?.....	101
How Do Latinx Presidents at HSCCs Experience and Understand Their Role in Driving Efforts to Enhance Equity in Hiring?.....	102
What Actions and Strategies Do Latinx Presidents Perceive As Vital to Create Institutional Change That Support Equity in Hiring? .....	105
Implications.....	108
Implications for Institutional, State, and Federal Policy.....	109

Implications for Practice .....	110
Implications for Research .....	112
Conclusion .....	114
References.....	115
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	124
Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire.....	125
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	126

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Qualitative Data Overview .....	38
Table 2: HSCCs' Decrease in Latinx Faculty Representation.....	41
Table 3: Participant Attributes .....	43

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Qualitative Study Analyzing the Experiences and Perspectives of Latinx Presidents in Implementing Equity in Hiring of Faculty and Senior Leaders at HSCCs.....	35
---	----

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Community colleges are the largest open-access postsecondary system in the country, serving predominantly students of color. California community colleges (CCCs) enroll 60% of the state's college students and serve the most diverse student population, with over two-thirds of enrollees identifying as Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, and/or Indigenous (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Reddy & Ryan, 2021). Between 1999 and 2009, Black and Latinx students accounted for 92% of nationwide enrollment growth at open-access institutions (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). This growth supports research that asserts that racially minoritized students are systemically funneled into 2-year institutions that hold the largest equity gaps in degree attainment compared to the most selective institutions (Cross & Carman, 2022). Trends across the nation point to a higher education system that enforces systemic barriers, limiting “college and career opportunities for many African Americans and Hispanics who are well prepared for higher education but tracked into crowded and underfunded colleges where they are less likely to develop fully or to graduate” (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013, p. 7). Indeed, CCCs have made gains in providing access to racially minoritized students as envisioned in the California Master Plan of Education; however, many of these campuses struggle to support students' persistence, completion, and transfer to 4-year colleges.

The low success rates highlight the need for transformational change at CCCs. Only 2.5% of students who enroll at these institutions complete a degree/certificate or transfer in 2 years, and only 28% of students who started at these campuses intending to transfer did so within 6 years (Reddy & Ryan, 2021). Furthermore, transfer rates are lower for Black and Latinx students. In 2016, these students were less likely to be supported to transfer within 4 years than their White and Asian peers (Reddy & Ryan, 2021). At CCCs, Latinx students trail behind their

White and Asian peers in all success metrics, including course success rates, persistence, transfer-level English and math completion, and degree/transfer attainment (California Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2020a). Eliminating these gaps in success rates is a racial equity imperative, particularly given the Latinx student population's projected growth.

As of 2021–2022, 107 of the 116 CCCs are also Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), defined as campuses where Latinx students make up at least 25% of total undergraduate full-time equivalent enrollment (Excelencia in Education, 2023). These schools also enroll more Indigenous and Black students than non-HSIs (Garcia, 2019) and are eligible to compete for federal grants, such as Title III STEM, Title V Developing HSI, and other federal sources. By all accounts, these grants and resources are racialized projects on which institutions consciously embark when applying for and receiving federal HSI grants (Aguilar-Smith, 2021). While some research suggests that HSIs make efforts to support Latinx students (Garcia, 2019; Núñez, 2015), Aguilar-Smith (2021) found that racially targeted funding did not always lead to intentionally supporting Latinx students and, therefore, failed to address the racial inequalities HSIs intended to address.

Vargas et al. (2020) affirmed that federally funded HSIs generally allocate resources to support services for all students and do not focus specifically on Latinx students. Moreover, many institutions use HSI federal grant funding for professional development to enhance the skills of their predominantly White faculty. While this practice may support activities that lead to better outcomes for Latinx students, the lack of intentional support for advancing Latinx faculty represents a missed opportunity to fully disrupt historical and structural challenges (Vargas et al., 2020). As HSIs are central to Latinx students' success, they must intentionally

allocate targeted funding to support them, including by increasing Latinx faculty and staff representation and professional advancement.

In this context, a key aspect of servingness structure is the proportional representation of Latinx faculty. Notably, minoritized students benefit from having access to instructors who share similar backgrounds, a more diverse faculty essential to the concept of servingness (Garcia et al., 2019). As the research suggests affirms, racially minoritized students benefit from access to racially minoritized instructors (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Cross & Carman, 2022; Fairlie et al., 2014). Yet, CCC students' diversity outpaces that of faculty and staff (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Contreras, 2017; Vargas et al., 2020). Between the 2006–2007 and 2016–2017 academic terms, the percentage of students of color increased from 38% to 51%, while that of faculty of color increased only from 19% to 21% (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). In the 2016–2017 school year, 44% of CCC students identified as Latinx, while only 15% of tenured faculty and 17% of senior leaders did so (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). As these institutions are responsible for educating California's diverse student population, faculty diversity is a key component of academic excellence for students of color (Contreras, 2017).

However, CCCs are underprepared to serve the increasingly diverse student body, and equity gaps will persist without intentional and transformative measures to increase the representation of Latinx faculty and staff (Contreras, 2017). Higher education, in general, faces the significant challenge of educating a diverse workforce that reflects the state's population while building the capacity and cultural competence of staff and faculty who are not representative of the students they serve (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). For racially minoritized students especially, faculty and leaders who reflect their culture provide a sense of belonging and signal whether the institution values inclusion (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Milem et al., 2005).

In response to equity gaps, the CCC board of governors adopted the *Vision for Success* in 2017 to ensure students from all backgrounds reach their goals and improve their families and communities, finally eliminating achievement gaps (CCCCO, 2021). Leaning on The Campaign for College Opportunity's (2018) research, among the goals and commitments of the Vision for Success, the chancellor's office acknowledged that reducing equity gaps requires institutions to increase faculty and staff diversity (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). Title V of California's higher education regulations already required CCCs to submit an equal employment opportunity plan every 3 years to review institutional practices to support a diverse workforce and eliminate the underrepresentation of protected groups, including race/ethnicity and gender, among other statuses (Konrad & Linehan, 1995). Title V also required progress reports on multiple methods measures of the equal employment opportunity (EEO) plan annually. The multiple methods for allocating the EEO fund consisted of nine areas compartmentalized into three sections: pre-hiring, hiring, and post-hiring. Aside from training and webinar support for colleges, the chancellor's office also focused on collecting longitudinal hiring data through a guide. Instead of receiving funds for EEO implementation based on full-time equivalent students, starting in Fiscal Year 2016–2017, institutions would only receive funding if they had created an equal employment opportunity advisory council (EEOAC), submitted an EEO plan, and met five of the remaining eight areas of the multiple methods.

The CCCCCO's initiatives indicate the urgency to diversify faculty and staff, including providing various funding sources to continue EEO efforts, professional growth for faculty tied to faculty evaluations, and professional development to increase cultural competence among faculty and staff. In 2019, 3 years after the initial adoption of multiple methods funding for colleges, after recognizing that more support was needed to complement the EEO plan to



improve the diversity of staff and faculty, the chancellor's office convened a diversity, equity, and inclusion (and later, access) taskforce. The report the taskforce produced in 2020 posed two critical questions to guide the report's outcomes:

- If faculty and staff are a main lever in student achievement, how then is achievement impacted when faculty and staff are unlike the students they serve?
- What does it take to create an inclusive environment where all students are equitably served?

The taskforce report highlighted a shared understanding of the problem of a lack of faculty and staff diversity and strategies to improve diversity in hiring. The taskforce shared four key findings: diversity increases student achievement, diversity impacts student and employee retention, faculty and staff diversity reduces the likelihood of implicit bias, and faculty and staff diversity increases the ability to integrate multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy into teaching practices (CCCCO, 2020a). Despite the availability of these reports and guidelines, there is a limited understanding of how CCC leaders address the underrepresentation of Latinx faculty and staff and the strategies they employ to navigate challenges stemming from competing interests and systemic barriers.

### **Purpose**

Efforts to diversify the composition of faculty and staff in CCCs require an institutional commitment from senior-level administrators and faculty leadership, recognizing that there is a need for systemic changes that require political will and drive (CCCCO, 2020a). The leadership ultimately sets the tone for implementing initiatives that require organizational change, like increasing staff and faculty diversity (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). As the make-up of the community college student population shifted between 2010 and 2020, the demographics of

CCC faculty and staff remained primarily White (Contreras, 2017). As such, this qualitative study involved analyzing the representation of Latinx faculty and senior leaders at CCCs designated as HSIs. Additionally, it included interviewing Latinx presidents to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experiences that have shaped their commitment to equity in hiring, their understanding of their roles and their experiences in implementing strategies to diversify hiring at their institutions. Three research questions guided this dissertation study:

1. How do the educational and professional experiences of Latinx presidents shape their commitment to equity and equity in hiring?
2. How do Latinx presidents at HSCCs experience and understand their role in driving efforts to enhance equity in hiring?
3. What actions and strategies do Latinx presidents perceive as vital to creating institutional change that supports equity in hiring?

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To set a framework for this study, this thematic literature review draws upon prior research on equity in hiring efforts to increase the representation of racially minoritized faculty and staff at community colleges.

### **Co-ethnic Racial Representation of Latinx Faculty and Senior Leaders**

Ensuring proportional co-ethnoracial representation of Latinx faculty and senior leaders is essential in establishing an educational environment that is inclusive and dynamic for the diverse community college student population. Although CCCs are the engine of social mobility for students of color, the system continues to grapple with widening educational outcomes for Black and Latinx students (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Fairlie et al., 2014; Garcia et al., 2019; Núñez, 2015). Prior research shows that diverse racial and ethnic faculty representation contributes to racially minoritized students' success (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Cross & Carman, 2022; Fairlie et al., 2014), including academic progress, increase in students' sense of belonging and academic self-concept (Cuellar, 2015). More faculty diversity also yields greater recruitment and retention of faculty of color leading to institutional transformation, fostering an inclusive and more equitable educational environment for both students, faculty and staff (Umbach, 2006). These studies convey the positive contributions of faculty and staff of color on student and institutional outcomes, but too few studies explore these patterns in community colleges.

### ***Trends of Latinx Students, Faculty and Administrators Demographics***

Given the importance of Latinx faculty as an integral structure of servingness, several HSI studies examined the demographics of Latinx faculty and administrators. In their study of HSIs that received grants as identified in IPEDS data for the 2014-2015 academic term, Vargas

et al. (2020) found that Latinx faculty constituted 14% of the faculty in the top five states receiving the highest number of HSI Title V grants, which included California, Texas, New York, New Mexico, and Florida. The Latinx student-to-faculty ratio was 146:1 compared to a White student-to-faculty ratio of 10:1. Among the five states receiving the highest number of HSI grants, California, the state with the largest number of HSI grants, also had the largest gap with a 145:1 Latinx student-to-faculty ratio compared to a White student-to-faculty ratio of 11:1. As such, Latinx students do not receive the same opportunities to establish meaningful co-ethnoracial relationships with their professors when compared to their fellow peers (Vargas et al., 2020). It is important to note that Latinx faculty at HSIs, on average, have approximately 14.6 times more co-ethnoracial students who seek out their guidance and mentorship than their White counterparts (Vargas et al., 2020). These findings, however, reflect the aggregation of both 2-year and 4-year HSIs. Regarding Latinx faculty-to-student ratios at all HSCCs, Cuellar et al. (2023) reported that in fall of 2022, 19% of tenured faculty identified as Latinx, making the Latinx student-to-faculty ratio 188:1 compared to the White student-to-faculty ratio of 29:1. The Latinx student-to-faculty ratio is far larger than any of the other demographic groups and furthers the need to increase the representation of Latinx faculty.

Latinx professionals face greater difficulty in attaining professoriate positions, a persistent struggle that has resulted in significant underrepresentation relative to the student population they seek to serve. In their 2017 report on the state of Latinx faculty in postsecondary education nationwide, Excelencia in Education noted that although there was progress in increasing the number of Latinx faculty members, Latinx professionals are losing ground because the growth is not at the rate of Latinx students. Nationwide across all higher education institutions, between 2003 and 2013, the Latinx student-to-faculty ratio increased from 80:1 to

90:1, and Latinx faculty made up 4% of all faculty across all postsecondary institutions, compared to 73% of White faculty (Excelencia in Education, 2017). The report also emphasized that the pipeline of Latinx graduate students remains insufficiently robust, accounting for only 8% of graduate students in 2014, compared to 57% White, 13% African American, and 7% Asian/Pacific Islander. Moreover, graduate assistant representation, which is usually a direct pipeline to the professoriate, is 5% for Latinx students. The fact that Latinx faculty were slightly less likely to be employed as full-time faculty further compounds this disparity (Excelencia in Education, 2017). The data also revealed that although females outnumber males in K–12 and higher education, 65% of Latinx professors were males, with females more likely to be assistant professors and not hold tenured or tenure-track positions. These data points are particularly troubling as senior leaders most commonly emerge from the faculty ranks (Melidona et al., 2023). This report emphasizes the limited progress that Latinx professionals have made nationally in the professoriate ranks; however, there is a need for specific data concerning Latinx faculty in CCCs to truly assess the challenges Latinx professionals face navigating the professoriate pipeline in this sector.

Following similar trends, the representation of Latinx professionals in higher education administration has been relatively low compared to Latinx students' enrollment. According to The Campaign for College Opportunity (2018a), in 2016–2017, only 17% of senior leaders identified as Latinx, compared to 59% who identified as White. The American Council of Education (2023) found that in 1986, only 8% of college and university presidents were racially minoritized, compared to 17% in 2016 and 15.9% in 2023. Notably, leaders at community colleges are more diverse than those at 4-year institutions (Melidona et al., 2023); however, Latinx leaders remain underrepresented at the presidential level. In fall of 2022, across

California's HSCCs, 23% of administrators identified as Latinx, with a Latinx student-to-administrator ratio of 1182:1, compared to a 29:1 ratio for White students to administrators (Cuellar et al., 2023). While there has been nominal progress in diversifying CCC presidencies and administration, Bensimon & Associates (2022) noted that this upward trend might be due to the racial reckoning following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. They found that this change may be a response to the current climate; however, historical patterns suggest that this progress could be short-lived. Furthermore, the significant disparity between Latinx students and administrators is concerning, given that many Latinx administrators "are actively embracing the HSI identity, enacting servingness, and making data-driven decisions that center equity for students of color in HSIs" (Cuellar et al., 2023, p. 16). There is a need for research aimed at understanding the experiences of senior leaders as they progress through the hiring process at HSCCs and how they perceive their role in hiring.

The challenge of a leadership pipeline issue in community colleges compounds the disparities in hiring Latinx leaders. Since 2001, there have been ongoing warnings about an impending crisis in the higher education leadership pipeline due to upcoming retirements (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Eddy, 2018; Gutierrez et al., 2002; Melidona et al., 2023; Perrakis et al., 2009). These warnings persist; in 2016, approximately 80% of CCC presidents anticipated retiring within 10 years (Eddy, 2018). Furthermore, based on survey data from presidents nationally, across all institutions, 54% of presidents from racially minoritized groups intended to retire within the upcoming 5 years (Melidona et al., 2023). Presidents from racially minoritized groups also had a slightly shorter tenure compared to White presidents (Melidona et al., 2023). Presidents from two-year institutions also have shorter tenures, compounding the likelihood that Latinx presidents in CCCs, where they are better represented, will have short

tenures. According to a study by Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research (2016), the average tenure for CCC presidents was 3.5 years compared to a 7-year tenure for 4-year colleges. This data point underscores the distinct characteristics of CCC presidents and points to potential tensions or challenges that limit their tenure, which requires further exploration. With the looming retirements and shorter tenures, increasing the representation of racially minoritized presidents becomes more complex; however, the literature evidences a significant gap in understanding much of their experiences in navigating the hiring process.

### ***Impact on Student Success***

Although still scarce, research on the impact of co-ethnoracial interactions and student success has affirmed the positive impact diverse faculty have on racially minoritized student outcomes (Cross & Carman, 2022; Fairlie et al., 2014; Wassmer & Galloway, 2023). For example, Cross and Carman (2022) used IPEDS data and a diversity score to assess the relationship between diversity and student success in a random sample of 120 2-year public degree-granting community colleges across the United States. Referencing Tinto's institutional integration theory, Cross and Carman asserted that casual interaction with co-ethnic peers and faculty supports students' campus integration, benefiting their program completion. Cross and Carman concluded that there was a strong positive relationship between faculty diversity and graduation and transfer rates for racially minoritized students. These findings suggest that the representation of racially minoritized faculty contributes to a more inclusive and supportive environment that enhances all students' educational experiences by developing greater cultural awareness and elevating diverse perspectives. Increasing co-ethnoracial representation for Latinx students with Latinx professionals means a greater connection to the college and an opportunity

to see successful people from similar backgrounds and experiences (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Garcia et al., 2020; Liera, 2023).

Fairlie et al. (2014) explored the impact of faculty diversity and student success at a San Francisco Bay Area HSCC, analyzing data from every class offered and every student enrolled at the college between the fall of 2002 and the spring of 2007. They found that racially minoritized students where instructors are the same race also perform better in all courses analyzed (Fairlie et al., 2014). Furthermore, the study found that gaps in outcomes, including dropout rates, pass rates, and grades, between White and racially minoritized students decrease by 20% to 50% when the instructor is a member of a racially minoritized population (Fairlie et al., 2014). This study suggests that community college students may develop a sense of responsibility and accountability to a faculty member of the same race that prevents them from dropping out of the class or failing. Notably, Fairlie et al. found strong correlations across all samples and outcomes for Black students with Black instructors and less clear patterns for Latinx students with Latinx instructors. Their study is frequently cited due to its emphasis on examining the impact of faculty representation on student success in a CCC. However, it is worth noting that the study's scope was limited, as it took place at a single CCC where the Latinx student population was approximately 14% and where Latinx faculty accounted for only 6% of all faculty.

In a more recent study based on data from 108 CCCs using the CCCCO's DataMart Dashboard, Wassmer and Galloway (2023) found that, in most cases, increasing the representation of Latinx faculty and administrators resulted in a positive correlation with student success rates. Notably, a one-percentage-point increase in Latinx administrators has consistent and positive outcomes on completion rates for most Latinx student cohorts: academically prepared, economically advantaged, and economically disadvantaged (Wassmer & Galloway,



2023). Also, the increase in Latinx administrator representation had a positive effect on academically unprepared Latinx students when one-third of students were Latinx. Their findings also revealed that when 50% or more students are Latinx, there is a greater impact on student success with an increase in Latinx faculty. This study strongly affirms the importance of enhancing the proportional representation of Latinx students, faculty, and senior leaders at CCCs. It also highlights the need for hiring reform and organizational transformation to increase Latinx professional representation, especially at HSIs. The research significantly contributes to the literature by homing in on Latinx faculty and administrators while broadening the focus beyond faculty to include administrators.

### **Attitudes and Experiences of Faculty and Administrators in Higher Education**

Gaining insight into the attitudes and experiences of faculty and administrators at HSCCs in advancing equity efforts can help identify barriers and challenges unique to faculty and senior leaders of color in the hiring processes. While the research is limited in understanding the attitudes and perceptions of senior leaders, there is much to learn from various studies on faculty attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their roles in supporting diversity in hiring. Likewise, it is also important to understand how senior-level administrators perceive their role in executing equity initiatives that promote equitable hiring practices. Furthermore, given that presidents hold a key leadership role in spearheading equity efforts, it emphasizes comprehending how presidents negotiate the politics of institutionalizing equity in hiring initiatives (Kezar, 2008).

### ***Faculty Attitudes and Teaching Approaches at HSIs***

Faculty at many HSIs are in a peculiar situation in which factors such as geographic location and demographic shifts have resulted in an HSI designation rather than the deliberate establishment of an institution that supports a diverse student population. Hence, working at an

HSI demands enhancing faculty members' cultural competence to better serve Latinx students. This is a pivotal point, considering that faculty at HSIs remain predominantly White. In a study of faculty attitudes, perceptions, and preferences gathered through survey responses from 819 U.S. HSIs and predominantly Black institutions, Hubbard and Stage (2009) found that faculty at institutions with higher Latinx enrollment expressed satisfaction in spending a larger proportion of their time teaching undergraduate students when compared to doctoral and comprehensive institutions with lower Latinx enrollment. However, when disaggregated by institutional type and designation as HSIs or predominantly White institutions, faculty at campuses with high Latinx student enrollment significantly preferred to spend less time teaching undergraduate students. Furthermore, faculty at HSCCs also expressed significant dissatisfaction with the quality of their students and the authority they had in determining the courses they taught. These findings further amplify the notion that community college HSIs may not consistently prioritize Latinx servingness in their institutional ethos and that faculty may carry deficit-minded beliefs about the students they serve.

Faculty at HSIs must embrace a sense of individual responsibility to interrogate their perceptions of Latinx students and how their personal background knowledge influences their perceptions (Hubbard & Stage, 2009). Through interviews with 20 faculty and administrators at three public universities with high Latinx student enrollment, Ching (2023) found that faculty's sensemaking of their perceptions depended on their background knowledge, previous experiences with Latinx students, and understanding of Latinx students. Overall, Latinx faculty use their personal experiences to build common ground to relate to the students' interactions in the classroom, exhibiting a greater degree of understanding and care toward their Latinx students. This was not the case for most non-Latinx faculty, reinforcing their need for

professional development to expand their knowledge base and build common ground with Latinx students.

