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Author

Medina III, Jose Luis

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Talk College To Me: The Use of Equitable Language in Student Recruitment

Jose L Medina III

Kremen School of Education and Human Development, California State University, Fresno

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Dr. Soua Xiong, Ph.D.

Abstract

The field of student affairs plays a critical role in the higher education experience. The work done by student affairs professionals helps students begin a lifetime journey of growth and self-exploration (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, n.d.). An important part of being a student affairs professional is promoting and encouraging respect for the diverse communities served by our respective institutions. The purpose of this study is to explore the use of language in the recruitment process of special programs such as the Fresno State Outreach and Special Programs office. The study seeks to answer the research question, how does the language utilized in recruitment materials impact students who may apply for a particular program? The goal is to offer recommendations for more equity-minded recruitment practices. The study finds that the Fresno State Outreach and Special Programs office utilizes the six equity-mindedness practices of the USC Equity Web Scan Tool.

Keywords: student affairs, equity-mindedness, higher education, recruitment

Introduction

In higher education, many tend to throw around the words “diversity” and “inclusion.” What professionals in the field do not know is that these words are not synonyms for the word “equity.” For a professional to understand “equity,” they must understand the significance of the word and how much power it holds. Understanding the significance and power is learning and understanding how privilege and disadvantage operate throughout society. The professional must understand how these operations affect individuals and groups of people over time (Castro, 2015). Privilege and disadvantage can be seen in the ways that students interact with and are positioned by the resources that are made available to them. Equity is about power, and engaging in equity-oriented practices means working toward changing powerful systems: systemic practices, regulations, norms, and habits of the institution (Castro, 2015).

There are many inequalities in educational outcomes for historically underserved student populations. Bensimon (2005) looks at the persistence of unequal educational outcomes for racial and ethnic groups with a history of past discrimination in postsecondary education. It is the role of faculty members, administrators, counselors, and other professionals who play a part in educational inequalities. The attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions of these individuals play a role in unequal outcomes for particular student groups. Faculty members, counselors, and institutional leaders need to become equity-minded (Bensimon, 2005). Institutions and professionals need to learn about the nature of racial patterns in educational outcomes. Learning means developing an awareness that racial and ethnic patterns of inequalities exist (Bensimon, 2005). Racial/ethnic and class-based disparities in college access, enrollment, and completion persist despite years of programmatic and policy efforts to counteract them (Malcom-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017).

Inequality in higher education is a structural problem that is hidden or revealed through the use of language imbued with political and social meaning (Bensimon et al. 2016). Clarity of language is important because equity is often confused with equality. Equality is defined as treating everyone the same or giving everyone the same opportunities regardless of their attributes. Equity, in contrast, means accounting for differences in individual attributes and experiences to achieve equal outcomes (Bensimon et al., n.d.). Student affairs practitioners need to use clear language especially when identifying racial and ethnic groups. If practitioners put all racial and ethnic groups into one category it is erasing the differences in circumstances that are faced by the student.

Race-based inequalities in educational outcomes cannot be solved if we do not even have the will to name the problem. Many professionals continue to use euphemisms like “diverse students” or “underrepresented students” instead of using students' race. Doing this will prevent practitioners from understanding that current practices and policies may have a disproportionately negative impact on African American, Latino/a, and Native American students. Equity-mindedness requires acknowledging that race and class are different and eliminating race-based inequalities will require a different approach (Malcolm-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017). To truly show equity-mindedness practitioners need to raise awareness of racial inequalities in outcomes, build an understanding of the connection between inequitable outcomes and systemic inequalities, and cultivate evidence-based knowledge about the nature of inequalities on their campuses (Ching et al., 2020).

Despite continued investment in reforms and increased demand to eliminate disparities, gaps in degree attainment across racial/ethnic student groups have not only endured but have widened over time (Ching et al., 2020). We will not see these gaps close if colleges do not accept

the responsibility for achieving racial/ethnic equity and creating educational environments that foster the success of students of color (Ching et al., 2020). For students of color to be more successful institutions and student affairs practitioners must implement equity-minded practices to promote equity for the students that they serve.

While conducting research, I plan to utilize an equity-mindedness framework.

Equity-mindedness is a schema that provides an alternative framework for understanding the cause of equity gaps in outcomes and the actions needed to close them (Malcolm-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017). Equity-mindedness encompasses being race-conscious, institutionally focused, evidence-based, systematically aware, and action-oriented (Malcolm-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017). For a practitioner, practices, and policies to be considered equity-mindedness, they must be race-conscious. Race consciousness is noticing racial inequalities in educational outcomes and experiences, naming those specific racial/ethnic groups that experience equity gaps, and shying away from euphemisms often used to avoid open and honest discussions of the roles that race, and racism play in the perpetuation of educational inequality (Malcolm-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017). Conversations regarding race are uncomfortable for practically everyone but it is critically important that we have these conversations.