From a deficit lens, several faculty members expressed notions that Latinx students were forced to stay close to home to support their families rather than uplifting their cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) and acknowledging their strong support systems (Ching, 2023). Additionally, several White faculty members shared deficit-based perceptions of Latinx students, citing that they were underprepared for college due to familial obligations. Others, however, expressed the need to go beyond their roles as instructors and use their positioning to carve out opportunities for Latinx students, emphasizing the need for faculty to serve as institutional agents to make policies and practices more equitable. Given the strong influence of faculty attitudes in teaching practices, Ching (2023) argued that institutions must assess understanding and awareness of Latinx faculty experiences through the hiring and evaluation process. Additionally, by identifying common ground and engaging in inquiry and introspection, they must recognize how their perspectives and preconceived notions may come from a deficit mindset, which can hinder the success of Latinx students.

As HSIs tend to enroll a more diverse student population compared to non-HSIs (Garcia et al., 2019), faculty need to assess their attitudes about institutional discrimination and blatant racist issues, which may affect how they teach students of color (Garcia et al., 2020). Research on faculty racial attitudes at HSIs uncovered gaps in support for Latinx students (Garcia et al., 2020). In a quantitative study, Garcia et al. (2020) assessed the racial attitudes of faculty at 10 4-year HSIs in the United States. The findings indicated that faculty were cognizant of racial issues and the systemic and historical structural challenges Latinx students encounter. Ultimately, there were still gaps among faculty. For example, when asked if racism was still a problem, 11% of

respondents did not believe it was (Garcia et al., 2020), which may derail progress for racially minoritized students and calls for continued training and professional growth to ensure all faculty understand how their institutions perpetuate racist practices and policies. Faculty of color had lower levels of color-neutral attitudes, further underscoring the need for greater representation of faculty of color as a fundamental aspect of servingness at HSIs. Although focused on 4-year institutions, Garcia et al.'s study helps inform the impact of faculty diversity but provides limited insights into the community college sector.

### ***Latinx Faculty and Senior-Level Administrator Efforts to Increase Retention***

Utilizing a critical race theory (CRT) lens, researchers have unpacked the heightened expectations placed on Latinx professionals that White candidates may not face (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Gutierrez et al., 2002; Vargas et al., 2020). In a review of HSI abstracts for Title V federal HSI grants, Vargas et al. (2020) opined that achieving significant gains in proportional representation for Latinx professionals requires providing them with intentional professional development, creating an inclusive and supportive environment, and ensuring they feel supported with reduced pressure and stressors to serve on numerous committees while also acting as mentors for students and staff of color. When there is a critical mass of faculty and administrators of color, institutions are more likely to embrace a strong commitment to equity and inclusion and undergo a transformative culture change (Levin et al., 2013). Greater diversity among students, faculty, administrators, and classified professionals enables institutions to readily acknowledge diverse populations' contributions (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Lara, 2019).

Levin et al.'s (2013) research involved faculty members at four CCCs: three with high representation (greater than 30%) of faculty of color and one with low representation (less than

20%). Interviews revealed that faculty of color expressed feeling overwhelmed with the pressures of their teaching loads and the expectation to serve on committees where they balanced dual representation as faculty members and as members of their ethnic groups. Latinx faculty aid in Latinx students' success and significantly enrich their own experiences, thereby supporting their retention and advancement. Latinx faculty and administrators serve as mentors and support systems for other Latinx faculty and faculty of color, so increasing their representation is a highly effective retention strategy (Vargas et al., 2020). Research on the retention of Latinx faculty or faculty of color in general is scarce, and there is a need to better understand the stressors that may lead them to leave the classroom.

Navigating institutions of higher education can be a challenging journey for Latinx faculty and administrators, both as students and professionals. Many Latinx professionals, as the first in their families to pursue higher education and professional careers, begin college as first-generation students and begin their careers as first-generation professionals (Garcia, 2016). Presidents of color often have to navigate academia's unwritten rules, a particularly pronounced challenge for first-generation professionals (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Gutierrez et al., 2002). Gutierrez et al.'s (2002) survey of 26 participants at the 2001 National Community College Hispanic Council found that Latinx senior leaders faced the expectation of paying dues through a traditional career progression. Many, however, did not follow a linear trajectory in career advancement. Gutierrez et al. (2002) advised institutions to intentionally increase Latinx leaders' representation rather than leave it up to chance.

Through interviews with 27 CCC presidents, all California State University presidents, and all Chancellors of University of California campuses, Bensimon & Associates (2022) found many leaders of color experience being the token person of color who needs to know and drive

racial equity issues across campus. This dynamic can evoke conflicting emotions associated with embracing their role as advocates for Latinx students and enduring the pressure and stress of ensuring these students' success (Bensimon & Associates, 2022). Similarly, Perrakis et al. (2009) when surveying 2-year and 4-year college presidents across four states, found that administrators of color find serving in senior administrative positions taxing, feeling like the token person of color or the person of color speaking for everyone of color. Community college boards and leadership are tasked with filling new positions and the imperative to cultivate, develop, and retain racially minoritized administrative leaders.

### **Experiences of Latinx Faculty and Senior Leaders in Hiring**

The underrepresentation of Latinx faculty and senior leaders is due to several complex factors, including hiring procedures, campus culture, and a political landscape that can create barriers to their advancement. In 1996, California voters passed Proposition 209 prohibiting preferential treatment based on race, gender, and national origin in public employment, education, and contracting. While California's public higher education systems have incorporated strategies to mitigate the legislation's negative effects, they have struggled to achieve the progress needed after the harm caused to racially minoritized students and employees. Adding to this, the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023 ruling against the use of race in college and university admissions jeopardizes outcomes for racially minoritized populations. Although California has been banned from considering affirmative action since 1996, the state's educators are further concerned that the recent ruling will be weaponized to instill apprehension regarding recruitment and hiring practices to support the advancement of racially minoritized populations.

More recently, several researchers utilized CRT to investigate faculty diversity (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Contreras, 2017; Fujii, 2014; Fujimoto, 2012; Lara, 2019; and Vargas et al., 2020). These studies have advanced research on faculty hiring practices, but there is limited research on the obstacles and difficulties racially minoritized senior leaders face as candidates in the hiring process and as individuals key to implementing equitable hiring practices (Kezar, 2008). Hiring processes in community colleges have remained largely unchanged since their establishment in the 1950s and 1960s, failing to address fundamental structures that have historically prioritized the White archetype (Flannigan et al., 2004). Employing CRT to examine the permanence of racism in the hiring structures is essential for understanding how community colleges maintain White privilege and racial biases.

Institutions, whether intentional or not, often value White faculty candidates (Bensimon & Associates, 2022) and fail to interrogate how their processes perpetuate racist structures, often masked as merit and fit. In the rather slim research on Latinx senior leadership in community colleges, some report that unconscious bias, racism, and feelings of needing to be overqualified remain pervasive in hiring practices (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Gutierrez et al., 2002). Bensimon & Associates (2022) reported that presidents of color often experience pressure to conform to White norms and suppress their ethnic identity to avoid being associated with negative ethnic stereotypes. Bensimon & Associates also found that presidents of color expressed needing exceptional qualifications to be deemed worthy of a presidency. They believed it necessary to demonstrate that their achievements surpassed those of a White male counterpart to be considered qualified (Bensimon & Associates, 2022).

Bensimon & Associates (2022) further highlighted that presidents of color feel that trustees and hiring committees are unable to visualize a president of color at their institution,

many times feeling like hiring them is too much of a risk. Additionally, candidates of color were further racialized if they attained the position, experiencing scrutiny when prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism initiatives. Presidents of color perceived a necessity to indirectly express their support for racially minoritized students by framing their support as a broader commitment for all students, aiming to prevent resistance or opposition. One participant employed this strategy during the interview to avoid creating discomfort among White people and countering the White-normative values committee members espouse (Bensimon & Associates, 2022). Their study contributes to a richer understanding of the experiences of presidents of color during the hiring process; however, it is constrained in capturing the distinct experience of Latinx presidents, which this dissertation aims to explore. Furthermore, this body of research is not specific to community college presidents and does not directly address the president's role in advancing equity in hiring efforts.

Three recent studies significantly enhance the scholarly understanding of community college hiring practices, uncovering entrenched systemic barriers to the advancement of faculty of color, all within the framework of CRT (Fujii, 2014; Fujimoto, 2012; Lara, 2019). First, Fujimoto (2012) conducted a document analysis of affirmative action reports, search and screening procedures, and state certification guidelines. Additionally, they interviewed individuals in a case study for a 2-year college and found that participants held differing perceptions of fairness. Second, Fujimoto (2012) argued that traditional notions of merit disregard the reality of unequal opportunity distribution due to deep-rooted societal factors. The discussion around fit for the campus culture often means the candidate does not fit the prototype of a White faculty member (Lara, 2019). Third, Lara (2019) interviewed 10 diverse participants across five CCCs who self-identified as current or former faculty of color who had recently



participated in a faculty hiring process and were committed to diversity in hiring. Lara found that committee members tended to select candidates who resembled them. Only when positions were previously occupied by a racially minoritized person were they more likely to be filled by a person of color, a finding consistent with other studies (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Fujii, 2014; Levin et al., 2013). Although the terms “merit” and “fit” seem to center on finding the best candidate for the organization’s needs, these characteristics are measured against White norms entrenched in the organization’s culture.

Serving on committees was also a strong point of contention for faculty of color concerned about pervasive colorblind ideologies throughout the hiring process, especially in hiring committee deliberations. Lara (2019) explained that participants shared frustration in serving on faculty hiring committees where racial diversity was never addressed as part of the conversation, often hiding behind EEO regulations and Proposition 209 to avoid talking about race. Furthermore, participants expressed a need for meaningful conversations about the value of race and diversity in the hiring process to understand disparities in selecting candidates of color that would otherwise be perpetuated. Similarly, in a qualitative study involving 12 participants at three community colleges, Fujii (2014) found that faculty of color expressed frustration when serving on a hiring committee as the only faculty of color, often feeling dismissed when attempting to bring forward conversations about diversity. These studies provide essential perspectives through interviews with faculty of color; however, they do not center the experiences of Latinx leaders in positions where they can prioritize and reimagine these hiring efforts.

Whether committees resort to affirmative action concerns or seek to preserve members’ comfort, the absence of a culture that encourages open discussions about race and poor training

for committee members to address racial matters can make it more convenient to adopt race-evasive practices and policies. Fujii (2014) furthered the point that search committees are an extension of organizational culture and can easily be influenced by societal factors. Through interviews with faculty members at four CCCs, Levin et al. (2013) observed that faculty of color identified recurring patterns in the hiring process that disregarded the value of diversity. Furthermore, Fujii (2014) emphasized purposely fostering diversity rather than merely joining diversity initiatives. Fujii's research underscores that valuing diversity in an institution does not inherently lead to greater faculty diversity, so advancing diversity efforts requires intentionality. The literature calls for centering race and defining diversity but falls short in examining the challenges institutions may experience when attempting to do so. Interviewing Latinx presidents as key players in advancing equitable hiring practices through a racialized lens provides insights that will aid in implementing these strategies more effectively.

The responsibility of diversifying faculty and staff at community colleges must be shared; however, presidents are distinctly situated to influence institutional structures and practices that drive diversity in hiring (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Milem et al., 2005). As past research corroborated (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Fujii, 2014; Kezar, 2008), hiring administrators and department chairs note that the president sets the tone on leading issues of equity and diversity in hiring. Kezar's (2008) study of elite interviews of 23 college presidents to understand how they handled politics to move a diversity agenda forward, found six dominant strategies mentioned by presidents as most important: (a) develop coalitions and advocates, (b) take the political pulse regularly, (c) anticipate resistance, (d) use data to neutralize politics and rationalize process, (e) create public relations campaigns and showcase success, and (f) capitalize on controversy. These strategies can support a shift in the culture of the institution, to create a culture that is more

accepting and inviting of reform efforts supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) and equity in hiring. The advancement of hiring equity depends on organizational change and shift in campus culture, which is led and enacted by presidents and other senior leaders (Kezar, 2008). Therefore, a significant obstacle to recruiting and hiring of Latinx faculty is the underrepresentation of Latinx senior-level CCC administrators, who are depended on to reform hiring processes and to center racially minoritized students' needs. Understanding the political tensions they encounter at HSCC's and the political strategies they utilize to advancing equity in hiring is critical.

Overall, Latinx administrators acknowledge the significant role of hiring equity in servingness at HSIs and use data to ensure a more inclusive and equitable educational environment through reform of hiring practices (Cuellar et al., 2023). However, most of them fill lower and middle management roles (Martinez, 2023) and do not influence the hiring of senior leaders. The literature is also unclear on whether Latinx presidents and senior leaders perceive themselves as having the agency to drive equity hiring and the strategies they employ to effect changes in campus culture, which this study sought to address.

Furthermore, the pipeline for a community college presidency most often comes from the dean and vice-president ranks, which often require experience as a tenured faculty member (Perrakis et al., 2009). Therefore, if community colleges lack racially and ethnically diverse faculty members who can ascend into administrative roles, they will also lack diversity in college presidencies (Fujii, 2014). While the path to the presidency traditionally involves advancement from full-time faculty positions, diversifying the administrative ranks remains elusive, as the faculty at most campuses remain predominantly White (Melidona et al., 2023). The presence of

faculty of color is the most immediate source of senior-level administrator candidates (Perrakis et al., 2009).

Challenges with increasing representation of faculty and staff of color have been relegated to a pipeline issue. However, Bustillos and Siqueiros (2018) found that the University of California (UC) and California State University systems awarded more than 25,000 master's and doctorates to Latinx candidates between 2012 and 2016. More recent evidence suggests that half of college presidents have not followed the trajectory from full-time faculty to the presidency across higher education institutions (Melidona et al., 2023). The other avenue has been career administrative leadership, which has supported the increase of presidents from racially minoritized backgrounds (Gutierrez et al., 2002; Melidona et al., 2023). These studies challenge the notion that advancing Latinx professionals into leadership roles is exclusively a pipeline issue, warranting research on structural and systemic barriers that limit the advancement of Latinx professionals into faculty and administrator roles.

### **Existing and Promising Equity in Hiring Efforts in Higher Education**

This section consolidates prior scholarship on promising practices, policies, and institutional culture changes that promote hiring equity. The recommendations emerged from the research; however, the research lacks specific strategies that have led to a significant advancement of Latinx professionals in the professoriate or administrator ranks. Prior studies generalize the experiences of faculty and senior leaders of color, failing to address the distinct barriers that Latinx candidates face. While most of this research pertains more broadly to higher education, some centers on community colleges.

### *Shifts in Policies and Programs That Promote Equity in Hiring*

Liera and Ching (2019) contended that institutions must move beyond a culture of niceness to explicitly employ race-conscious language throughout the hiring process. In their observation of faculty that participated in an inquiry-based- intervention at a private 4-year institution with the USC Race and Equity Center, Liera and Ching (2019) interrogated campus racial culture and the creation of equitable hiring structures. Drawing from his observations of participant interactions, he discovered that a culture of niceness is rooted in colorblind ideology to protect the feelings of White staff. His research found that having conversations about how faculty of color experience racism in their work environment becomes a humanizing experience for all parties. Likewise, through interviews with participants in hiring searches, Fujimoto (2012) gathered that racial diversity in hiring can truly be realized only by openly acknowledging race and racism in both thought and action as societal factors. Addressing how students, faculty, and other college staff have experienced overt or covert racism will create a college culture where the experiences of racially minoritized campus stakeholders are acknowledged and respected. Engaging in conversation about race sets up the opportunity to learn equity-based language, which can increase comfort in discussing an academic program's diversity needs while inviting White faculty to be allies in the conversation (Liera & Ching, 2019). While these studies have provided much insight into how institutions can acknowledge the permanence of race, they have not focused on the president's role in catalyzing these efforts and supporting faculty and hiring managers in this process.

Furthermore, the hiring committee has long been critiqued as a barrier to equity in hiring (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Fujii, 2014). The committee's composition has consistently been referenced as a challenge (Fujii, 2014), especially since the poor representation of racially

minoritized faculty can limit their availability to serve on committees. Hiring managers must intentionally invite committee members to ensure a diverse composition in light of research that asserts that committee members favor candidates who resemble themselves (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Fujimoto, 2012; Levin et al., 2013). Additionally, Fujimoto (2012) contended that institutions must not list qualifications not required for the position, like terminal degrees, which the hiring committee may consider in developing the job announcement and screening criteria rubric. The inclusion of terminal degrees in position where they are not required will further create barriers that may disproportionately adversely impact racially minoritized applicants. Aside from the composition of the committee to ensure that it is reflective of the student population they serve, it is critical for department chairs and hiring committee members to be trained to detect biases, learn from the experiences of racially minoritized faculty and administrators at CCCs and engage in dialogue about the racial diversity goals of the program prior to developing the screening criteria and the interview questions (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Liera & Ching, 2019). Additionally, although research is absent on including students on hiring committees, the CCCCO provided a legal opinion to support the recommendation, as outlined in the DEI integration plan, for students to be included in the recruitment and selection process (CCCCO, 2020b). The legal opinion also notes that the Education Code EEO plan explicitly supports including students as a best practice. Overall, committee composition is critical to advancing diversity in hiring efforts, as is the training committee members receive.

The committee, HR, or the hiring manager must measure for adverse impact (Fujimoto, 2012; Opp & Smith, 1994). Adverse impact is assessed by reviewing candidates' demographic data to ensure that a group is not disproportionately disadvantaged. For example, in one of the institutions in Fujimoto's (2012) case study, six of 18 candidates of color who would have

advanced in the hiring process were eliminated based on a conflated requirement (certification level), which should have been flagged as an adverse impact for candidates of color. A disparity may occur from the point of application until the final interview, and hiring managers or senior-level leaders must intervene and push back the process until there is an equitable progression for racially minoritized candidates (Fujimoto, 2012).

Moreover, if the applicant pool is not diverse, senior-level administrators must similarly reopen the application process and push for broader and more intentional advertisement of the position (Opp & Smith, 1994). In a survey study of 1,387 CC administrators, Opp and Smith (1994) discovered that institutions that eliminated faculty search processes in cases where there were no candidates of color had a greater number of faculty of color in their institution. This requires committee members or HR to review the data and ensure that racially minoritized candidates are proportionately entering and moving through the hiring process; however, acquiring data from HR has been a major barrier (Fujimoto, 2012). Fujimoto's research provides a model to investigate adverse impact, and further research is required to understand how this practice is monitored and implemented by hiring committees and community college administrators.

Studies regarding faculty diversification propose that job descriptions should explicitly communicate the institution's values and express appreciation for and pursuit of candidates capable of connecting to the experiences of the diverse student body (Fujii, 2014; Fujimoto, 2012; Lara, 2019; Liera, 2020; Liera & Ching, 2019). The language in the job description, particularly whether it focuses on assets or deficits concerning racially minoritized students, communicates information valuable to the candidate. In a review of presidents' job announcements and curriculum vitae, Bensimon & Associates (2022) found that most job

announcements missed the mark on racial equity. When job announcements include race-conscious language, race-conscious leaders will apply (Bensimon & Associates, 2022).

Bensimon & Associates noted that job announcements generally lack specific equity-minded language, and few described a commitment to serving racially minoritized students. One CCC was lauded for a job announcement that clearly defined a commitment to equity and called out racism and inequity in institutional policies. This study significantly contributes to prior research, providing examples of job announcement language that promotes inclusivity and race consciousness and serves as an exemplar for higher education institutions.

Lastly, the research also calls for more intentional support for racially minoritized faculty and senior leaders in persisting through the tenure process. Extensive support must also be provided to faculty of color to include diversity in the tenure committees to foster co-ethnic interactions, which generally lend support and provide a sense of belonging for faculty of color. Similarly, in a study of California higher education presidents, Bensimon & Associates (2022) found that racially minoritized presidents experienced a hidden curriculum during and after their hiring. Their network of support may shrink, making it more challenging to navigate political landscapes and advocate and implement policies and practices to drive equitable hiring (Bensimon & Associates, 2022). Institutions must commit to hiring racially minoritized faculty and administrators, providing proper onboarding, and building up a team of support to ensure new hires' retention.

The literature asserts that implementing a diversity agenda requires a shared responsibility from campus stakeholders, including faculty, classified professionals, and administrators; however, deep and long-lasting change requires a president who can address the barriers and navigate political tensions (Adserias et al., 2017; Kezar & Eckel, 2008). College



presidents must engage in the hiring process by advancing practices that support equity and assess adverse impact. To be responsive to the state's changing demographics, CCC presidents must enact strategies to lead transformational change (Adserias et al., 2017). In their study, Adserias et al. (2017) analyzed 10 manuscripts that provided an analysis of optimal leadership styles to advance diversity efforts at colleges and universities, where they found transformational change as the nexus of social justice and diversity in the ethos of an organization. Presidents of color, Kezar and Eckel (2008) found, may encounter additional challenges when attempting to institutionalize transformational change, with doubts from campus stakeholders if this is a personal agenda. Kezar (2008) asserted that a politically savvy leader is critical when implementing an equity agenda in hiring because these efforts can easily be derailed or silenced when coupled with, for example, budgetary constraints. While prior research on equity in hiring primarily focuses on hiring strategies and practices, this study centered the role of Latinx presidents in leading the professional advancement of Latinx faculty and senior leaders through the lens of transformational change.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks that shape and inform this study's design are CRT and political theory. Using CRT provides an opportunity to center race and racism as determinants of the success of Latinx presidents and the advancement in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Latinx faculty and senior leaders at CCCs. The political theory framework acknowledges that leading diversity efforts is a political act, and therefore, it requires political strategies for institutional change. These two theories offer a means to explore the viewpoints and experiences of Latinx CCC presidents to implement equitable hiring practices at their institutions. This exploration involves delving into racial structures that limit the advancement of Latinx faculty

and senior leaders and the opportunities and challenges Latinx presidents face in shifting the culture of the college.

Critical race theory was first developed by Freeman, Bell, and Delgado in response to the slow racial reform in the court systems (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1999). Since then, there have been several adaptations of CRT, applying race-conscious efforts in legal studies, healthcare, and education (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have pioneered CRT in education to better understand how it relates to education through curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation. Although there are slight variations of CRT tenets, there is some consensus on the following five: racism exists and is normal, race is socially constructed, interest convergence, acknowledgement of intersectionality, and counter-storytelling (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). This study focused on the following three tenets: racism exists, interest convergence, and counter-storytelling is essential, elaborated upon below.

Community colleges, like most educational institutions, are systems of oppression that continue to perpetuate structures advantageous to White, dominant culture. CRT will demonstrate how the lack of representation of faculty and senior administrators is a result of systemic and engrained racist ideology in institutions of higher education that require intentional and transformational change. The three tenets guiding this study are defined as follows:

1. The first tenet of CRT is acknowledging that racism is systemic and ordinary. For institutions to address diversity in hiring, there must first be recognition that racism “is the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of people of color” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023, p. 8). Colorblind ideologies only further perpetuate racist practices that are harmful to the advancement of equity.

2. The third tenet, according to Delgado and Stefancic (2023), is interest convergence, which more often favors White people. “Because racism advances the interests of both White elites (materially) and working-class whites, large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023, p. 9). When there are competing interests, the interests of the dominant group will win, which reinforces the status quo.
3. Lastly, counter-storytelling emphasizes the perspective and knowledge that people of color bring to their experiences and its “presumed competence to speak about race and racism” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023, p.11). Understanding the various experiences of people of color is essential for equity in hiring initiatives at higher education institutions. Counter-storytelling provides an opportunity to lift the voices of people of color.

Central to this study, the three tenets informed the literature review and serve as guiding themes for data collection and analysis. Much of the research (Fujii, 2014; Fujimoto, 2012; Lara, 2019; Liera & Ching, 2019) points to a need to examine the racialized experiences of Latinx presidents and the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Latinx faculty and senior leaders. Counter-storytelling will also be central to the interviews to better understand how the interviewees experience hiring as candidates and as implementers of equity.

Institutions of higher education hold structures that continue to oppress marginalized communities through colorblind ideology, institutional racism, and enforcement of bureaucratic processes (Kezar, 2008). Kezar (2008) argued that ensuring diversity efforts are prioritized and executed properly requires strong leadership that can navigate an institution’s political terrain. To gain deeper insight into the political dynamics that may arise, including the strategies

employed by college presidents addressing challenges, Kezar's (2008) approach to organizational change emphasized the political theory framework. Kezar (2008) argued that demonstrable change at higher education institutions cannot happen without politically savvy leadership due to the varied interest groups and the struggle between accountability and shared governance.

Kezar (2008) noted that stakeholder groups perceive diversity as a political act, and therefore, technical strategies like diversity training will not address the challenges school leaders encounter. In their study, Kezar (2008) initially applied strategies from Bolman and Deal's (1997) political frame: mapping the political terrain, coalition building, persuasion, and bargaining to have a greater understanding of critical strategies for creating change from political theory (Kezar, 2008). Based on Kezar's (2008) findings, the strategies that will be focused on to support this study are as follows:

1. Develop coalitions and advocates by ensuring support from the governing board, the external community and student groups.
2. Take a political pulse by assessing and understanding the political dynamics and sentiments within their institutions to tailor their strategies to build support, mitigate resistance and successfully implement diversity efforts.
3. Anticipate resistance by understanding the political landscape and the data, to create a narrative centered on students.
4. Use data to neutralize politics and working closely with institutional research to justify, amplify and at times refute opposition to advancing a diversity agenda.
5. Create public relations campaigns and showcase success to make the success of diversity efforts on campus visible to the campus and external community.

6. Capitalize on controversy for learning by using conflict to engage campus stakeholders on diversity conversations.

The political theory framework better informs school leaders on how to enact change to increase the number of racially minoritized faculty and administrators at their campuses. The theoretical framework for this research consists of CRT and Kezar's political theory, an extension of Bolman and Gallo's work on academic leadership lens. This theoretical framework will support the understanding of senior leadership at community colleges to drive diversity in hiring. Kezar (2008) noted that impactful change in higher education requires a politically astute leader; therefore, focusing on political theory perspectives provides the greatest insight to this research.

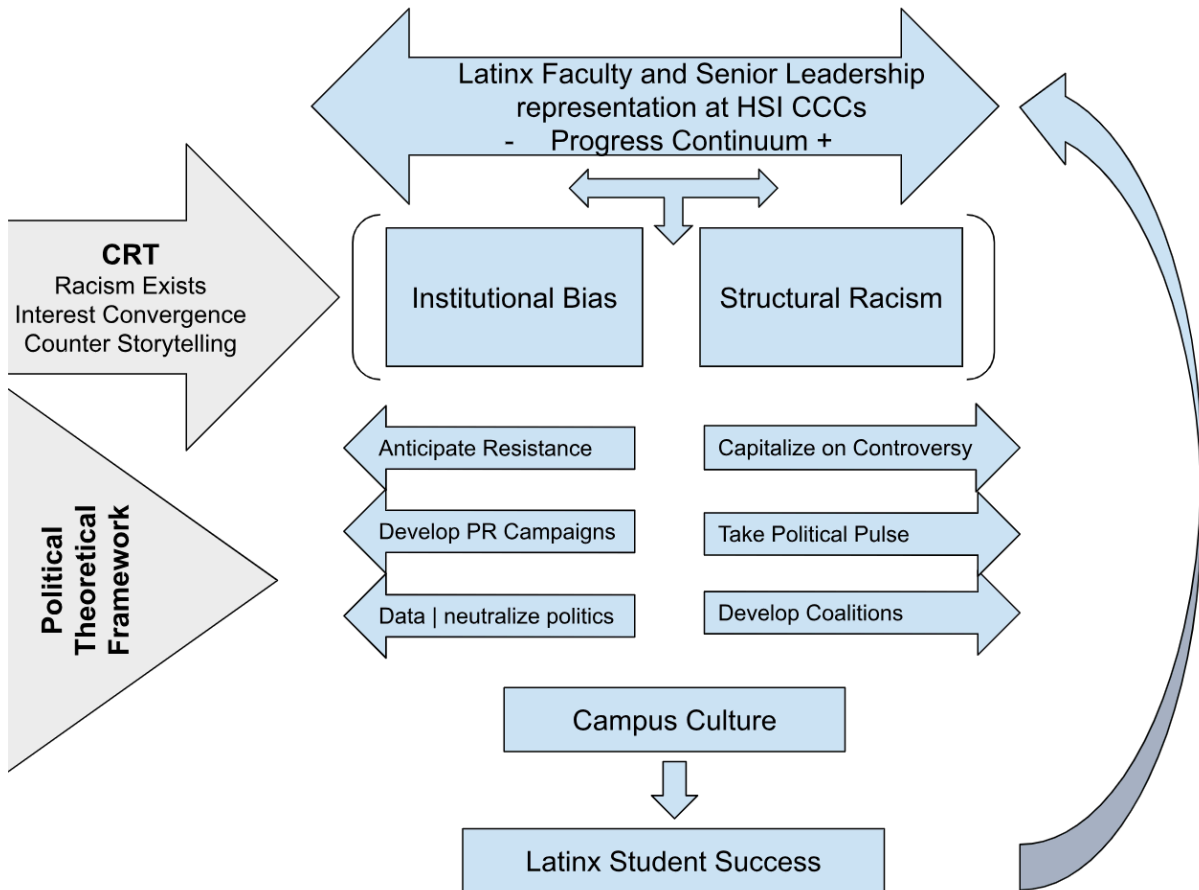
Critical race theory and political theory framed the interview questions and provided a lens to code and identify themes in the literature. The conceptual framework provided an overarching structure for the study in guiding the research questions and data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, the decision to interview presidents, as agents of power, in implementing equity in hiring efforts, is supported by political theory framework. As Kezar (2008) stated, "Presidents play many important roles to help advance a diversity agenda—roles that most other leaders cannot play because they do not have the authority or leverage that is critical to institutionalization" (p. 407). As such, utilizing a political theory framework to examine and interrogate the implementation of equity in hiring at institutions led by Latinx presidents and how they adapt strategies to advance a diversity agenda will contribute to the research and have impactful implications for diversifying faculty and senior leadership.

## **Conceptual Framework**

This conceptual framework intertwines CRT with the political theory framework to interrogate how institutions that are inherently racist continue to perpetuate practices and policies that limit the advancement of Latinx faculty and senior leaders. Intertwining these two theories to understand how presidents lead diversity in hiring posits a greater understanding of the strategies they employ to navigate political tensions driven by power structures held by racism (Kezar, 2008). Leading diversity in hiring efforts requires negotiating values that lead to a change in campus culture that changes the moral high ground of the institution rather than solely focusing on changing policies. Opportunities to increase the representation of Latinx faculty and administrators will arise from this culture shift, improving Latinx student success. Shifting the culture of an institution that embodies inclusion and a sense of belonging for Latinx students will ultimately attract more Latinx professionals, improving their representation (Cross & Carman, 2022).

**Figure 1**

*Qualitative Study Analyzing the Experiences and Perspectives of Latinx Presidents in Implementing Equity in Hiring of Faculty and Senior Leaders at HSCCs*



### CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This qualitative study contributes to the knowledge base on faculty and staff diversity at CCCs by exploring the representation of Latinx faculty and administrators in HSCCs through the lens of Latinx presidents as agents of organizational change and diversity. Utilizing a phenomenological research approach involved delving into the participants' subjective encounters, as they experienced hiring processes as candidates and now play a critical role in implementing and supporting hiring practices at their campuses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study explored their perceptions, successes, challenges, and the overall impact of their experiences, particularly as it related to hiring practices.

A transformative worldview was applied to this study, choosing qualitative research to understand the systemic and structural barriers Latinx professionals have faced in their efforts to diversify faculty hiring (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study entailed learning from CCC leaders how structural racism, discrimination, and politics limited the progress of Latinx professionals more broadly and/or from their own experiences, aiming to better understand the phenomenon. A transformative worldview uses philosophical perspectives or theoretical frameworks, as evidenced in this dissertation by the use of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1999), to better understand issues, the participants, and the changes necessary for progress (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The theoretical perspective and worldview intertwine in the overall approach to this study. The transformative worldview underlines the *how* and *why* behind the persistent lack of faculty and administrator diversity at HSCCs, providing a critical lens to the phenomenon of advancing diversity efforts across higher education that goes well beyond hiring practices (Creswell, 2007).



The research was approached with the presumption that the phenomenon of study was founded in a social, historical, and political context that required transformational change, culture shifts, and a strong political acumen to impact change. This approach provided a deeper and more nuanced understanding of personal, systemic, and cultural dimensions that shaped hiring practices and diversification in CCCs, bringing together the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method facilitated the integration of a more holistic view of the research topic from the lens of dynamic leaders in the system (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do the educational and professional experiences of Latinx presidents shape their commitment to equity and equity in hiring?
2. How do Latinx presidents at HSCCs experience and understand their role in driving efforts to enhance equity in hiring?
3. What actions and strategies do Latinx presidents perceive as vital to creating institutional change that supports equity in hiring?

**Table 1**

*Qualitative Data Overview*

<b>Qualitative Data</b>		
<b>Research Question 1</b>	<b>Research Question 2</b>	<b>Research Question 3</b>
How do the educational and professional experiences of Latinx presidents shape their commitment to equity and equity in hiring? <b>Purpose</b>	How do Latinx presidents at California HSCCs perceive and experience their role in advancing diversity hiring efforts? <b>Purpose</b>	What actions and strategies do Latinx presidents perceive as vital to creating institutional change that supports equity in hiring? <b>Purpose</b>
Provide a comprehensive understanding of how the lived experiences of Latinx presidents influence their commitment to equitable hiring practices.	Gain a deep understanding of the perceived role and experiences of Latinx presidents in implementing diversity in hiring efforts.	To learn from Latinx presidents about the strategies, perceived opportunities, and challenges in advancing diversity in hiring efforts.

**Setting**

California’s community college system is the largest open-access educational system in the United States, with 116 colleges serving more than 2.1 million students per year (Johnson & Mejia, 2019). As of Fall 2022, 107 HSCCs meet the 25% enrollment threshold of Latinx student representation (Cuellar et al., 2023), making it an HSI system (Contreras, 2019). The system is led by a chancellor who serves as the CEO and a 17-member board of governors appointed by the state’s governor. There are also 72 districts governed by elected boards of trustees, which appoint the district chancellor and college presidents (Johnson & Mejia, 2019). By design, CCCs have open admissions, lower tuition relative to four-year institutions, and flexible schedules (Cross & Carman, 2022). More than half of all college students in the state attend CCCs, and two-thirds of them are racially minoritized students (Johnson & Mejia, 2019).

To address the persistent equity gaps for racially minoritized students and the inadequate representation of racially minoritized faculty and administrators at CCCs, the CCCCCO convened

the DEI taskforce to develop a framework for cultural change to increase equity in hiring as an integral component of the Vision for Success. As recently as 2020, the DEI taskforce published the DEI integration plan with 68 strategies gleaned as emerging strategies, compartmentalized as replicable pre-hiring, hiring, and post-hiring strategies. The task force also recognized that CCCs must move from merely complying with EEO plans and the multiple methods to actively and proactively elevating equity in hiring.

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study is qualitative in nature, but in order to provide context about the settings led by participants, secondary data has been analyzed. To contextualize shifts in faculty and senior leadership diversity at HSCCs, demographic data for the 26 colleges led by Latinx presidents in 2023-24 was first reviewed comparing academic terms 2016–2017 and 2021–2022. Although this 5-year period may not capture the president’s tenure, it corresponds with the initial year that funding was tied to developing an EEO plan in alignment with the multiple measures at CCCs. This time frame serves as a good baseline, as it signifies a period when institutions were incentivized to develop a plan to improve their hiring procedures. This study included only HSIs with Latinx presidents or superintendents serving in the fall of 2023.

It is important to note that of the 26 institutions led by Latinx presidents/superintendents, two did not meet HSI designation, and one opened after the research period. This yielded 23 HSCCs led by a Latinx president. Only the data for academic tenured/tenured track data, referred to as faculty, was analyzed from two reports by The Campaign for College Opportunity: *Left Out: How Exclusion in California’s Colleges and Universities Hurts Our Values, Our Students, and Our Economy*, published in 2018 and *Still Left Out: How Exclusion in California’s Colleges & Universities Continues to Hurt Our Values, Students, and Democracy*, published in 2024. The

education code defines tenured or tenure-track faculty as full-time, tenured instructional faculty and does not include non-tenured faculty positions or part-time adjunct faculty positions. The demographic comparisons did not include temporary faculty and non-tenured faculty.

Representation gaps were identified by comparing the percentage differences between Latinx students and faculty for the 2016-2017 and 2021-2022 academic terms.

Of the 23 colleges that met the initial criteria, 11 made some progress in closing the representation gap between Latinx students and faculty, while 11 widened that gap. One college did not show a change in representation. Among the colleges that narrowed the percentage gap, the average percentage-point change was three percentage points, ranging from 2-16 Percentage points. Among those that widened the gap, the percentage-point average was four percentage points, ranging from 2-7 Percentage points. In the 2021–2022 academic year, 8 colleges had a Latinx student population ranging from 26% to 47%, and 14 colleges had a Latinx student population ranging from a low of 53% and a high of 77% (Tables 2 and 3). Comparably, Latinx faculty ranged from 7% to 37%. It is important to note that the percentage gap is not necessarily a determinant of progress or regression in diversifying faculty. Many factors make progress challenging to define, including the student data, which is presented for the 2021–2022 academic term. This term is the year immediately after the pandemic when the number of racially minoritized students decreased at various schools. Therefore, if an institution had a significant drop in Latinx students and made no significant changes to Latinx faculty numbers, they appear in the data as having made progress. Additionally, some institutions started the 2016–2017 academic year with a low ratio, so increases were more likely at those institutions. Lastly, attributing change in Latinx faculty hiring to any of the nine interviewees would be erroneous since all participants have served in their role for less than 4 years, with the majority serving

between 1 and 3 years. The data on senior leaders was not considered due to the high volatility, given the limited number of senior leaders (3 to 5 senior leaders at each college). The table below illustrates Latinx student and faculty data for each of the 23 colleges during the 2016-2017 and 2021-2022 academic terms. It highlights the percentage-point difference for each term, comparing each deriving to the representation gap (last column).

**Table 2**

*HSCCs' Decrease in Latinx Faculty Representation*

HSCC		Latinx Data 2016-2017	Latinx Data 2021-2022	Percentage- Point Difference	Percentage- Point Difference in Student to Staff Representati on (2016)	Percentage- Point Difference in Student to Staff Representati on (2022)	Overall Percentage- Point Difference from 2016 to 2022
Gavilan College	Student	58%	62%	4%			
	Faculty	8%	28%	20%	50%	34%	-16%
Los Angeles Mission College	Student	80%	70%	-10%			
	Faculty	21%	25%	4%	59%	45%	-14%
Southwestern College	Student	66%	68%	2%			
	Faculty	12%	24%	12%	54%	44%	-10%
Long Beach City College	Student	58%	56%	-2%			
	Faculty	17%	20%	3%	41%	36%	-5%
Hartnell College	Student	62%	65%	3%			
	Faculty	27%	34%	7%	35%	31%	-4%
Mt. San Antonio College	Student	53%	53%	0%			
	Faculty	17%	21%	4%	36%	32%	-4%
Sacramento City College	Student	30%	30%	0%			
	Faculty	11%	14%	3%	19%	16%	-3%
Orange Coast College	Student	34%	34%	0%			
	Faculty	12%	14%	2%	22%	20%	-2%
Woodland	Student	47%	49%	2%			

HSCC		Latinx Data 2016-2017	Latinx Data 2021-2022	Percentage- Point Difference	Percentage- Point Difference in Student to Staff Representati on (2016)	Percentage- Point Difference in Student to Staff Representati on (2022)	Overall Percentage- Point Difference from 2016 to 2022
Community College	Faculty	9%	13%	13%	38%	36%	-2%
East Los Angeles College	Student	67%	63%	-4%			
Fullerton College	Faculty	25%	21%	-4%			
Los Angeles Harbor College	Student	52%	56%	4%	33%	35%	2%
Porterville College	Faculty	19%	21%	2%			
Los Angeles Pierce College	Student	57%	59%	2%			
San Joaquin Delta	Faculty	15%	15%	0%	42%	44%	2%
Santa Rosa Jr. College	Student	76%	76%	0%			
Oxnard College	Faculty	22%	20%	-2%	54%	56%	2%
Solano College	Student	46%	46%	0%			
Fresno City College	Faculty	10%	7%	-3%	36%	39%	3%
Rio Hondo College	Student	44%	47%	3%			
Palomar College	Faculty	14%	14%	0%	30%	33%	3%
Average	Student	32%	39%	7%			
	Faculty	10%	14%	4%	22%	25%	3%
	Student	69%	69%	0%			
	Faculty	36%	31%	-5%	33%	38%	5%
	Student	29%	34%	5%			
	Faculty	10%	10%	0%	19%	24%	5%
	Student	54%	59%	5%			
	Faculty	19%	18%	-1%	35%	41%	6%
	Student	73%	77%	4%			
	Faculty	36%	34%	-2%	37%	43%	6%
	Student	43%	47%	4%			
	Faculty	16%	13%	-3%	27%	34%	7%
	Average				36.00%	35.00%	1.00%

*Note.* Adapted from *Left Out: How Exclusion in California’s Colleges and Universities Hurts Our Values, Our Students, and Our Economy* by Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018, and *Still Left Out: How Exclusion in California’s Colleges & Universities Continues to Hurt Our Values, Students, and Democracy* by Campaign for College Opportunity, 2024

## *Participants*

To identify the participants for this study, the demographic data for each HSCC led by a Latinx president was reviewed via reports by The Campaign for College Opportunity and my analysis comparing demographic changes in a five-year period shown in Tables 2. Of the nine Latinx presidents interviewed, five were at a college that had a decrease in the percentage gap between Latinx students and Latinx faculty from 2016-2017 and 2021-2022 and 4 were at a college with an increase in the percentage gap based on the data in the two reports from The Campaign for College Opportunity. Four participants were female, and five were male. The majority spent most of their careers in education working at community colleges, and all were in the first few years of their presidencies as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

### *Participant Attributes*

Name	Years of experience in education	Years of experience in community college	Years of experience as a president at an HSCC
President 1	26–30	26–30	1–5
President 2	26–30	16–20	1–5
President 3	26–30	26–30	1–5
President 4	21–25	21–25	1–5
President 5	21–25	21–25	1–5
President 6	26–30	21–25	1–5
President 7	26–30	16–20	1–5
President 8	21–25	21–25	1–5
President 9	26–30	11–15	1–5

## ***Data Collection***

Bhattacharya (2017) noted that qualitative research operates within the framework of human experiences and how individuals construct meaning from those experiences. The interviews allowed for a humanistic perspective, honoring the participants' experiences and broadly informing the experiences of leaders of color (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The questions and interview protocol can be found in Appendix A. Elite interviews were used to explore the interviewees' experiences when developing strategies and leading institutional change to increase staff and faculty diversity (Kezar, 2003). Elite interviewing is the practice of interviewing high-ranking officials (Kezar, 2003, 2008). Using elite interviews for this research was suitable and in line with the characteristics of elite interviews, including the interviewee being connected to the situation, the utilization of descriptive data informing the interview, and the interviewee's role in defining the situation (Kezar, 2003).

The nature of semi-structured interviews offered flexibility for incorporating additional questions. Semi-structured interviews afforded the participants the freedom to lead and shape the discussion. The interviews were conducted using Zoom technology to have greater access to participants across the CCC system. Each participant received an individual Zoom meeting ID and password to ensure confidentiality and interviews lasted for roughly 45 minutes on average. As part of the Zoom software, the interviews were recorded, allowing for audio and video recording as well as transcription of the conversation. In addition to the Zoom transcription, notes audio transcription was also used to capture the interviews and cross-reference with Zoom transcription if needed.

Throughout the interviews, the researcher also developed analytic memos as a third form of collecting the interview information to ensure any immediate reflections on the interview were



captured and to serve as an intellectual workplace to think and rethink in the moment (Saldaña, 2021). Memoing also facilitated the identification of themes and trends during the coding process, recording hunches and aligning themes from the literature review (Bhattacharya, 2017). Participants remained anonymous, and any information that could expose their identities was not included in the findings. Measures were taken to eliminate identifying information for all participants, including assigning pseudonyms when the data was stored and generalizing identifiers like schools' names with the terms "college."

Latinx presidents were particularly important in this research as they have insights into the challenges and successes of achieving diversity both as leaders of the work and as participants in the process. They spoke to their racialized experiences as they elevated to the presidency and as leaders of equity in hiring at their institutions. They also spoke about the challenges they encountered and how these helped shape their equity in hiring efforts, including strategies and approaches for managing the political intricacies of implementing equity initiatives in hiring. These interviews addressed a gap in the literature by moving beyond strategies to advance diversity in hiring to operationalize the interviewees' experiences in navigating politics to institutionalize equity in hiring (Kezar, 2008). Moreover, it amplified the voices of Latinx presidents, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities they encountered as leaders of color. By providing a voice in this research to Latinx presidents to delve into the complexities of advancing diversity in hiring efforts, this study sought to investigate this phenomenon in depth and provide greater comprehension of the factors that contributed to increasing the representation of Latinx faculty and senior leaders in CCCs through the lens of Latinx presidents, both as the affected group (Latinx professionals) and the leaders advancing these efforts.

## *Data Analysis*

As part of the initial data analysis, all interview transcripts were printed to annotate keywords and highlight alignment between the research questions and the data. This method was utilized to be able to “touch” the data (Saldaña, 2021, p. 12) and provide a first run-through of the insights emerging from the interviews. The annotations were used to guide the coding on Atlas.ti. Prior to examining the interview transcription on Atlas.ti, deductive codes were entered based on the theoretical frameworks. For CRT, the following codes were entered: racism exists, interest convergence, and counter-storytelling. Codes informed by the political theory framework included developing a coalition, taking a political pulse, anticipating resistance, using data to neutralize politics, developing a communication strategy, and capitalizing on controversy. The interview transcripts were then examined using Atlas.ti, first using deductive analysis.

An inductive approach was used simultaneously to identify codes that emerged outside of the framework. As Saldaña (2021) affirmed, inductive coding involved approaching the analytical process with an open and receptive mindset, adopting an adaptability and flexibility approach that naturally generated codes during the initial review of data. This coding process allowed the researcher to serve as an instrument to lift the participants’ voices by staying open to themes and codes that may not have been expected or that expanded on the literature (Saldaña, 2021). A codebook was developed to more easily reference codes and emerging themes for the a priori list through the multiple analyses of the interviews (Saldaña, 2021).

Using the constant comparative method or axial coding, analytical codes provided an interpretation of meaning if codes emerged outside of the a priori codes developed from the theoretical frameworks and the existing literature on the topic of diversity in hiring (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Throughout the process, the conceptual theoretical framework,

consisting of CRT and political theory, was referenced to examine the dynamics of power, race, politics, and life experiences to codify the data more efficiently (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This was an iterative process, comparing codes across the interviews, renaming codes, and merging them to reduce their number. During the first review, there were 75 codes, which were reduced to 40 and finally to 27. The codes were printed and organized in an open space to group them and flesh out the major themes. The data were analyzed to illuminate observable themes that could be tracked throughout the interviews to indiscriminately analyze aspects of the interviews that stood out in relevance to the research questions and the theoretical frameworks (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Trustworthiness**

To identify validity threats in the research, the results were compared to previous research, verifying for alternative explanations or interpretation of the data. If discrepancies were identified, those were addressed through a member check for further clarification and may have been ruled out of the research (Maxwell, 2013). To ensure validity and trustworthiness in this study, a member check was conducted with one of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to ensure that the perceptions and experiences of presidents were captured accurately. Three participants also received the study's major themes to review the interpretation of the data and provide clarification as needed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Additionally, an audit trail of all research processes was conducted to track research procedures, data collection, and data analysis to increase transparency and obtain feedback from the advisor (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Peer review was also employed to increase trustworthiness, allowing for input and feedback from a peer currently employed at an HSCC who has familiarity with the hiring process, procedures and protocols (Saldaña, 2021). Interview

questions were modified from similar research and carefully crafted to avoid leading candidates to personal preconceived notions or biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Positionality**

My personal background as a first-generation college graduate, Latina, raised in a low-income household by immigrant Mexican parents shaped and influenced my professional life and ultimately led me to this research topic. Throughout my academic career, I have experienced the value and benefits of faculty and staff who understand my experiences and serve as role models. In my most formative years, my two most impactful teachers were Latina; they motivated and inspired me to see beyond what I could imagine. While in a master's program in education working toward a bilingual, bicultural teaching credential, the majority of my classes were taught by Latinx faculty, and for the first time since high school, I felt validated and honored in an educational setting. Being in a classroom where my cultural experiences resonated with others, including my professors, was liberating. In my first year in the master's program, a Latina professor personally asked me to apply to fill her position as an English teacher, and it was this level of intentionality in hiring that I took on in my role a few years later as department chair and grade level leader. I was committed to recruiting and hiring faculty that understood, validated, and incorporated the Latinx experience into their curricula. When I became president of the teacher's union after my second year of teaching, I helped systematize professional development opportunities for teachers and counselors and worked alongside HR and the District to develop recruitment strategies to attract the most qualified and culturally competent educators.

I recognize that the intersectionality of my culture, race, socioeconomic status during my upbringing, and my status as a first-generation college student leads to my passion for researching the experiences of Latinx professionals regarding CCC's hiring practices. I pursued a

career at a community college because the majority of my previous students attended these institutions, and I resolved that if I wanted to have a significant impact on racially minoritized students at an academic institution, community college was the best setting for me. I was first hired at my campus as the inaugural Hispanic-serving institutional director, and I served as the only Latina administrator at a college where 42% of students are of Latinx origins. Within my first year, I was also asked to serve on the EEOAC at the district level, tasked with developing the district's EEO plan. These roles helped shape my passion and, consequently, my desire to research obstacles to employment at CCCs for Latinx faculty and senior leaders.

The EEOAC met apathy and resistance when bringing awareness to staff and faculty demographic data and when creating and adopting an equity statement for job announcements. Although I understand that there might be tensions across the district when bringing to light practices that adversely affect candidates of color, I also feel a sense of urgency to create environments of belonging for both students and professionals in CCCs. I am deeply committed to increasing the representation of faculty and senior leaders of color and sometimes question if I am too connected to this work to be objective, but it is this same connectivity and sense of responsibility to our students that reassure me that this is research that needs to be done.

I currently serve on the board of the California Community Colleges Organización de Latinx Empowerment, Guidance, Advocacy for Success (COLEGAS), a professional organization working to develop, elevate, and increase leadership for Latinx professionals. As a board member, I serve with six Latinx presidents of CCCs that are also HSIs. Through serving on the board, I have also gained access to other Latinx CCC presidents who have served as mentors and a source of inspiration. This positions me to have more access to them and, with

some, to have established a rapport as well. I believe this rapport facilitated their comfort in engaging more openly during the interviews.

My experience serving on the EEOAC and supporting diversity in hiring throughout my career provides me with intimate insight into the challenges school leaders face. Additionally, as a dean and, therefore, hiring manager, I have extensive experience in leading hiring committees, which informed this research. It is this strong connection to my topic that also required me to ensure that my personal beliefs did not introduce bias into the data analysis. As the main instrument in this qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I am also conscious that my distrust for systems and strong connection to the research may have created blind spots. Due to these potential biases, I triangulated data collection and analysis with memoing and member checks.

### **Limitations**

This study examined Latinx faculty and administrators' representation at HSCCs through the lens of Latinx presidents. Organizational change largely impacts diversity in hiring efforts and requires institutional change. A limitation of this study stems from the interviewees' short tenures. Although they all offer keen insight into the subject of diversity in hiring due to their involvement in community colleges, most had only been in their roles for less than 2 years. Although Latinx presidents invited to interview were not identified based on their number of years serving as presidents, the very low tenure of presidents is consistent with research from Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research (2023); therefore, making it difficult to find a Latinx CCC president with more than 4 years. It is important to note that most interviewees had been working in community colleges for over 16 years, with more than half having over 21 years of experience. Furthermore, contextual data used to inform the

invitations to participants was from a secondary source, and the data presented in 2016–2017 for each category was labeled differently in 2021–2022. In the 2016–2017 term, there was only a full-time faculty category and a part-time faculty category, while in the 2021–2022 year, there was a full-time tenure, full-time non-tenure, and part-time faculty. The data was then combined for 2021–2022 for full-time tenure and full-time non-tenure to have comparable data.

Additionally, the data for senior leadership was too volatile to include as a comparable factor because the number of senior leaders at each campus was only four to five. This data was omitted from the contextual data; however, administrator representation was discussed during the interviews. Also, this study did not research the representation of part-time adjunct faculty, which often serves as a pipeline for tenured faculty positions and may be more diverse than the tenure-track positions. Further research on the experiences of adjunct faculty through the hiring process and in the advancement of their careers would provide other angles of tenured faculty hiring.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on many institutions in terms of hiring. Many campuses experienced a hiring freeze, followed by retirements and the chancellor's office incentive to increase faculty hiring. Hiring over these last few years has been an anomaly, and due to the racial reckoning during the pandemic, there may be a greater interest in equity in hiring.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews to explore the insights and experiences of Latinx presidents, aiming to deepen our understanding of their perspectives and experiences on implementing diversity-enhancing strategies in hiring practices. All participants were serving as presidents/superintendents of CCCs designated as HSIs in the fall of 2023.

The findings in this chapter are organized into three major themes and subthemes: (a) empowerment through identity, (b) setting the conditions for equity in hiring, and (c) strategies for diversifying the workforce. Each of the three themes had a few subthemes, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### **Empowerment Through Identity**

The interviewees conveyed an immense responsibility to lead equity initiatives on their campuses, particularly focusing on the diversification of faculty and administrative positions. The commitment to diversification in the workforce was driven by a connection to personal values, a dedication to the mission, and a sense of fulfillment from creating meaningful change. Most interviewees found strength, agency, and confidence from their sense of self and the connections to individuals who shared a similar identity, empowering them to fill leadership roles, advocate for their values, and be resilient through opposition. The significance of identity as a motivational force persisted as the interviewees discussed the diverse intersectionality that shapes their leadership, such as their Latinx heritage,<sup>1</sup> roles as mothers, queer identities, being first-generation, and their backgrounds as educators. This overarching theme of empowerment

---

<sup>1</sup> All presidents chose various terms when asked about their ethnicity including Chicana/Chicano, Mexican, or Hispanic.



through identity is categorized into two subthemes: their personal connection to the work and the fact that representation mattered in their career paths.

### ***Personal Connection to the Work***

All interviewees shared a deep commitment, accountability, and ownership to their work as presidents, which motivated them to prioritize diversity in their institutions' hiring efforts. Many of them began their higher education at CCCs, which inspired them to give back. Others, being the first in their families to attend college, empathized with the challenges students face in higher education. Others stated that their motivation was the need to serve the most marginalized populations, aligned with the mission of CCCs. Regardless of where they began, the interviewees collectively conveyed a deep personal connection to their work rooted in their own experiences. Understanding their experiences provides a glimpse of what motivated and inspired them to pursue a career in CCCs and further informs how to support the advancement of Latinx candidates.

The interviewees shared personal and relevant examples that demonstrated their belief in the transformative power of community colleges. Several attributed their success to the support they attained as students at CCCs. President 5, for example, shared,

Fortunately, [I] came across amazing faculty members and counselors, and really, the support that I never received in high school, I received at a community college, so that always left a lasting impression with me.

This level of impact drove this interviewee to work at CCCs and was a major reason they pursued a presidency. Similarly, President 4 attributed their college success to their CCC counselor, who inspired their desire to also impact other students' lives. The counselor pushed

them to transfer to a 4-year institution, and they credited their counselor for their success in completing their college degree.

All the interviewees expressed a desire to work with CCC students and a deep commitment to ensure that students can see themselves in the staff and faculty at their college. President 1 declared that they decided to work at a CCC when they worked for a grant serving K–12 students and saw the fundamental role CCCs play in the community. They said, “So, that’s when I fell in love with the [CCC] system. And why? Because of the access, because we don’t turn students away because we’re an open-access institution and because of the [CCC] mission.” President 3 expressed the same appreciation for CCCs’ diverse student population, disclosing their family’s personal connection to inspiring the work they pursued at a CCC:

My family’s a product of adult ed, right? Like, my father went to high school, actually to take English and citizenship. He became a citizen and voted every year, and, you know, his civic participation was really a big part of us, you know. And so, when adult ed came to community colleges, I went to my college president, and I said, I want to get involved in that. And I continued to advance in roles because I wanted to do innovative work.

President 3 further shared that creating pathways for adult education students and students learning English as a second language ensured their commitment to the work at CCCs. Ultimately, although they never set out to be president, their dedication to serving disproportionately impacted communities and their willingness to take on new opportunities led them to a role that they love.

Many interviewees expressed a desire to work with a student population that mirrored their own community. This was the case for President 1, who was heavily recruited at various colleges but was attracted to the institution they currently serve due to its HSI status. President 9,

similarly, made the deliberate decision early in their community college career to exclusively seek employment at an HSI, sharing, “I knew that if I was gonna be a college president, I only wanted to work at HSIs. Like, I really wanted to be intentional about that.” This level of intentionality reflected a rooted commitment to align their values with their professional goals of working in institutions that serve diverse student populations.

More than half of the interviewees decided to pursue the presidency to serve the community in which they grew up. President 6 described harboring reservations due to the short tenure of presidents, especially racially minoritized ones, but the opportunity to serve their home community encouraged them. The commitment to serve their community was a critical factor for many presidents in the study. President 8 conveyed,

I had other opportunities, ... but I really wanted to be ... my goal was to become president, but I wanted to do it where it was really meaningful for me. So, this is about me coming back to my community and giving back.

President 7 expressed that their passion for serving community college students arose from their own experience as a community college student. When the opportunity came for them to serve the community they had attended as a student, although it was a lateral move, it was important to them because it gave them the opportunity to serve their community.

Furthermore, all interviewees expressed the desire to create systemic change, given their personal connection and their understanding of the opportunity and urgency in improving Latinx students’ experiences. In describing their impetus to serve at the community college, President 1 shared about learning how to navigate and understand the intersection of policy, theory, and practice early in their career to disrupt systems that are harmful to students:

So, it's interesting in that I started at that [bilingual K–12 instructor] level because it opened my eyes into the intersection of policy, theory, and practice because politically, it depended on what the political agenda was. I think it acknowledged that the theory was really driven, in this case, by the politics, which is unfortunate. And then, of course, then it gets to the practice. How do you live in that space that's highly politicized with an academic background, which as I'm saying, this has a lot to do with where I'm at right now.

Many interviewees described education as a highly politicized space. They set forward to pursue ascension in their careers with the understanding that navigating the politics of the institution was part of the role, aligning with the political theoretical framework, as Kezar (2008) described.

Similarly, President 6 expressed realizing that they had to pursue management positions to have a seat at the table to impact structural change:

So, I felt like, at some point, I needed to get into the policy space to change how we serve our communities, how we serve our students, and then how we appropriate resources to do this work in a different way. And when I did, I started as a director at a college, where I ended up getting into management and really being able to design programs.

The majority of interviewees were further driven by a desire to shape policy and practice. Early in their career, President 2 was advised by a mentor, "If you want to change this [student outcomes], you should be an administrator. Administrators are at the table, and they get to make those decisions, and they get to implement changes." President 2 conveyed the need to be in an administrative role to have a voice in decision-making, believing their perspective as a racially minoritized leader was critical in that setting.

Interestingly, women raised concerns about pursuing the presidency due to familial factors and self-doubt, which can inform why there are fewer women presidents in the system. Three of the women interviewed did not decide to pursue a presidency lightly. They emphasized that it was a family decision, considering the impact on their children and ensuring that the presidency was the right time and place to raise their families. Particularly poignant was that three females spoke directly about making the decision based on their role as mothers. One of them shared taking the surrounding area's environment and K–12 school system into consideration before pursuing a presidency. Another female detailed a similar dilemma:

As a Latina mother of two children, I can tell you that we are culturally, we are the worst. We're the least forgiving, and we ridicule our parenting and our presence. So, I had told myself I would not even consider a president or superintendent position or chancellor position until my children were in college and on their own when this opportunity was offered to me.

Self-criticism was initially a barrier to pursuing the presidency, and this leader had to fight internal pressure to even consider leadership positions. Although this was a difficult decision, one of the females described accepting a presidency before their anticipated timeline. In making this decision, they reflected that they would “always go back to your why.” For them, it was about their connection to the diverse students they serve and their commitment to authentically undertake the challenging work required to positively impact students' lives. Their pathways provide additional insights into the systemic and intersectional barriers that other women of color may experience as they ascend into presidency roles.

### ***Representation Mattered***

The interviewees reflected on leaders who shared similar identities impacting and influencing their career path, emphasizing that representation mattered to them. Their reflections highlighted ensuring Latinx students and other racially minoritized students can see themselves and relate to faculty and institutional leaders. Many expressed how their career trajectories were shaped by someone sharing a similar identity, motivating them to pursue community college, advance in their careers, and ultimately aspire to the presidency. For example, President 4's commitment to work at a community college stemmed from the impact their college counselor had on their educational trajectory:

I ended up enrolling in community college, and so I was really fortunate that I met a counselor. When I first tried to re-enroll at community college, I thought I was just going to get a few classes under my belt to get a good job. When I met the counselor, it was a very powerful moment for me because it was the first time that I saw a Latino male educator, someone with an advanced degree.

This counselor guided President 4 in developing a transfer plan and served as a role model. This type of contact with a person they could look up to provided President 4 with the opportunity to see a future beyond what they had envisioned for themselves. By fulfilling their role as a counselor, the counselor also inadvertently served as a mentor. Largely because of this counselor, they also pursued a career in counseling at a community college and found it imperative to ensure that the faculty and staff resemble the students they serve.

Most interviewees expressed the pivotal role of mentorship in their career advancement, with the most significant impact often stemming from Latinx or other racially minoritized

leaders. Serving under a Latinx professional significantly shaped President 7's approach to career advancement and their perceptions as a leader:

He was really kind of a counter-narrative to Latinos from Latino males that I had seen growing up. He said very, very concisely, "I see your leadership, and I see that people follow your leadership. And so, I already know that you're gonna be a president" and so I'll never forget that. It's been mentors. It's been taking leadership challenges. And it's been learning from students, learning from the people who I was expected to lead and also learning from them as well. And all of those things, all of those experiences prepared me for where I'm at today.

The majority of interviewees shared experiences of being urged, encouraged, or tapped to serve as a president by other Latinx or racially minoritized mentors, further affirming the CRT principle of counter-storytelling (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). This underscores the importance of representation for racially minoritized students, enabling them to engage with and draw inspiration from leaders who share their backgrounds and experiences. In an interaction with a Black president, President 9 detailed,

Folks like me aren't president. And then we mapped and did this like crosswalk of who are the kind of students and the communities you want to be with and like, where are they? And basically, made the case for why being a community college educator was more in alignment with my values. And so that was the very first time that anyone had ever said, hey, you could be a college president.

This recognition that community college was better suited for their values and mission and that their leadership was needed at the presidency level shifted President 9's career trajectory. The

affirmation from another racially minoritized president propelled them to pursue a career in a community college.

President 2 decided to wholeheartedly commit to a career in community colleges, sparked by understanding the barriers community college students face. President 2 had spent many years working in 4-year institutions, but they felt they found their true calling when doing research on educational systems:

So, I started seeing data and research that showed our students didn't really make it out of community colleges in large numbers, so I wanted to see what was happening there, and that really piqued my interest to figure out by working there, and if I could implement change at community college, then I wanted to do that. And [the Latinx mentor] did a call to action for those of us who are out there. If we really wanted to help solve problems.

And we had, like the administrator, you know, interest, we should go to community college and work there.

President 2 found significant support from a multitude of racially minoritized professionals who bolstered their career and advocated for their involvement in community colleges because they understood the power of their leadership and the impact it would make in this space.

### **Setting the Conditions for Equity in Hiring**

The interviewees made deliberate and often difficult decisions to create an environment conducive to equity in hiring, which involved establishing supporting structures through shared governance, board relationships, and reviewing policies, practices, professional development opportunities, and governance structures. All participants described embedding equity as a core aspect of the college's identity and way of operating. For the majority, that included integrating the college mission and vision, guiding documents, evaluations, and utilizing data to neutralize



politics, with a commitment to equity and diversifying the workforce. All strategies aligned with the political theoretical frame (Kezar, 2008) when setting the conditions for equity, notably focusing on building coalitions, using data to neutralize politics, and developing strong messaging.

### ***Strong Heart and Thick Skin***

One of the most salient points that emerged throughout the interviews was the imperative for bold and courageous leadership when advancing equity in hiring. The majority of interviewees identified diversity in hiring as their primary responsibility and a critical factor in improving racially minoritized students' outcomes. They affirmed demonstrating emotional strength and resilience in the face of criticism, setbacks, and adversity, all while maintaining steadfastness in their convictions and vision for equity. President 3 discussed the difficulties of the role:

I want to have people at the helm of the class that look like the students we serve, you know, for some that could be very uncomfortable and be prepared for the blowback. Be prepared to weather the storm with it. It's that part of leadership, developing thick skin, and this is one that you'll need thick skin for.

Most interviewees shared expecting "blowback" or resistance when implementing equity in hiring practices, a strategy in the political theoretical frame (Kezar, 2008). Despite recognizing the challenging nature of diversifying the workforce and driving DEIA efforts, President 3, like other interviewees, deemed it imperative to directly confront criticism and resistance.

Across participants, there was a sense of urgency to lead with equity and full-hearted support of DEIA initiatives. All affirmed staying true to their intended direction in supporting DEIA work, especially in the face of internal opposition. President 6 shaped their response by

discussing the political dynamic of implementing equity in hiring, including overcoming opposition from detractors attempting to undermine equity efforts:

The presidency comes with a lot of pressure. If it's gonna be pressure, then let's embrace the pressure to do the hard work that needs to be done. Otherwise, we're gonna look down 30 years from now and say 70% of students that enroll in [CCC] over the last 30 years did not finish the educational goal they set for themselves when they enrolled.

President 6, like the majority of the other interviewees, anticipated and welcomed opposition, understanding the potential political repercussions they might encounter. Nevertheless, they emphasized that prioritizing doing what is right for students was paramount. They underscored a recurring pattern where many decisions they make (or do not make) reflect their personal convictions. President 6 emphasized the need to communicate a clear and uncompromising message about the institution's values and expectations for all personnel in alignment with the mission.

Making an unpopular decision was a common aspect of the interviewees' experiences, and they largely acknowledged it as a necessary course of action. All expressed that clarity and strong messaging were key to advancing equity efforts and highlighted holding all stakeholders accountable for their actions and promoting open dialogue on sensitive issues. President 9 shared their approach to staying focused on student needs:

The minute I start taking care of their [faculty and staff] feelings, I feel like that's when you get these, like, race-neutral, you know, when people say, like, what does that president even mean? I need for folks to be absolutely fucking crystal clear about what I meant when they leave a room. Oh, I think I was probably a little too harsh about it, but I'm nothing, if not at least consistent. I ask myself, when making a decision, how is this

going to impact students today? So when I get nervous and I don't want to do it, I have to ask myself, if I don't speak up, how does this impact students?

President 9, like others, expressed the complex space they navigate as decision-makers, going back to a commitment to clarity, consistency, and student-centered decision-making.

All interviewees found it important to stay focused on the institution's priorities and not allow for equity detractors, individuals who hinder the advancement of equity, to dissuade progress. President 6 prioritized clear equity goals and holding people accountable for meeting those expectations. They shared,

I was very successful in being able to kind of take out the nonsense from the rumors and the gossip and make sure that people understood that we were putting together an executive leadership team that was going to be able to lead the college into the future.

Early in their tenure, it was important for President 6 to set the tone regarding what people could expect from them, setting in motion an opportunity for transformational change in the face of opposition.

### ***Equity in Ethos of the College***

All interviewees regarded fairness and justice, particularly in uplifting marginalized communities, as fundamental principles deeply rooted in the college's culture, fostering equity in hiring. The interviews underscored their engagement in big-picture work, which laid the groundwork for equitable hiring. They shared their commitment to equity, not just as an aspirational goal but as integral to the institution's identity and guiding ethos. All were grounded in their work by the first tenet of CRT, that racism is systemic and ordinary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). The interviewees expressed that they leveraged the language on their mission statement to hold people accountable to equity, garnering support from stakeholders, including

their board. Common across many responses was that a strategic approach to equity efforts requires actively engaging the college's structures, processes, and culture. Reflecting some of this commitment, as evident in the review of college websites, six of the nine institutions included a commitment to anti-racism as part of their mission, while the other three included equity, social justice, cultural competence, and/or inclusion in their organizational values. This furthers the institution's commitment to equity, influences organizational cultures, attracts more diverse talent, and supports students' success, which ultimately establishes the conditions for equity in hiring efforts.

One-third of the interviewees revealed the challenges they faced in transitioning from merely acknowledging anti-racism in their mission to implementing this value at the institution, which remains an ongoing and arduous process. President 5 recalled maintaining firm on the inclusion of an anti-racism statement in the mission in the face of pushback, primarily from administrators. For the most part, the effort was led and highly supported by faculty and classified professionals, but there was a contingency of administrators who felt the addition of anti-racism was exclusionary. They said,

But we didn't allow them [administrators] to put a stop to the whole thing. They didn't like that. We had anti-racism, and ... they didn't like that. We had words in Spanish there. So, we said, "Okay, you don't like it. That's okay. That's your opinion. We're moving forward with it."

The effort to include an anti-racism statement in the mission, after faculty and classified professionals vetted the statement, came with obstacles, requiring the president to make a difficult decision that did not please everyone but prioritized equity and support for racially minoritized students and staff.

Leaders drew the connection between mission and vision statements and hiring conditions. Similarly, President 1 shared that it was the institution's anti-racist mission that persuaded them to apply for the presidency at this college. They also acknowledged that although the college stated its commitment to combating racism, there were complexities involved in fully realizing this goal in the institution's operations and culture, particularly highlighting the lack of support they received when they sought to change hiring policies. President 1 cited the college's anti-racism mission statement as a benchmark for accountability when advocating for changes in hiring practices and expressed frustration when stakeholders raised barriers to implementing practices aimed at increasing access for racially minoritized candidates.

More than half of the interviewees expressed that the decision to include anti-racism or equity in the mission statement must be tied to deliverables. President 3 shared that they used the mission statement to hold individuals accountable for equity in hiring:

The college was updating its mission statement to include an affirmation statement on equity. It was a beautiful statement. So, when the search came for hiring, I said to the senate president, "Okay, I'm going to include our affirmation statement in my letter to the senate, saying this is how many we're hiring, and I would expect the hiring committees to know that we are going to actually add teeth to this affirmation statement on equity."

This strategy of connecting equity goals, as outlined in the college's mission statement, was the foundation for enacting practices and reinforcing to the hiring committees the need to integrate equity into the hiring process. The anti-racist language in the mission statement provided guidance to hiring committees on the priorities of the college, which helped some of the interviewees reinforce an ethos of equity in hiring.

Similarly, more than half of interviewees also noted that the mission statement signals to candidates the priorities for the college, which, in turn, attracts more diverse candidates.

President 5 was instrumental in developing the mission statement and guided the college through the process of revamping it to better reflect the institution's commitment to anti-racism while also establishing clear expectations for candidates to commit to the mission statement. They shared, "A lot of people that apply want to work here because of our mission statement, the vision statement that we have. They know what we stand for. And I think a lot of people are attracted to that." President 5 expressed an expectation for candidates to be able to speak to their mission, which places the utmost importance on diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Furthermore, the mission was central to leading equity in hiring efforts, providing guidance, inspiration, and accountability. Several interviewees discussed ensuring alignment with equity in hiring objectives at the college to the mission and vision, evaluations, and board policies that guide hiring practices. Tying the DEIA goals to the professional evaluation goals for employees demonstrated an institutional commitment to ensuring that every employee is held accountable for equity efforts. President 4, who was part of a single district with a board that is very supportive of DEIA, shared,

I have a very progressive, equity-centered board who puts into my CEO evaluation goals around DEIA. And so I'm evaluated on these things. I'm personally evaluated. And so, whether I'm seeing success or not, a lot of my success is tied to these outcomes.

President 4 expressed appreciation for the board's strong commitment, noting their explicit dedication to diversity in hiring goals, emphasizing that the board's directives determine the extent of boldness a president can exercise in spearheading DEIA and equity in hiring. This

support has enabled President 4 to effectively navigate and oversee obstacles presented by detractors.

Similarly, other interviewees shared that DEIA goals were included as part of the evaluation of other constituency groups. For example, President 9 initiated adding DEIA goals as part of their own evaluation. President 9 also regularly shared the progress of advancing equity at the institution and requested feedback from the board to keep these initiatives at the forefront of the work of both the board and the president:

And our evaluations, like, that's [DEIA goals] in there. So it's in our management evaluation. It's not in classified because we're negotiating with them right now. So it'll probably be in the next round. And with faculty, we're in the process of negotiating what that looks like as part of their evaluation pieces. So we just kind of take it like, this is what we're supposed to do. And then how do we put it through the lens of our community and go from there?

With the chancellor's office's recent mandates to include DEIA as part of the evaluation of faculty, President 9 also wanted to ensure that this requirement was included for management and classified professionals. Including DEIA in the evaluation of other constituencies seemed like the next step for many interviewees.

Multiple interviewees looked to board policies to strengthen their advocacy for diversity in hiring. President 1 came into the role during an external evaluation of hiring practices that the board had directed. There were significant findings that had to be addressed, and at the directives of the board, President 1 would then have to revise the policies and administrative hiring procedures for board writing and approval:

Presidents can't do anything unless there's board policy that drives this, so they highlighted several deficiencies. When we make recommendations to an administrative procedure...we first vet through constituency groups. There is a level of pushback that you will get because of our collegial governance. So now the next step is, that's what we do now is I need to work with my collegial governance through participatory governance on the how. How do I implement this? The role that I play is to create ... how do we get to the what of the board policies that will move us in the right direction to ensure that we are responding to the findings of this consultant and that are in alignment with our EEO plan.

Ultimately, for President 1, working closely with the board and through collegial governance aimed to ensure that the board policies reflect the institution's commitment to DEIA and to realize or put into implementation the board policies. The board policies, President 1 shared, would propel great movement in advancing equity in hiring if the board adopted them. President 1 viewed the board policies as creating teeth for equity in hiring, providing valuable guidelines and standards for hiring practices. When board policies reflect a commitment to equity in hiring, President 1 envisioned that then, through participatory governance, they can oversee the implementation of these policies. President 1 described board approval of board policies as a clear indication that the board "had my back" when it came to updating the college's hiring procedures to establish equitable processes.

Similarly, President 4 described strengthening policies to ensure more equitable hiring procedures. They were forced to fail a search when the majority of candidates were racially minoritized, but the finalists were all White men:



Multiple things that had happened were more likely than not bias occurred in this process, and it was ugly, and it was uncomfortable, but it needed to be done to set an example, and then to go even further after that because I learned a lot of lessons. We took our administrative procedure on hiring, and we strengthened it even more. And now it says you must interview a minimum [number of candidates]. Like, we even put that in there.

President 4 noted that board policies and administrative procedures must align with the institution's DEIA work, especially as it relates to diversity in hiring. President 4 then pushed for the adoption of new language on board policies so that the expectations for hiring committees and hiring managers moving forward were clear. President 3 relied on board policies and other guiding documents to navigate away from obstacles to equity and push boundaries, recognizing that supporting documents provide justification for actions.

Several interviewees shared the need for the president to work closely with the board to explicitly state diversity in hiring as a goal. Most interviewees acknowledged that, similar to the board procedures, aligning board goals supports the advancement of equity in hiring by maintaining a consistent and clear message regarding the college's priorities. President 6, also in a single-district college, was empowered by the board goals, serving as a leverage to implement diversity in hiring:

I think the people that we hire are a reflection of the institution. So, ultimately, it is the responsibility of the board and the superintendent/president to list that as an explicit goal to diversify our workforce, especially our faculty in the classroom. I've been very explicit so that when you get into a committee, you're not doing something that no one's

expecting. Those are explicit goals that have been stated by the governing board and the president around a commitment to diversify our workforce.

President 6 emphasized the significance of hiring decisions in shaping the institution's identity and culture, with a focus on reflecting the student population being served. They shared that at their previous institutions, faculty and senior leaders were overwhelmingly White. One of the main reasons President 6 pursued the presidency at their institution was the board's commitment to diversity in hiring. This commitment empowered them to tackle diversity issues in hiring from various angles, including anchoring the policies, procedures, evaluations, and goals, which defined their expectations and could lead to the institutional culture they want to shape.

Diverse representation is essential at every level, including on the board of trustees (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). As corroborated by presidents of single-college districts, most of them emphasized that the diversity of their board was in line with the support and responsiveness to equity initiatives on each campus. Four of five single-college district presidents shared that their boards are much more diverse than in previous institutions and, therefore, felt more supported in implementing DEIA at their campus. The sentiment of feeling greater support due to their diverse board was also expressed by President 1:

And I've had some really good difficult discussions with the board, but I will tell you that when it comes back to who holds this responsibility, it's the board and myself. And I will tell you that I'm one of the few districts that has a 100% [racially minoritized] board from my understanding, which has helped greatly.

Despite disagreements at times, President 1 experienced significant support in ensuring accountability and decision-making in DEIA work within the district. A couple of other interviewees, primarily presidents who served in single-college districts, raised diversity and the

board's commitment to DEIA as a critical issue. President 4 recognized that "there's *colegas* that I know that are just as progressive as I am, but they have to navigate differently because they are working for more conservative boards." President 4, also with a board composed of predominantly racially minoritized members, underscored the board's role in shaping college presidents' leadership approaches, which influences their effectiveness in advancing DEIA initiatives. President 4 recognized that the dynamics in a single-college district are nimbler also, with an opportunity to execute changes faster.

More than half of the interviewees also expressed the role of shared governance in cementing equity in the college culture or detouring equity efforts. President 7 shared that diverse representation in the shared governance structures brought diverse perspectives, which was central to advancing equity in hiring. They further explained that it may seem unfamiliar or difficult for others to comprehend:

Because when you work in those types of [predominantly White] environments, it's almost as if, when you're a leader of color, you're speaking like a foreign language, just because there's a whole different way of thinking around how we serve the community. They highlight the challenges that leaders of color may face in navigating predominantly White spaces, where their perspectives and approaches may be marginalized or misunderstood. They also underscored the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in creating environments where all voices are valued and understood.

Several interviewees shared that working with diverse leaders of high influence at their institution has supported the advancement of DEIA work. President 7 expressed their belief that having Latinx leadership in the academic and classified senate has helped advance their equity agenda, expressing fortune "because I have a Latina academic senate president who gets it. She's

a social science instructor, and she believes in social justice. She believes in what I'm trying to do. She's supportive of it. Same thing with classified [senate]." President 7 noted the significance of representation among the leadership, particularly in reflecting the demographics of the student population as a defining aspect of the speed of advancing equity. President 2 described the importance they saw in implementing diversity in hiring efforts:

I think, in my opinion, the other body that is really critical in playing a role right now is the academic senate because to change the policy and procedure, you need a shared governance process, so ultimately, the body of people that vote on all of that includes the faculty.

President 2 was also cognizant of the influence presidents have on advancing equity efforts outside of policies and procedures, sharing that there are leadership actions the president can take to create an environment that either puts pressure to change policies and procedures. Likewise, President 7 advised on ensuring that the academic senate and classified senates were both intentionally invited to the decision-making table, including them in cabinet meetings to create open lines of communication. Again, President 7 reiterated the primary role that the president plays in diversity in hiring while also cautioning that the buy-in from the academic and classified senate is essential:

Everything is out there. I'm asking them for feedback. "What's your opinion on this," you know. So, it's a close partnership, so they don't see it, oh, you know, the evil administration. We have a very inclusive governance model to ... make sure that we empower our classified [professionals] and students. But we always maintain that faculty voice as well.

More than half of the interviewees shared that their approach to addressing equity gaps in student success rates and hiring was to bring in the senates as partners, including advocating for the inclusion of classified senate. The majority of them underscored that healthy governance practices allow for equity to remain at the forefront of the college's objectives.

The integration of governance structures and campus procedures was described as essential for many college presidents to advance diversity in hiring. President 9 advised leaders to create a through line of equity across the existing structure of the college:

Your goal needs to advance diversity and equity across the institution. Like, meaning it has to be in how you do program reviews and strategic planning and allocation requests and governance committees. Like, it has to be embedded in all the things. It has to be embedded in the board policies and the administrative procedures, and the understanding that you're trying to create an institution that really is trying to live in these diversities, equity, justice spaces because you can have focus in the hiring process.

President 9 explained that equity is operationalized when it is ingrained as part of the culture of the institution. They further shared that the commitment to equity in hiring can be measured by how they promote and include equity across the processes of the college because the institution also has to be ready to support racially minoritized staff. For President 9, it is not enough to stop at hiring a few racially minoritized staff, but the institution must also create a sense of belonging to ensure the longevity of that staff.

### ***Cultivating Culture Shifts***

The interviewees stressed prioritizing campus culture improvement and supporting stakeholders through change that upholds the values of the college. The interviewees recognized that the college is more likely to succeed in implementing equity in hiring efforts by fostering a

culture that prioritizes equity, acknowledging racist systems as outlined in a tenet of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023), and a commitment to supporting all marginalized communities, professional development focused on DEIA and leveraging collaboration.

All interviewees acknowledged that racial discrimination, prejudice, and bias persist in society and that these must be disrupted in the community college system. They were resolute in calling out racist structures, policies, and procedures that perpetuate biases and discrimination. President 4 indicated frustration with the community college system's structural and systemic barriers. They stated, "I felt like there was a lot of systemic and structural racism at the institutions I was working at. I felt like there was a lot of anti-Latino and anti-immigrant sentiment." Fighting these structural systems was a call to action and a reflective point, as they wanted to be in an environment where their skills and experience would allow for institutional change in addressing the systemic barriers, which ultimately drove them to leave that institution. Although they recognized that their current institution is not in a post-racist utopia, they were encouraged by the conditions that are more conducive to advancing equity efforts.

Most interviewees pointed to the racial equity gaps both in success rates for racially minoritized students and the disproportionate representation of White faculty as evidence of the persistent racist structures at their institutions. About half of them reflected on their experiences navigating these same structures as students and professionals. For instance, President 1 frequently shares their experience with racism throughout their career with campus stakeholders to initiate dialogue and raise awareness to prevent perpetuating racist structures.

President 8 voiced apprehension about the prospects of closing equity gaps if colleges do not prioritize workforce diversification and cultural competence. They shared a conversation

they had with the cabinet about prioritizing diversity in hiring. For President 8, it was about hiring a critical mass of racially minoritized faculty:

There was this sort of performative effort to diversify and there were a few of us that were brought in, but there weren't enough of us, and we were constantly being attacked for being ourselves. You just can't hire a few and say, okay, we did a good job. You have to keep hiring more until you are kind of at this tipping point where now there's not a majority. Who cares? If you hire 10 or 20, right? They're still dominating. And it's still the dominant culture that doesn't reflect our students.

President 8 told their cabinet members that prioritizing faculty diversification was paramount to closing student equity gaps. They emphasized that transforming racially minoritized students' experiences required undoing a prevailing culture that could perpetuate racism.

Some interviewees faced accusations of counter-racism when they spoke out against racism and advocated for equity in hiring, which aligns with CRTs third tenet, interest convergence, where improvements to hiring practices are made more difficult unless they align with the interests of the dominant group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). President 3 described the pushback they received when they hired a Latinx professional over an internal White candidate. They shared that they received accusations of nepotism, even though they had no relation to the candidate. Similarly, President 4 described learning that a hiring committee chair falsely shared with the committee that the president would not hire White people. They explained, "But you know, there's still this false narrative that if you are talking about ensuring diversity in hiring, that means you won't hire White people...what we're saying is, these pools need to be diverse, to ensure that I will always hire the best candidate that goes through the process." Both presidents described pride in their commitment to diverse pools at every step of the hiring

process, aiming to select the candidate that will best serve the students, regardless of race. They emphasized that demonstrating a determination to prioritize diversity in the candidate pool was essential for achieving significant racial progress in hiring, noting that racially minoritized candidates must at least receive a fair opportunity to participate in the process.

Unanimously, all interviewees described their passion to serve all marginalized groups on their campus, often needing to clarify misconceptions that their advocacy extended solely to Latinx students and staff. President 2 affirmed that justice for their community also meant championing the other communities. Their commitment to serving students at CCCs is meant to unequivocally support all marginalized groups. Specifically, they shared,

Like honestly, a real activist would never be satisfied with just that for your own people, like we're seeking *justicia* [justice] for everyone at all times, you know, all oppressed peoples. That is our goal. That should always be the goal.

These interviewees consistently expressed unwavering advocacy and solidarity with all marginalized groups that face systemic oppression.

All interviewees found it essential to intentionally communicate the equity gaps to address and eliminate them. They urged campus leaders to initiate difficult conversations with stakeholders, creating transparency and clarity around what is expected of all stakeholders. Espousing this approach, President 9 described, will build trust and encourage a willingness to reform:

And so we had to like, educate the community on that, so they wouldn't think that they were in opposition to one another. It forces conversations if you have HSI [status], and you're supporting your Latinx students, then what does that mean about Black students?



And so, it forces you to like, just have to have these conversations out in the open, which we have to, and we have to be intentional about it.

President 9 believes it is important to get people out of their comfort zones when talking about race. This was a critical point for many interviewees, who described leading conversations about race and racism and intentionally addressing them to shift the culture so that these conversations permeate all aspects of decision-making. They had to be deliberate about not lumping all students together and avoid falling into divisive traps.

President 6 emphasized being unequivocal about diversity and inclusion goals. They prioritized setting clear expectations to drive transformational change:

And so we've completely reframed and revamped mindsets. And I'll be honest with you. Part of that has meant that we've had to get some people off the bus, and leadership doesn't talk like that anymore. But if you're not here to help us meet our mission, you can't be here, and I'm just gonna say it. And I say that on campus pretty regularly. If you're not here to help us meet our mission, you can't be here. Go find another career. And that's okay. But if you're gonna be someone that stirs up trouble or creates chaos and wants to make a circus on the work that we do here at the college, this is not a good fit for you.

President 6 stated that they did not tolerate behavior that was disruptive to the goals of the college. For President 6, clarity in expectations supported creating a positive and focused environment when removing or pushing out the people who are not committed to furthering their mission. These were not the majority, they shared, but a loud majority that could detract the college from centering their work on students.

Like President 6, the majority of the interviewees acknowledged that they play a principal role in cultivating cultural shifts. President 3 reflected on their personal responsibility and commitment while acknowledging that they are also responsible for supporting others to feel agency over equity efforts. They had to push back and stay firm on their stand to expect a diverse pool for stakeholders to realize that the president's priority was diversity:

Then, they would send me candidates that they were comfortable with. Eventually, enough interviews with me and the chairs would know the level of questions that I asked, and what type of candidate I was looking for, what kind of vision and purpose I was looking for. Then I think people at this point realized, no, okay, she wants diversity. And not only does she want diversity, but she wants people who want to be here and serve this community.

President 3 was adamant that the culture shift starts with being clear about their expectations and being transparent. They grounded their actions on student success data, demographic data, and student surveys so that they had a foundation to fall back on. President 3 shared that they had to be unapologetic about wanting a diverse pool of candidates to create a common understanding and effect culture shifts.

The majority of interviewees stressed that achieving equity in hiring requires significant organizational and cultural change, with the president being responsible for fostering environments for stakeholders to fully support DEIA. Part of setting those conditions, as all interviewees expressed, has been focusing on creating robust professional development opportunities for stakeholders so that conversations about equity and diversity in hiring are part of the culture of the organization. All the interviewees discussed using professional development to bolster their DEIA priorities, while more than two-thirds of them described personally seeking

out experts in DEIA to support building equity at their campus and create buy-in around equity efforts. They called out ongoing and deliberate professional development on DEIA as an essential part of developing and maintaining equity-minded professionals. President 2 discussed their major strategy as utilizing the voices of outside experts, sharing about the various speakers that have helped initiate new efforts at the college. Bringing in outside speakers, they shared, created “opportunities for learning and then really challenged us. Now that we learned this, what are we going to do with it? So then, providing those opportunities to apply what we learned and really make changes?” President 2 also capitalized on the learnings to hold stakeholders accountable for equity work. Similar to President 2, most interviewees introduced professional development opportunities that aligned with a college’s DEIA goals. They ensured that these training sessions, workshops, and keynotes were not one-time events but rather recurring opportunities.

For most interviewees, the training and workshops are efforts to ensure equity across campus, which sets up the conditions for equity in hiring, from recruitment to retention of racially minoritized faculty. An inclusive and supportive environment highlights this training, which is essential for diverse faculty members’ success and retention. President 8 expressed that these efforts are just as important as ensuring that hiring committee members participate in training because they help reduce bias. These initiatives promote fair hiring practices and foster a climate where racially minoritized faculty feel valued and supported. For President 8, it was important to bring in a professional expert on anti-racism, knowing that this would be an uncomfortable conversation for much of their campus:

The speaker spoke to us on how to become an anti-racist institution and then that triggered a lot of things on campus with affinity groups being created. Then our faculty, a

group of faculty, got together to develop a proposal on an academy for faculty, on anti-racist, but also how to embed cultural competency through their courses.

President 8 shared several experiences that provided centering points for their campus on equity, including strengthening affinity groups and faculty-driven training on liberatory pedagogical approaches. They emphasized providing the necessary resources and support for efforts that can shift the minds and hearts of their peers.

Several interviewees also noted that it was necessary for all campus stakeholders to make participation in equity workshops and training mandatory, when possible, within the contractual agreements. President 1 recounted the advocacy necessary to establish college-wide professional development opportunities and emphasized including classified professionals in decision-making processes, a space from which they had previously been excluded. The professional development opportunities were intentionally carved out as DEIA and anti-bias training, which brought about rich conversations about racial gaps and diversity in hiring. Influencing this committee, which was led by faculty and included administrators and classified professionals, was “a big win because that allows us to have more collaboration. And it also validates to ensure that these opportunities, and that this language and the training and the narrative is impacting everyone.” President 1 shared attaining great feedback from stakeholders who were at one point shut out of these opportunities, like maintenance staff, and expressed appreciation for learning about equity-minded practices to improve how they serve students. President 1 expressed that when classified professionals are the most diverse units on campus, it is critical to incorporate their input. They also shared that minimal progress would be achieved if DEIA professional development opportunities remained optional; therefore, cultivating college-wide engagement becomes vital to

reach a broader audience and signal to all college constituents that DEIA is a priority for the college.

Almost half of the interviewees also emphasized supporting racially minoritized staff, empowering them to become change agents at their campuses. These professional development opportunities and the inclusion of campus stakeholders in discussions about equity enhance and influence conversations during hiring so that hiring committees also feel supported and have the language to talk about equity in their processes (Lara, 2019). All interviewees shared the importance of ensuring that hiring committees were diverse and trained to reduce bias. President 9 was clear about aligning their training to the professional development opportunities provided for the campus. They discussed aligning the training with EEO efforts and emphasized utilizing training as “critical to creating an ecosystem of belonging.” President 9 used EEO training to show the campus community their commitment to diversity and, in turn, develop an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. The majority of interviewees emphasized using the USC Race & Equity Center as a resource for professional development experts on whom they relied to provide professional growth opportunities and assess campus cultures’ responsiveness to equity.

Similarly, President 8 discussed empowering faculty, through the faculty senate and shared governance structures, to take ownership of equity efforts on the campus:

Having the faculty support it, get behind it, it is very important. And then also your unions are gonna be another critical group that needs to believe in it and support it. So as president, your job is to do your work to get buy-in from all the groups and from your internal people so that you can do this work and be successful.

President 8 recognized that their ability to advance equity efforts is constrained unless they first garner support from stakeholders. They emphasized that trust among groups and a commitment to equity are invaluable to securing their support. In fact, President 8 revealed that most equity initiatives, including those pertaining to hiring, originated as grassroots efforts initiated by the faculty senate.

The majority of interviewees shared their experiences in supporting their staff to institutional changes that centered diversity and inclusion principles. For many stakeholders, change is difficult and causes discomfort, as President 1 explained,

They don't want to change anything. They think that everything we've been doing to date is fine. Somebody made a statement, "That this isn't corporate America...we've been doing just fine with hiring, and we don't know what the problem is." But our numbers [of diverse faculty] have not changed. We need to make sure that all of our policies are anti-racist.

President 1 leaned on the coalition work they had done to bring in faculty or staff to get other stakeholders to come around to collaborating on hiring policies and procedure decisions by inviting multiple stakeholders to partake in the conversation. They emphasized ensuring these conversations were inclusive, allowing more individuals to contribute, and ensuring decisions were made with the students' best interests in mind. In one scenario, the academic senate felt their authority over determining professional development opportunities for the college was being undermined. Yet, the president managed to secure their support by presenting compelling data. The majority of presidents used data to neutralize politics, which is a strategy in the political theoretical frame (Kezar, 2008).

Likewise, President 2 also created buy-in by offering multiple opportunities for campus constituents to better understand the data on student success and the disproportionate impact of remedial courses. There was campus-wide involvement in the professional development opportunities offered, which created an openness to reevaluate their practices:

Yes, the people who attended the general sessions [professional development activities on the impact of placement exams on Black and Latinx students] voted yes. That left the English division out on a limb, the only ones who I was waiting for to submit their decision, and they kind of got pressured. I was, like, math voted yes, and the general people at the sessions all say we need to [remove the placement exams]. So, you know, it's kind of like you have to just maneuver through and just get people to see what is the harm in trying this. There's not going to be harm to our students. We're already harming our students with the practices we have in place.

President 2 also emphasized assessing readiness for change while acknowledging that waiting for everyone to be ready is not feasible. They shared that, at some point when there is consensus, the president has to decide to move forward.

All interviewees reinforced that a president cannot do the work alone to effect changes in hiring, with President 7 specifically speaking to the need to positively engage campus stakeholders:

It does require a lot of diplomacy. There's a lot of collaboration with your partners because you can't do it in isolation. I mean, you have a great idea, but if you don't have the support of the senate and then you're kind of stuck. So, I think my biggest advice is being able to work well with your partners and your campus stakeholders. There's always

going to be divisions, but at the end of the day, you know, people believe that our students deserve the best.

President 7 shared that the presidents cannot compromise the values of the college, but at the end of the day, there are always allies in the faculty and classified ranks to support equity work on campus. The strategy for President 7, as slightly fewer than half of the interviewees shared, was to lean on those people to help create the buy-in to get the work done.

President 8 also underscored the importance of collaborating with partners to realize their vision. They highlighted the need for faculty and administration to work together when implementing diversity in hiring initiatives, emphasizing the significance of effective buy-in strategies:

So, I drafted a statement talking about the importance of diversity in hiring and how important it is to have faculty who can connect and support our students of color. So that was my piece. And then being able to attend meetings with them and answer questions and provide support you know, at any time. And when there's pushback, people step in and defend it and not, you know, not hide behind.

Advancing the initiative required facilitating the participation of stakeholders from diverse areas. President 8 emphasized the need for a unified voice among stakeholders, which helped to prevent misinformation about the effort from spreading across campus. They were also mindful of the timing of the effort and the political landscape, ensuring the conditions were ready for the diversity in hiring effort to proceed:

Most of my 20-something years have been working directly under a president or chancellor. You kind of learn, and you kinda learn from the mistakes of when it's a good



time to push, pause, or retrieve, right? Go back where the costs are higher. The opportunity was there. The timing was perfect, and we went ahead and did it.

President 8 shared the difficulty of implementing the effort, but with the support of campus constituency groups, they implemented diversity in hiring that proved favorable in hiring racially minoritized faculty.

Several interviewees discussed identifying clear lines of communication with the senates and union as key to advancing diversity in hiring efforts. President 7 shared that they include the faculty and classified senate presidents in cabinet meetings to “make sure we’re on the same page. There’s a lot of politics back and forth.” Similar to President 8, establishing strong communication with stakeholders holding a lot of influence at the college is key to getting the work done. More than half of the interviewees also shared about the political dynamics that presidents have to navigate to implement diversity in hiring strategies. Like President 8, President 9 discussed the politics involved in advancing diversity efforts but acknowledged the necessity of doing so while being upfront about their intentions:

Right now, we’re dealing with some stuff we’re creating this DEIA task force really focusing on campus climate, and I just have stopped trying to play the political game. I mean, I’m playing the political game, but I’m being very upfront about it, and the very upfront about it for me is ... we all recognize that we have an issue. You have a role. I have a role. How do we collaborate in that to keep folks of color?

President 9 also emphasized that part of the hiring process involves establishing supportive systems to retain diverse candidates. Additionally, prioritizing DEIA efforts necessitates developing infrastructure that is responsive to the racially minoritized faculty’s needs.

## **Strategies for Diversifying the Workforce**

The interviewees described employing unpopular, unconventional, and arduous decisions to drive equity in hiring. They viewed these efforts as a top priority. They were determined not to passively observe and to actively lead and drive initiatives in this area. They shared various strategies to attract, recruit, hire, and retain faculty and administrators, including targeting the marketing of job postings, requiring diverse hiring committees, fostering an inclusive workplace culture, and creating opportunities to develop existing employees to advance in their careers. In addition to the strategies mentioned above, three overarching strategies emerged consistently across the interviews, including utilizing failed searches as a tool for advancing equity in hiring, embracing an HSI identity to increase diverse pools, and incorporating acculturation practices of new hires.

### ***Failed Searches as a Tool for Advancing Equity in Hiring***

The majority of interviewees failed some searches to set the expectation that hiring committees and the campus had to provide diverse candidate pools. Failing searches was a strategic tool to halt a hiring process that lacked diversity and to reject settling for less diversity among new hires (Bensimon & Associates, 2022). When the outcomes presented by the search committee did not align with the college's mission and expectations of diversity, presidents chose to engage in justice-centered leadership practices, which meant failing a search. Over half of the interviewees portrayed this action as having political implications, serving as a cautionary tale for other hiring pools that a poorly represented candidate pool would not be considered. President 4 suggested that the system is designed to not bring forward diverse pools due to the barriers and biases that often exclude racially minoritized candidates, and therefore, they see it as their role to intervene to avoid inequitable practices:

And so it requires the president, I think, at that moment to intervene and say, you know this is not a viable search, and stop these things, and from getting to a point where you know we have pools that are not diverse. It was ugly, and it was uncomfortable, but it needed to be done to set an example.

Ensuring diverse pools is an obligation that President 4 takes to heart because the decision to fail a search does not come lightly. Failing a search came with political and, at times, legal implications, but it was a decision worth making for many of these interviewees to make progress in diversifying the workforce. Some described taking a political hit by making the unpopular decision to fail a search, while others described being grieved by faculty for failing a search.

Similarly, President 5 described employing a failed search when a finalist pool did not reflect the cultural competence to serve the students. For President 5, candidates had to understand the student population:

I just didn't think that any of the people [finalists] had answered my questions the way that I wanted them at the second level. But none of the candidates had an idea of what diversity, equity, and inclusion meant to this institution, and none of them had read the mission statement. So, for me, that was a problem. That was from that committee.

President 5 understood that it was an issue of the committee moving forward candidates who were not committed to the college's mission and goals. They stated that this pool had diverse candidates; however, they were not confident that any of the candidates understood the expectations of the college to center DEIA work.

According to the interviewees, failed searches many times, came with frustration from the hiring committee or area faculty and deans. President 3 shared their conviction to hire diverse faculty and administrators by not allowing criticisms to impact their decision:

I've had to have a number of failed searches. I've upset a number of people. And I say, it occurs from the standpoint that people then get the reputation of only hiring Latinas, or Latinos and you know. But, I put it out there from the beginning what kind of candidate we are looking for and can help us fulfill our mission and meet our affirmation statement. And then, when I started to have failed searches, I sent a strong message to committees that I'm not trying to be performative.

For President 3, the tide turned when committees realized that they would not hire for the sake of hiring. They explained that they will always prioritize hiring candidates that students deserve in every position they hire, regardless of who may disagree with them, to act toward racial equity.

President 6 shared that they establish the institutional goals to set clear expectations for hiring committees, aiming to avoid the need for failed searches. By steadfastly ensuring that diverse candidates are included in the finalists' pool, President 6 emphasized their responsibility to make the final determination on all hires with a commitment to diversity. They shared an experience a part-time racially minoritized faculty member had with trying to get a full-time position for several years, making it to the final round and not getting hired. When there was another opportunity to interview for the position, soon after they were appointed president, the president offered them the position because they were the best candidate. The interviewee shared their frustration with the barriers racially minoritized faculty face when going through the hiring process:

And it was a perpetuation of the practices that we've seen historically again, what you're gonna see when you have predominant White faculty committees is they're gonna seek candidates that reflect their own experiences or closely reflect their experiences. You're not doing something that no one's expecting. We have to keep the data in mind around why our workforce needs to be diversified and how we give opportunities to people of color in the faculty ranks. Those are explicit goals that have been stated by the governing board and the President around a commitment to diversify our workforce. So, I haven't received a whole lot of pushback. Haven't had a lot of failed searches, but will do it when necessary.

President 6 further explained that the board policies had been helpful in justifying their efforts to diversify the faculty, which helped avoid failing searches since they set clear expectations for hiring committees.

President 2 described their involvement in hiring focused on the final interview and that they relied on the hiring chair to identify candidates that would be supportive of the students. For President 2, having the final decision on hiring provides a balance to ensure that the chair and hiring committee have met the institutional goals of equity in hiring:

The chair knows their responsibility is to ... find people who can relate to our students, who can really champion diversity, equity, inclusion in their actions, and who our students also can relate to. So, I think that's extremely important. And then, finally, I do participate in almost all second-level hiring committees. And I make those final decisions. So, for me, it's key to get people in place that understand our community college. This is the leadership we need at all levels. So, I have to help people get

comfortable with change and push back through failed searches when pools do not meet our expectations.

President 2 recognized the obstacles and biases that certain members of hiring committees may possess, stemming from a desire to maintain the status quo, which may not always align with the best interests of the students and the college. President 2 viewed it as their duty to assist hiring committees in embracing a justice-centered perspective when making hiring decisions and selecting the candidate best suited to address racial equity disparities.

### ***Embracing an HSI Identity to Increase Diverse Pools***

The interviewees leveraged their identity as HSIs to expand and diversify candidate pools. For the majority of them, embracing their HSI identity as a campus was also a marketing tool to attract, recruit, and retain diverse faculty and administrators. They shared recognizing and celebrating the institution's designation as more than an opportunity to attain federal grants but as a commitment to serving Latinx and marginalized student populations. When candidates can see the institution's commitment to diversity through the recognition of their HSI status, it signals an inclusive campus environment that resonates with diverse candidates.

More than half of the interviewees shared that embracing their HSI identity as a campus cultivates an environment conducive to fostering diversity and driving equitable change. Their identity as an HSI also empowered them to reaffirm the call to action to enhance the representation of Latinx faculty. President 1 shared that their board was very vocal about the institution's HSI status and reminded stakeholders why it was necessary to make significant changes to their hiring practices:

So, the board will continuously remind everyone we're an HSI as we move towards diversifying our practices for hiring. It is something that's pointed to. It's all over that

consultant's audit report. It's all over our EEO plan and equally so, we are blissfully recipients of a lot of HSI grants and wear it on our sleeve. We take pride in it. So, it is part of the culture. It is something that does drive, and it is quite frankly a positive in that I can point to it and remind folks. It will help us move forward and will help attract diverse candidate pools.

The deep commitment from the board to uphold and promote the institution's HSI status demonstrates a clear alignment with the strategic goals for enhancing diversity and fostering an inclusive campus environment. This proactive stance highlights their pride in the HSI designation and underscores their dedication to leveraging it as a catalyst for positive change at the institution. Prominently featuring their HSI status in institutional guiding documents signals the college's priorities to the campus and external community.

The majority of interviewees made the distinction that embracing an HSI identity meant working toward a Latinx-serving institution versus a Latinx-enrolling institution. President 8 described the lack of awareness their campus had on what it meant to have an HSI designation when they first arrived as president:

In fact, when I started, we started using HSI a lot in our marketing. People are confused. They're like, "Oh, we are an HSI because we have a Latino president?" So, we had to do an informational campaign and explain to them what HSI designation means. It's a federal designation, and we'll get to be part of an HSI. But it needs to be an HSI as a benefit to our students, ... but also embedding it into everything that we do on our campus, including hiring.

President 8 launched an informational campaign across campus to ensure that constituents gained a clearer understanding of what being an HSI entails and how to embrace that identity. The

campaign provided grounding to emphasize the need to diversify the faculty to reflect the student population. Through the initiation and support of faculty who were interested in reforming their hiring practices and with the support of President 8, the next round of hiring had the most diverse pools and was the most competitive, even in fields where it is generally difficult to recruit diverse candidates.

Likewise, President 9 explained that embracing their institution's HSI identity meant incorporating it into job descriptions, press releases, campus logos, artwork, and guiding documents like the strategic plan. They emphasized prominently displaying the HSI designation and fostering broader discussions about embracing the campus's identity as an HSI:

And so, I think that the HSI designation can influence the equity and hiring because you're signaling to folks, like, this is something we care about. And to someone like me, where I said, I'm only gonna work at HSIs, I didn't bother looking at other places because I was like, that's gonna be outside of what my focus and like my goal and my passion will be.

For President 9, being an HSI entailed more than enrolling Latinx students and reaching designation status; it was about demonstrating how the campus has woven HSI priorities into its overarching goals. This illustrates the institution's commitment to being held accountable for HSI efforts and prioritizing equity in hiring.

The interviewees also stated that embracing an HSI identity meant more than just meeting the 25% of Latinx student enrollment, as it also signified a commitment to providing specialized resources and support for Latinx students to succeed. President 4's institution has been awarded multiple HSI federal grants, and they feel a responsibility to promote the success of Latinx students and professionals:



We have very open conversations about what it means to be, you know, not just a Hispanic-serving, but what I call a Latinx thriving institution. This assumption that everything you do is Latinx because they're the majority, like, no, that's not intentionality. And just because it happens to serve the majority of the population you serve doesn't necessarily mean it's rooted in a practice that is affirming and uplifting of Latinx students or Latinx staff.

President 4 sees fostering a thriving Latinx campus as a retention strategy for Latinx faculty and staff and for cultivating a culture and climate of belonging. They affirmed that racially minoritized students need to see faculty and administrators who share their identity also thriving on campus.

Importantly, embracing an HSI identity provided opportunities for these interviewees to highlight needs and justify prioritizing diversity in hiring. For President 5, their HSI identity is their "North Star. Otherwise, you know, it; it doesn't really make sense to anybody when you're just trying to say that you wanna hire more diverse faculty, you know. You gotta have a reason for it." President 5 explained that when the institution is committed to serving Latinx students and therefore embracing their HSI identity, it means the institution is doing the work to understand how to better support Latinx students, which many times illuminates the disparities in representation between the student population and those of the faculty, especially. Similarly, President 3 shared that their success rates for Latinx students are reason enough to diversify their workforce, pointing to the shift in embracing their HSI identity as an opportunity to home in on diversity in hiring. President 6 acknowledged that as a campus, they still had much work to do to truly embrace their HSI identity: "I think it's been at the forefront, pretty prominently. And so I think, as we do this, it gives us the impetus for us to start really messaging why we're focusing

on hiring Latinx faculty administrators, staff, and people are on board with it.” As the campus works toward creating supportive structures for their Latinx students, it is also an opportunity to establish diversity in hiring goals.

Half of the interviewees took on the tasks themselves of initiating conversations and developing plans to address Latinx students’ needs and promote diversity in hiring efforts. President 7 initiated strategies to embrace their HSI identity, which came with knowledge growth:

I really started doubling down on who we are as an institution. So, we started doing a lot of training around being more of an intentional HSI. And I think that really helped spark a lot of discussions on gaps. What’s the representation of our faculty and classified staff? Are our faculty and staff prepared to work with our population of students and the local community? So, last year, I initiated, and this was through the support of our academic senate and classified senate. It took a lot of meetings back and forth, but we didn’t call it a cohort model, a HSI cohort model, but we did a lot of the aspects of it. So, for example, we added supplemental questions related to, you know, working in HSI working with Latinx students. “What’s been your experience?” Give us examples of things that you’ve done to work with this population, and be more intentional.

President 7 shared that because they are part of a multi-college district, they could not fully implement cluster hiring even though they had the support of their campus. They shared that even though they are in the same districts, the other campuses are not as diverse in their student body or staff, and therefore, there is less buy-in to expend resources in adopting cluster hiring. However, even when implementing only elements of cluster hiring, they still had significant success in attracting and hiring diverse professionals in the last round of hiring.

For one-third of the interviewees, understanding and addressing their students' needs was crucial. This realization motivated them to create an environment that embraced their HSI identity and led them to make significant changes in their hiring practice. President 2 emphasized their approach of closely partnering with experts in racial equity, justice, and liberation. While they have not fully implemented cluster hiring, they have gleaned insights from leaders at other institutions that have, recognizing that their own institution may not be ready for that level of change at this time:

So, then I amplify it, and I share that. So, I can see who's in a position to be able to push that practice on their campus. I introduced it, but the conditions, people, weren't ready for that yet. So, I would say, test the waters and see what you're ready for and then borrow that and that kind of blueprint and do it. One of my colleagues was in a position to get it done, and [they] did it. And then it was like, you have an example that you can draw from as a leader.

President 2 has taken the approach of developing a team that provides recommendations on making the institution an HSI-embracing institution. This committee has also provided strategies to improve their hiring practices and increase diversity in their faculty. Throughout the interviews, the participants described the necessity of taking a political pulse, as referenced in the political theory framework, to determine whether institutions are prepared for cluster hires, which involve recruiting for multiple positions simultaneously, with a specific emphasis on attracting diverse candidates. Alternatively, they proceed cautiously, adjusting hiring practices to continue driving improved outcomes in diversifying their workforce.

### *Acculturation of New Hires to Campus Culture*

The interviewees showed great concern for ensuring new hires adapted and integrated into the culture, norms, and DEIA values of the institution. All acknowledged that it is equally important to attract and recruit diverse faculty and administrators as it is to ensure they are acculturated to the campus cultures, focused on DEIA. All shared professional development and training opportunities that are offered or, in some cases, required of new hires to attend.

Most interviewees emphasized fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment where new hires feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute to the institution's mission and goals. President 5 engaged candidates during the interviews on their commitment to DEIA through the participation of their academy:

And so, you know, navigating through those conversations, you know, and I ask it as an actual question towards the end of my interview. Are you willing to participate? Because I may make it a part of your evaluation? You know, if you get hired here, you know so, and a lot of them will say yes, and I've had several say no.

Raising this question during the interviews was critical since attending the academy for this campus is not a contractual obligation. The candidate's response indicates their commitment to DEIA and sets clear expectations for the candidates to understand that those are the college's priorities.

For half of the colleges, the acculturation practices were embedded as part of the faculty and classified professionals' contracts. President 4 discussed how College Culture Fridays provided a year-round onboarding process for new faculty members:

They have to spend all day together, every Friday, so that's 32 Fridays, going through an onboarding process and a kind of acculturation into the institution. So, there's a lot of

conversations around equity and DEIA and support embedded. They also meet the [faculty association], the faculty do like a peer mentor and connect new faculty with seasoned faculty. Now, not all new faculty choose to participate in the mentor program, but they are given that opportunity and someone outside of their department so that they can kind of talk openly about whatever it is they're experiencing.

President 4 emphasized that maintaining a consistent and ongoing professional community greatly contributes to ensuring faculty members' success. Additionally, it offers faculty members the chance to engage and align themselves with the college's mission.

Other interviewees took a more informal approach with new faculty, in addition to other professional growth opportunities and onboarding. President 7 strives to create opportunities for new faculty to interact with them, demonstrating their accessibility. They shared,

Each semester, I do two luncheons with new faculty just to check up on them. How are you doing? How are you connecting with your department? What's some of the challenges? So, they've really enjoyed those opportunities. Just be able to connect with me.

Similarly, President 3 provides access to the new faculty by informally meeting with them:

I give them feedback on their interview. I let them know why they were hired. What I saw. I encourage them. I literally say to them, "You know this is my vision of being student-centered. You should consider this," or "Hey, what are we doing for Women's History Month? Hey, what are we doing for Latino Heritage Month?" Yeah. I push them to do things outside of the classroom. I try to create a safe space to rock the boat.

President 3 aims to create a safe space to be involved in campus culture and empower new hires to show up as their authentic selves. They are also concerned with inviting innovation and

continuous improvement. Like President 5 and 3, President 2 also meets with the new faculty regularly and engages them in projects that are rooted in equity. They also connect new faculty with professional development opportunities that promote a sense of belonging and DEIA. One-third of interviewees shared that they sponsored faculty, administrators, and classified professionals to participate in professional leadership opportunities that promote justice and liberation like the Aspiring Radical Leadership Institute or affinity group organization conference like COLEGAS, African American Male Education Network, and Asian Pacific American in Higher Education.

The interviewees stressed new hires' prompt onboarding. However, this process can be challenging due to union contracts that may restrict new faculty members' participation in professional development opportunities. At some colleges, formal and consistent onboarding procedures could require changes to working conditions. President 9 expressed frustration in the traditional approach to integrating new hires into institutional responsibilities:

But we're hiring with all the rights and responsibilities like, if we trust to put them in the classroom to teach students, we should be able to trust them to sit on a committee and hold perspective. This whole evangelizing them is not the business. And so that's why, like, one of the ways that I'm trying to help us diversify who sits in these spaces is by challenging the status quo of, like, you need to leave them alone for 4 years. But by then, they've been so indoctrinated into the status quo that they're, like, they don't want to be involved anymore.

President 9 expressed disappointment with the practice of shielding new faculty from meaningful engagement and decision-making processes early in their career, which can impede committees from hearing fresh perspectives and ideas. Additionally, if a faculty member is not involved from

the beginning of their tenure, they may struggle to embrace the institution's culture and practices. Overall, interviewees recognized the need to balance engaging new faculty in initiatives, ensuring proper onboarding, and securing their commitment to DEIA efforts.

### **Summary**

Overall, the insights gathered from the study highlighted three main themes, each with subthemes. Firstly, the interviewees found empowerment through their identity, drawing strength from their personal connections to their work, the guidance of supportive mentors who shared a similar identity, and their unwavering commitment to equity despite challenges. Secondly, they emphasized setting the conditions for equity in hiring, recognizing it fosters diversity at their institutions. This included embedding equity into the college's ethos and promoting cultural shifts to support diversity initiatives. Lastly, the interviewees shared strategies for diversifying the workforce, such as utilizing failed searches to advance equity, embracing their HSI identity, and acculturating new hires into campus culture. They emphasized the collaborative nature of this work while acknowledging their central role in driving diversity efforts forward. These findings offer a comprehensive insight into the experiences and viewpoints of Latinx presidents as they work to promote equity in hiring practices.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Efforts to diversify the composition of faculty and administrators in CCCs require an institutional commitment from senior-level administrators and faculty leadership, recognizing that there is a need for systemic changes that require political will and drive (CCCCO, 2020a). The campus leadership ultimately sets the tone for the implementation of initiatives that require organizational change (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). As such, this study explored the experiences and understanding of Latinx presidents in advancing diversity in hiring and examined the actions and strategies they perceived as vital for institutional change leading to equity in hiring.

Latinx presidents bring unique perspectives and insights to the process of diversifying the faculty and senior leadership, given their own experiences in leadership ascension. Purposeful sampling was employed to select presidents of colleges that experienced increases and decreases in the percentage of Latinx faculty. However, the fluctuations in increases and decreases do not inherently signify progress or lack thereof, as the comparable data, namely the number of Latinx students, fluctuated, while the number of faculty members was mostly kept the same from spring 2020 through fall 2022 due to hiring freezes during the pandemic. Furthermore, all interviewees were within their first 4 years of their presidency, and therefore, attributing changes to the diversity of their faculty would not be appropriate since some were hired just before or after the 2021–2022 academic term, which was the term used for the data published by The Campaign for College Opportunity (Reddy, 2024). Finally, no discernible trends were observed in the qualitative analysis based on the institutional gap in proportional percentage representation across the institutions.



Drawing on CRT and political theoretical frameworks as guiding principles and utilizing the literature review to analyze the interview data, three major themes emerged: empowerment through identity, setting the condition for equity in hiring, and strategies for diversifying the workforce. The study's findings aligned with existing literature suggesting that candidates of color encounter barriers throughout the hiring process (Bensimon & Associates, 2022) and underscored the importance of institutions setting conditions for equity in hiring (Lara, 2019). Furthermore, the findings are also consistent with Bensimon and Associates' (2022) research that states that Latinx professionals encounter resistance to advancing equity work. Moreover, the study also revealed new contributions to the literature, emphasizing the need for presidents to purposefully integrate diversity in hiring efforts into existing college structures such as the mission, evaluations, board policies, and institutional goals. This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the primary findings, addressing each research question and establishing connections with the existing literature. Moreover, it underscores findings that have not been previously illuminated in existing research. These insights are derived from the analysis of interviewees' responses, drawing on the theoretical frameworks, CRT and political theoretical framework, as well as insights gleaned from the literature review. The chapter concludes by outlining implications for institutional, state, and federal policy and institutional practices, along with recommendations for future research.

### **How Do the Educational and Professional Experiences of Latinx Presidents Shape Their Commitment to Equity and Equity in Hiring?**

Educational and professional experiences shape the commitment to equity in hiring practices. Many interviewees revealed how their personal experiences of navigating inequities and challenges in educational and professional settings fueled a strong personal commitment to

fostering equity and inclusion in all institutional operations (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Cuellar et al., 2023; Gutierrez et al., 2002). The study found that the interviewees view themselves as advocates for racially minoritized students and professionals, acknowledging the influence of other professionals of color and their personal experiences navigating college and the workforce. They shared having first-hand experience of the barriers and opportunities in pursuit of hiring education and their ascension into the president, many identifying as first-generation, low-income, and having attended community college.

They draw on their own experiences and identities to inform their approach to equity in hiring, recognizing the importance of representation and diverse perspectives in the decision-making process (Cuellar et al., 2023). It was the president's own sense of personal responsibility and connection to the work that also propelled them to create mentorship opportunities and create spaces of belonging for students, faculty, and staff. The interviewees take on a mentorship approach to onboarding new faculty, concerning themselves with providing a welcoming and inclusive environment. They described new onboarding initiatives that provide one-on-one mentorship support and informal programming, creating direct access to the president. This research is consistent with professionals of color serving as mentors and taking responsibility for equity initiatives (Lara, 2019).

### **How Do Latinx Presidents at HSCCs Experience and Understand Their Role in Driving Efforts to Enhance Equity in Hiring?**

The interviews revealed that diversity in hiring stands as the interviewees' first priority and primary responsibility, intricately connected with fostering student success (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018; Cross & Carman, 2022). They see equity in hiring as an optimal tool to improve the experience and outcomes of racially minoritized students, which is consistent with Kezar's

(2008) research, underscoring the significant role of college presidents in shaping the narrative on hiring-related issues. Although the interviewees took primary responsibility, they also acknowledged that it also required a commitment from campus stakeholders, primarily the board, senates, and unions, to effectively realize diversity in hiring. They then also took responsibility for creating the conditions and building the buy-in required to enact diversity in hiring efforts. Accepting the responsibility for the work highlights a commitment to equity in hiring, which is consistent with recent calls from HSCC research (Cuellar et al., 2023).

Although minimal research has been conducted on presidents at CCCs in the implementation of equity in hiring efforts, their perceived accountability aligns with that of a leader who understands the political landscape and is committed to ensuring racial equity at their institutions. Additionally, further research is required to understand the impacts of diversity on boards and academic senates. The interviewees revealed that diverse boards and academic senates created more inclusive environments and opportunities for presidents to advance diversity in hiring efforts (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018). In fact, the interviewees also emphasized that diversity initiatives are more likely to be enacted when they are derived as a grassroots effort, with the leadership and collaboration of the senates and unions. Therefore, campus leadership must be diverse to be conditioned to implement diversity in hiring efforts and developing coalitions that can support diversity work across the institution. Although there is limited research on the impact of diverse academic senates and boards on supporting equity efforts in higher education, further research is required to understand how it impacts equity in hiring.

The interviewees discussed the necessity of initiating challenging discussions about race and equity on campus to avoid perpetuating colorblind ideologies. Their unapologetic stance on

addressing race aligns with Liera's research on the culture of niceness (Liera & Ching, 2019), which describes the perpetuation of racist structures when institutions fail to call out racism and racist structures. They led with the recognition of the presence of racism, biases, and prejudice in the hiring process, acknowledging the importance of shifting the college culture (Fujimoto, 2012). These findings contribute to the research, emphasizing utilizing race-conscious language and engaging campus constituents in difficult conversations about race and equity. Past research has found that faculty of color are more race-conscious and, therefore, more willing to support addressing race inequities (Fujimoto, 2012).

The study further revealed that the interviewees emphasized their commitment to overcoming adversity and resistance, even if it meant displeasing individuals at the institution. They remained steadfast in their priorities, ensuring that conversations about equity and diversity in hiring were driven by their leadership. They experienced pushback and resistance when attempting to advance diversity in hiring efforts, and some were further racialized by stakeholders accusing them of attempting to push their personal agenda and only wanting to hire Latinx faculty, a pattern observed in other studies as well (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Kezar & Eckel, 2008). The interviewees navigated resistance by setting clear expectations and remaining consistent in their messaging of prioritizing equity in hiring. They discussed embracing the pressure constituents placed on them. Similar to findings by Perrakis et al. (2009), the interviewees acknowledged it was difficult work; however, all described a sense of hope in meeting their hiring diversity goals. Moreover, they described employing strategies to navigate political tensions, echoing Kezar's (2008) assertion that college presidents must be savvy in addressing equity barriers and navigating political tensions.

Interestingly, a few interviewees described themselves as politically savvy to avoid appearing contrived. However, most described building coalitions, a characteristic of the political framework, most prominently. They took a political pulse, anticipating resistance, using data to neutralize politics, and developing PR campaigns. Overall, the study aligns with existing research indicating that Latinx presidents prioritize implementing practices that foster equity for Latinx students and other racially minoritized students in HSIs (Cuellar et al., 2023), including supporting equity in hiring.

### **What Actions and Strategies Do Latinx Presidents Perceive As Vital to Create Institutional Change That Support Equity in Hiring?**

The interviewees reaffirmed the importance of shifting the institutional culture to drive diversity in hiring efforts (Fujii, 2014). They underscored the need for presidents to foster diversity initiatives and ensure collective responsibility for equity. As a fundamental aspect of changing the institution's culture, the interviewees ensured that DEIA efforts were a priority for the college (Levin et al., 2013). They created supportive and inclusive environments with professional development (Vargas et al., 2020). Some leaned on the DEIA experts they brought to the campus to illuminate racial equity gaps and create initiatives aimed at addressing the gaps. The professional development opportunities also supported the identification of the institutions' diversity and equity needs, which Liera and Ching (2019) expressed was critical. The majority of interviewees described developing diversity in hiring goals as part of their evaluation process and the evaluation process of other managers. This finding expands on Ching's (2023) research, looking at the evaluation of stakeholders as a key accountability piece for equity in hiring. This finding is particularly new to the area of research, with limited exposure to understanding how these guiding documents impact diversity in hiring.

Furthermore, interviewees delineated several actions and strategies they have employed to garner support for equity in hiring efforts. These include integrating college priorities throughout governance structures and guiding documents, conditioning stakeholders for equity, and changing hiring processes and expectations. The interviewees emphasized communicating clear expectations for stakeholders, highlighting equity and equity in hiring in institutional guiding documents, starting with the mission statement. There is limited research on using race-conscious language in job descriptions (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Fujii, 2014); moreover, further research is required to understand the impact of anti-racist mission statements on hiring processes. All college presidents mentioned adopting a mission statement with anti-racist and/or social justice language, underscoring the deliberate and significant role of the mission in guiding equity in hiring practices. The interviewees described the mission statement as a tool to attract and hire diverse faculty members.

Furthermore, the study revealed that board policies were also used as an instrument of accountability for hiring committees, ensuring that the board policies translate to prioritizing equity in hiring. The board policies, more than any other guiding document, were raised as an important step to implementing equity in hiring practices. The board policies were meant to serve as a deterrent to biases inherent in the hiring process. Board policies are the language of the board, and institutions in a single-college district described needing to have greater buy-in with the board, with more progressive boards being more willing to set the tone and prioritize equity in hiring. Those who were in a multi-college district did not describe the influence of the board as necessary to their work in advancing diversity in hiring. Although minimal research emphasizes the need for diverse boards (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018), there is a need for further

research on the influence of board and board policies may have on advancing diversity in hiring efforts to gain a better understanding of how the board might impede progress.

Interviewees also described reforming hiring practices that had been unchanged (Flannigan et al., 2004) and initiating those conversations at their institutions. Along with board policies, they also ensure updates to hiring handbooks and collective bargaining agreements, which often dictate hiring committee composition, onboarding, and professional development for campus staff. Several expressed ensuring that the hiring committees were diverse, which they described as required for advancing equity in hiring (Fujii, 2014). All used data to localize diversity in program hiring needs, encourage race-conscious conversations, and center the institution's commitment to equity, including checking data for adverse impact throughout the hiring process (Fujimoto, 2012). To ensure diverse pools, the majority of interviewees described the need to fail searches (Bensimon & Associates, 2022; Opp & Smith, 1994). Few studies have focused on the utilization of failed searches to ensure a diverse candidate pool. However, they also described using failed searches to strengthen institutional expectations for diversity in hiring practices. Again, these actions demarcate the high importance Latinx presidents attribute to hiring, particularly in their willingness to terminate a search despite its potential controversy.

Additionally, the study revealed that targeted and intentional recruitment was necessary to advance diversity efforts. Some of the most salient points came when interviewees described utilizing their HSI identity to increase the pool's diversity. This research is consistent with prior research and recommendations to include HSI as part of the job postings (Bensimon & Associates, 2022); however, the research does not address operationalizing the embracing of an HSI identity to frame the college prioritizing increased representation of faculty who have demonstrated success in serving Latinx students. The interviewees utilized the institutions' HSI

designation to justify diversity in hiring efforts, which Vargas et al. (2020) shared was the original intention of HSI awards and advocacy. Additionally, consistent with the research was the use of faculty cluster hires to increase the representation of faculty of color, with interviewees expressing this as a very controversial approach; however, the majority expressed employing aspects of faculty cluster hiring until the conditions were ready to employ it to fidelity.

### **Implications**

Exploring how Latinx presidents experience the implementation of equity in hiring is of particular importance because CCCs serve a significant Latinx student population. Latinx presidents offer diverse viewpoints, experiences relatable to the students, and leadership styles that can more effectively center Latinx students' needs. They may possess a heightened awareness of cultural nuances experienced by Latinx faculty, staff, and students, which can prioritize and inform more culturally sensitive and inclusive hiring practices (Cuellar et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2019). This research aimed to draw insights from leaders who have engaged in organizational culture shifts to enhance the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Latinx faculty and senior leaders. Importantly, this study's findings hold practical relevance for community college leaders, human resource personnel, EEO Advisory Council members, and CCCCCO personnel who support DEI equity in hiring efforts.

Additionally, the study's findings are helpful in guiding boards of trustees, college presidents, and other campus leaders in community college systems nationwide. The findings revealed that the interviewees are race-conscious leaders who have taken ownership and personal responsibility for the advancement of diversity efforts at their institution. The participants emphasized that all stakeholders have a role to play in equity in hiring; however, they see



themselves as primarily responsible, with some noting that the board of trustees and academic senates also play a dominant role. Furthermore, they demonstrated purpose in ensuring equity as central to their organizations' decision-making and intentionality in shifting the culture of the institution to create conditions for diversity in hiring efforts to flourish. Overall, the interviewees described a strong commitment to diversity in hiring, as they said it directly impacts racially minoritized students' success. The strong commitment ensures supportive structures through changes in board policies, integration in campus governance structures, and embracing HSI identity.

### ***Implications for Institutional, State, and Federal Policy***

The study provides several implications for policy at the institutional level. Given that board policies and governance documents shape hiring processes, institutions must examine these guiding documents to actively eliminate policies that create barriers and instead promote the advancement of candidates of color. The governance documents, like the faculty handbook and the bargaining agreements, may dictate the composition of hiring committees and overall influence faculty in hiring. These policies must be updated regularly to reflect the college's priorities and goals related to diversity in hiring. Furthermore, the CCCCO requires institutions to integrate reporting of Guided Pathways and Student Equity and Achievement plans and implement math and English support efforts. The integration of these reports requires institutions to reflect on how these three mandated efforts are intricately connected and how each supports the other. Similarly, this level of integration and reporting can be done with the EEO plan outcomes, culturally responsive competency grants, and DEIA evaluation and tenure review of district employees' efforts, with specific goals for diversification efforts. Although the EEO plan is a chancellor's office mandate to support the advancement of diversity in hiring efforts, and it

is required to report on progress every year and update every 3 years, most interviewees did not mention the EEO plan. The board policies and governance documents were more prevalent in the discourse as structures that operationalize the institution's goals regarding diversity hiring. The 2023–2024 academic term was the first in which the chancellor's office provided feedback on the districts' EEO plans, requiring districts to revise and resubmit if they did not meet specific outlined standards. As districts begin to implement EEO plan goals, the chancellor's office should include constituency groups that were involved in the implementation and/or participated in each of the strategies outlined in the plan in the progress reports. The chancellor's office can then assess the level of involvement of each constituency group in implementing the plan.

This study focuses on Latinx presidents serving at HSCCs, and all nine institutions have been recipients of HSI federal grants, with some institutions being awarded several HSI federal grants. This study may also inform potential considerations for grant requirements for Title III and Title V HSI federally funded institutions, potentially transforming policy to formalize practices and strategies to attract, retain, and develop Latinx faculty and staff at HSIs as part of grant evaluations. Currently, HSI federal grants generally require professional development; however, these opportunities are not intentional in Latinx faculty's professional growth and do not emphasize professional development in DEIA efforts. Lastly, this research can be a significant tool to highlight promising practices and understand barriers Latinx presidents encounter as they work toward implementing servingness for Latinx students through equity in hiring.

### ***Implications for Practice***

College presidents must hold responsibility for diversity in hiring efforts, with the understanding that they need the support of the board and campus leadership to advance these

efforts. The composition of the board and campus leadership is critically important to signal to the campus stakeholders, along with the president, that diversity in hiring is a primary effort. Institutions must also review their hiring practices, policies, and the EEO plan to ensure cross alignments and college and district-wide knowledge of the EEO plan. Districts can note the importance of the EEO plan by providing aligned professional development on implementing EEO plan assignments in the hiring committee training and college-wide professional development opportunities like convocations, college days, and flex days. College presidents must prioritize DEIA professional development and growth opportunities across the institutions, including identifying opportunities for all college constituents to participate in DEIA efforts. For some colleges, these professional development opportunities must be a mandatory responsibility. For others, college presidents, along with campus leadership, must be intentional in engaging all stakeholders in DEIA and can fit it into their existing professional development structures, like convocations and flex days.

Shifting the organizational culture to embrace practices and remove policies that hinder the advancement of Latinx faculty and senior leaders requires embedding practices from the mission into guiding documents and governance structures that support the advancement of diversity in hiring. Integration into the structure of the institution includes incorporating it in the evaluations of presidents and ensuring that institutions have a measurable diversity goal. Incorporating diversity in hiring goals as part of the college presidents' goals demonstrates to campus members that this is a priority of the college. Campuses must also negotiate the inclusion of equity and cultural competencies as part of the evaluations of classified professionals and faculty. Other administrators and managers should integrate diversity considerations into their own evaluations, particularly since they often serve as hiring managers or chairs in hiring

processes. Additionally, it is also important to incorporate diversity in hiring efforts as part of governance structures, including program review, college priorities, and the campus strategic plan. When those documents reflect diversity in hiring goals, they inform stakeholders that diversifying the faculty and senior leadership is at the core of supporting racially minoritized students.

Governance structures are platforms for promoting collaborative decision-making, fostering trust, and garnering broad buy-in to support the advancement of equity in hiring efforts. Working closely with senates, unions, and other constituency groups, with open lines of communication, the president can garner support for diversity efforts at the institution; however, the president must not compromise equity goals. Moreover, institutions must adopt data-informed hiring practices to identify the hiring program's needs and track and monitor the diversity of candidate pools, hiring outcomes, and retention rates. Lastly, college presidents must be empowered to utilize failed searches as a tool to ensure diverse candidate pools and, when needed, to set the tone for hiring committees that diverse candidate pools are a priority for consideration. Creating a culturally responsive and welcoming environment fosters inclusive organizational cultures that contribute to advancing equity efforts and, in turn, diversity in hiring.

### ***Implications for Research***

The research on Latinx presidents and their role in supporting and implementing equity in hiring efforts in CCCs is limited. Most of the research on hiring focuses on 4-year institutions, with much of that research focusing on faculty. Latinx faculty are sorely underrepresented in comparison to Latinx students in higher education, and their experiences must be further explored. Additionally, the research on Latinx presidents at HSCCs is almost non-existent. These leaders are also disproportionately underrepresented in the presidential ranks compared to the

student population and the state demographics. The research on supporting the advancement of Latinx presidents is essential, considering they demonstrate equity-minded leadership and race-conscious leadership (Cuellar et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this study revealed that advancing diversity efforts requires the diversification of the board of trustees and academic senate. Research must focus on better understanding the impact boards have on institutional policies and practices in equity in hiring efforts. Research on the impact of chancellors in multi-college districts is also imperative since they have a first-hand influence on presidents at CCCs. Research on the diversity of the academic senate and board of trustees is also limited, although existing research also shows even greater gaps in representation, with both bodies overwhelmingly still White (Bustillos & Siqueiros, 2018).

This study's findings affirmed that implementing diversity in hiring requires organizational change. There is a need for future research to understand mechanisms for organizational change that support diversity in hiring, including interviewing college constituents to provide a holistic perspective. Interviews should include the academic, classified professional and student senates, the faculty association and unions, and campus leadership. This study informs previous research, providing a perspective of presidents in implementing hiring diversity efforts. Gaining a greater understanding of the role, perceptions, and experiences of presidents serves as a best practices tool for other community colleges and provides some guidance to the CCCCCO for further incorporation into EEO plan requirements and integration into other chancellor initiatives like Guided Pathways and Student Equity and Achievement.

## **Conclusion**

HSCCs must prioritize the hiring of Latinx faculty and senior leadership to enhance the success outcomes of Latinx students and cultivate inclusive and welcoming environments. Latinx faculty remain significantly underrepresented in CCCs despite Latinx students comprising the majority of the student body at most institutions. Similarly, Latinx leadership is notably scarce in CCCs, underscoring the importance of increasing the representation of Latinx presidents across community colleges. These leaders largely serve as equity-minded individuals and are pivotal in shaping institutional practices and policies to foster DEIA. They draw from their experiences and identities, which closely mirror those of the student population across community colleges. Latinx presidents prioritize transparency and clear communication of goals and priorities while intentionally integrating diversity efforts into college structures. Additionally, they stress the significance of embracing their HSI identity as a strategy to diversify faculty. Latinx presidents possess immense potential to effect cultural shifts and pave the way for equitable hiring practices at HSCCs.

## REFERENCES

- Adserias, R. P., Charleston, L. J., & Jackson, J. F. (2017). What style of leadership is best suited to direct organizational change to fuel institutional diversity in higher education? *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 20(3), 315–331.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1260233>
- Aguilar-Smith, S. (2021). Seeking to serve or \$erve? Hispanic-serving institutions' race-evasive pursuit of racialized funding. *AERA Open*, 7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211057097>
- American Council on Education. (2023). *The American college president*.  
<https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/American-College-President-Study-2023.aspx>
- Bates, A. K., Bell, A., & Siqueiros, M. (2018). *State of higher education for Latinx in California*. The Campaign for College Opportunity.
- Bensimon, E., & Malcom, L. (2012). *Confronting equity issues on campus: Implementing the equity scorecard in theory and practice*. Stylus.
- Bensimon & Associates. (2022). *Whiteness rules: Racial exclusion in becoming an American college president*. [https://collegefutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/whiteness-rules-presidential-search\\_findings-report\\_final.pdf](https://collegefutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/whiteness-rules-presidential-search_findings-report_final.pdf)
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Routledge.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1997). *Reframing organizations*. Jossey-Bass.
- Bustillos, L. T., & Siqueiros, M. (2018). *Left out: How exclusion in California's colleges and universities hurts our values, our students, and our economy*. Campaign for College Opportunity.

- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2020a). *2020 report. Vision for success diversity, equity and inclusion task force*. <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Files/Communications/vision-for-success/cccco-dei-report.pdf>
- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2020b). *Legal opinion 2020-08: Student participation in community college recruitment*. <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Office-of-General-Counsel/Legal-Opinion-2020-08-Student-Participation-in-Community-College-Recruitment.pdf>
- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2021). *Update to the vision for success: Reaffirming equity in a time of recovery*. <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/report/vision-for-success-update-2021-a11y.pdf>
- The Campaign for College Opportunity. (2018a). *Left out: How exclusion in California's Colleges and universities hurts our values, our students, and our economy*.
- The Campaign for College Opportunity. (2018b). *The State of Higher Education for Latinx in California*. <https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/State-ofHigher-Education-Latinx-Report-2018.pdf>
- The Campaign for College Opportunity. (2024). *Still left out: How exclusion in California's colleges & universities continues to hurt our values, students, and democracy*.
- Carnevale, A. P., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Separate & unequal: How higher education reinforces the intergenerational reproduction of white racial privilege*. Georgetown University Center of Education and the Workforce.
- Ching, C. D. (2023). Developing "equity sense": Meaning-Making at a community college. *American Educational Research Journal*, 60(4), 810-844.



- Contreras, F. (2017). Latino faculty in Hispanic-serving institutions: Where is the diversity? *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, 11(3), 223–250.  
<https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.11.3.368>
- Contreras, F. (2019). *Becoming “Latinx responsive”*: Raising institutional and systemic consciousness in California’s HSIs. American Council on Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed). Sage.
- Cross, J. D., & Carman, C. A. (2022). The relationship between faculty diversity and student success in public community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 46(12), 855–868. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2021.1910595>
- Cuellar, M. (2015). Latina/o student characteristics and outcomes at four-year Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), emerging HSIs, and non-HSIs. In A.-M. Nunez, S. Hurtado, E. Calderon Galeano (Eds.), *Hispanic-serving institutions: Advancing research and transformative practice* (1st ed., pp. 115–134). Routledge.
- Cuellar, M. G., Garcia, G. A., Nuñez Martinez, M., & Bencomo Garcia, A. (2023). *Building capacity for equity and servingness across California’s Hispanic serving community colleges*. USC Race and Equity Center.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2023). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (Vol. 87). NYU Press.
- Eddy, P. L. (2018). Expanding the leadership pipeline in community colleges: Fostering racial equity. *Teachers College Record*, 120(14), 1–18.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811812001404>

- Excelencia in Education. (2017). *Latino Faculty in Postsecondary Education 2017*.  
<https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/issue-briefs/latino-faculty-postsecondary-education>
- Excelencia in Education. (2023). *Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs): 2021–22*.  
<https://www.edexcelencia.org/research-policy/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis>
- Fairlie, R. W., Hoffmann, F., & Oreopoulos, P. (2014). A community college instructor like me: Race and ethnicity interactions in the classroom. *The American Economic Review*, *104*(8), 2567–2591. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.104.8.2567>
- Flannigan, S., Jones, B. R., & Moore, W. (2004). An exploration of faculty hiring practices in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *28*(10), 823–836. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920390276894>
- Fujii, S. J. (2014). Diversity, communication, and leadership in the community college faculty search process. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *38*(10), 903–916. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2012.725387>
- Fujimoto, E. O. (2012). Hiring diverse faculty members in community colleges: A case study in ethical decision making. *Community College Review*, *40*(3), 255–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552112450069>
- Garcia, G. A. (2016). Exploring student affairs professionals’ experiences with the campus racial climate at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *9*(1), 20–33. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039199>
- Garcia, G. A. (2019). *Defining “servingness” at Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs): Practical implications for HSI leaders*. American Council on Education.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/book.66167>

- Garcia, G. A., Koren, E. R., & Cuellar, M. G. (2020). Assessing color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty at Hispanic-serving institutions. *AERA Open*, 6(3).  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420944906>
- Garcia, G. A., Núñez, A. M., & Sansone, V. A. (2019). Toward a multidimensional conceptual framework for understanding “servingness” in Hispanic-serving institutions: A synthesis of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(5), 745–784.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319864591>
- Gutierrez, M., Castañeda, C., & Katsinas, S. G. (2002). Latino leadership in community colleges: Issues and challenges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 26(4), 297–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/106689202753546457>
- Hubbard, S. M., & Stage, F. K. (2009). Attitudes, perceptions, and preferences of faculty at Hispanic serving and predominantly Black institutions. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(3), 270-289.
- Johnson, H., & Mejia, M. C. (2019). *California’s higher education system*. Public Policy Institute of California.
- Kezar, A. (2003). Transformational elite interviews: Principles and problems. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(3), 395-415.
- Kezar, A. (2008). Understanding leadership strategies for addressing the politics of diversity. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(4), 406–441.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2008.11772109>
- Kezar, A., & Eckel, P. (2008). Advancing diversity agendas on campus: Examining transactional and transformational presidential leadership styles. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 11(4), 379-405.

- Konrad, A. M., & Linehan, F. (1995). Race and sex differences in line managers' reactions to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action interventions. *Group & Organization Management, 20*(4), 409–439. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601195204003>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). Just what is critical race theory, and what's it doing in a nice field like education? In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is....race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 7–30). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429503504-2>
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Towards a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68.
- Lara, L. J. (2019). Faculty of color unmask color-blind ideology in the community college faculty search process. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 43*, 702–717. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2019.1600608>
- Levin, J. S., Walker, L., Haberler, Z., & Jackson-Boothby, A. (2013). The divided self: The double consciousness of faculty of color in community colleges. *Community College Review, 41*(4), 311–329. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552113504454>
- Liera, R. (2020). Moving beyond a culture of niceness in faculty hiring to advance racial equity. *American Educational Research Journal, 57*(5), 1954–1994. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219888624>
- Liera, R. (2023). Expanding faculty members' zone of proximal development to enact collective agency for racial equity in faculty hiring. *The Journal of Higher Education, 94*(6), 766–791. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2023.2195769>
- Liera, R., & Ching, C. (2019). Reconceptualizing “merit” and “fit”: An equity-minded approach to hiring. In A. Kezar & J. Posselt (Eds.), *Higher education administration for social*

*justice and equity* (1st ed., pp. 111–131). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429435140-7>

Martinez, E. (2023). Leadership so White: Working toward equitable representation of Latinx leadership at Hispanic-serving institutions. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 26(2), 165–176.

Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Melidona, D., Cecil, B. G., Cassell, A., & Chessman, H. M. (2023). *The American college president: 2023 edition*. American Council on Education.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Milem, J. F., Chang, M. J., & Antonio, A. L. (2005). *Making diversity work on campus: A research-based perspective*. Association American Colleges and Universities.

Núñez, A. M. (2015, April). *Hispanic-serving institutions: Where are they now* [Paper presentation]. HSIs in the 21st century: A convening. University of Texas El Paso.

Opp, R. D., & Smith, A. B. (1994). Effective strategies for enhancing minority faculty recruitment and retention. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 87, 43–55.

Perrakis, A., Campbell, D. M., & Antonaros, M. (2009). Diversifying the community college CEO pipeline. *Community College Enterprise*, 15(1), 7–19.

Reddy, V., & Ryan, J. (2021). *Chutes or ladders? Strengthening California community college transfer so more students earn the degrees they seek*. The Campaign for College Opportunity.

- Reddy, V., & Siqueiros, M. (2021). *The state of higher education for Latinx Californians: Executive summary*. The Campaign for College Opportunity.
- Reddy, V. (2024). *Still Left Out: How Exclusion in California's Colleges & Universities Continues to Hurt Our Values, Students, and Democracy*. The Campaign for College Opportunity.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications.
- Umbach, P. D. (2006). The contribution of faculty of color to undergraduate education. *Research in higher education*, 47, 317-345.
- Vargas, N., Villa-Palomino, J., & Davis, E. (2020). Latinx faculty representation and resources allocation at Hispanic serving institutions. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 23(1), 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1679749>
- Wassmer, R., & Galloway, M. (2023). Evidence that a greater presence of Latinx faculty or administrators raises the completion rates of various cohorts of community college students. *Educational Policy*, 37(5), 1380–1419. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048221090152>
- Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research. (2016). *Tough job if you can keep it: What California community college CEOs Say about their challenges and longevity*. [https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/ucdavis\\_wheelhouse\\_tough\\_job\\_research\\_brief.pdf](https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/ucdavis_wheelhouse_tough_job_research_brief.pdf)
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>

## **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I am the Dean of Academic Pathways and Student Success at Chabot College and a doctoral student in the Capitol Area North Doctorate in Educational Leadership at UC Davis. My dissertation topic examines the representation of Latinx faculty and senior leaders in HSI California community colleges and seeks to gain a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of Latinx presidents in implementing diversity in hiring efforts.

As a reminder, this interview is confidential and there will be no identifiable information included in the study. This interview will be approximately 45 minutes long. For accuracy purposes, this interview will be recorded and transcribed. May I proceed with recording the interview? Is there anything else I can answer for you before we continue with the interview?

## APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the questions to the best of your ability. You may skip any questions. Identifiable information will be kept confidential.

1. Name:
2. Gender:
3. Ethnicity:
4. Position/Title:
5. Institution/College Name:
6. Years of experience in the field of education:
7. Years of experience in community college:
8. Years of experience as a president at a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) Community College (CCC):
9. Educational background (highest degree attained):
10. Are you bilingual or multilingual? If yes, please specify the languages:
11. Previous positions in CCCs:

Thank you for completing the demographic questionnaire. Feel free to reach out with any questions at [agpatton@ucdavis.edu](mailto:agpatton@ucdavis.edu).



## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions	Framework Applied
<b>Introductory Question</b>	
Please share your educational and professional journey that has led you to serve as a President of a college. Why did you pursue this role?	Political
<b>Awareness and Experiences with Diversity and Hiring</b>	
Can you describe your experiences in navigating the hiring processes throughout your career? What worked and what would you change about your experience? - How has the hiring differed when applying to a presidency vs. other positions?	CRT
How do you define and understand diversity in the context of faculty and senior leadership hiring at your college? How does your personal background and identity as a Latinx leader influence your understanding of diversity?	CRT
<b>Strategies to Advance Equity in Hiring</b>	
How is data used to shape your understanding of hiring needs for faculty and senior leadership?	Political
In what ways do you find that moving a diversity in hiring agenda forward is a political process, what is the nature of the politics?	Political Kezar (2008) (Adapted)
What strategies do you use to negotiate a political environment and create change?	Political Kezar (2008) (Adapted)
<b>Responsibility to Lead Equity in Hiring</b>	
Who do you believe is responsible for diversity hiring efforts at your institution?	Political
What role do you believe college presidents should play in advancing diversity hiring efforts? How do you personally approach this responsibility, and what actions have you taken to ensure the success of these efforts?	Political

How do you engage with faculty search committees or hiring committees to ensure a commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout the hiring process?	CRT/ Political Lara (2019) (Adapted)
<b>Challenges and Barriers in Hiring</b>	
What aspects of the hiring processes represent barriers to hiring faculty or senior leaders of color?	CRT Lara (2019) (Adapted)
As a Latinx leader, how do you navigate any potential tensions or conflicts that may arise in promoting diversity hiring efforts, particularly when facing opposition or resistance and what strategies have you employed to build support and create buy-in among various stakeholders?	Political CRT
<b>Creating a Campus Culture Responsive to Equity in Hiring</b>	
How do you perceive the impact of a diverse faculty and senior leadership on student success and campus climate? Can you provide examples of campus-wide initiatives or policies that contribute to this culture?	CRT/Political
How do you support the professional growth and development of racially minoritized faculty members once they are hired? Are there any specific programs or initiatives in place to facilitate their success?	CRT
<b>Closing</b>	
What advice or insights would you give to other college leaders who are striving to advance diversity in faculty hiring?	Political
Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a Latinx leader in advancing diversity in hiring at your institution?	