In the current study, I will be using equity-mindedness as a framework to examine how equity is reflected on the university Outreach and Special Programs web pages. The study's purpose is to shed light on how equity-mindedness influences the view of prospective students and their families. Generating a better understanding of this view should help institutions to better understand the students that they are recruiting and assist in the crafting of intentional web design.

Literature Review

What is Equity?

In the higher education field, many tend to throw around the words “diversity” and “inclusion”. What professionals in the field do not know is that these words are not synonyms for the word “equity”. For a professional to understand “equity”, they must understand the significance of the word and how much power it holds. Understanding the significance and power is learning and understanding how privilege and disadvantage operate throughout society. The professional must understand how these operations affect individuals and groups of people over time (Castro, 2015). Privilege and disadvantage can be seen in the ways that students interact with and are positioned by the resources that are made available to them. Equity is about power, and engaging in equity-oriented practices means working toward changing powerful systems: systemic practices, regulations, norms, and habits of the institution (Castro, 2015).

Equity-Mindedness

Medina (2020) asserts that according to Bensimon et al. (2016), equity-mindedness is defined as a way of approaching educational reform that foregrounds the policies and practices contributing to disparities in educational achievement and abstains from blaming students for those accumulated disparities. Student affairs practitioners need to be able to differentiate between equality and equity. For example, a university recruitment counselor is showing equality by giving a general overview of the institution’s application process to a group of graduating seniors at a local high school. If the recruitment counselor wants to show equity, then they will not only provide a general overview to all of the students, but they will also offer support for those individuals who may not have the support system with the knowledge and experience to get them through the college application process. By providing that extra support to these students the

recruitment counselor is helping these students achieve equal outcomes as their peers. It is not just about the support that is provided to the students, but it is also about how the students are viewed. Educational deficit thinking occurs when institutions blame individual students for what they perceive as a lack (Castro, 2015) through their policies, practices, language, and thinking. This is very harmful to students because it labels students, and it can make students feel as if they are failures when in reality it is sometimes the institutions that fail the students.

The Principles of Equity-Mindedness

Equity-mindedness is a schema that provides an alternative framework for understanding the cause of equity gaps in outcomes and the actions needed to close them (Malcolm-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017). Equity-mindedness encompasses being race-conscious, institutionally focused, evidence-based, systematically aware, and action-oriented (Malcolm-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017). For a practitioner, practices, and policies to be considered equity-mindedness, they must be race-conscious. Race consciousness is noticing racial inequalities in educational outcomes and experiences, naming those specific racial/ethnic groups that experience equity gaps, and shying away from euphemisms often used to avoid open and honest discussions of the roles that race, and racism play in the perpetuation of educational inequality (Malcolm-Piqueux and Bensimon, 2017). Conversations regarding race are uncomfortable for practically everyone but it is critically important that we have these conversations.

Race-based inequalities in educational outcomes cannot be solved if we do not even have the will to name the problem. Many professionals continue to use euphemisms like “diverse students” or “underrepresented students” instead of using students' race. Doing this will prevent practitioners from understanding that current practices and policies may have a disproportionately negative impact on African American, Latino/a, and Native American students. Equity-mindedness

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Enacting Equity

Inequality in higher education is a structural problem that is hidden or revealed through the use of language imbued with political and social meaning (Bensimon et al. 2016). Clarity of language is important because equity is often confused with equality. Equality is defined as treating everyone the same or giving everyone the same opportunities regardless of their attributes. Equity, in contrast, means accounting for differences in individual attributes and experiences to achieve equal outcomes (Bensimon et al., n.d.). Student affairs practitioners need to use clear language especially when identifying racial and ethnic groups. If practitioners put all racial and ethnic groups into one category it is erasing the differences in circumstances that are faced by the student. This in turn can harm the college experience and it can also cause students to not complete their degrees.

Welcoming

When students are exploring colleges and universities their first step is to browse the institution's website. They are looking to see what the institution has to offer. The students want to know about campus life. Although college access has increased over the years there are still many first-generation college students who lack the necessary tools and support in the college search process. Institutions must have an understanding of how students view institutional websites and

how these play a role in the search process. Students want to know that their academics and personal preferences along with their needs and interests are met. Holland (2019) found that first-generation college students employed three frames to evaluate colleges: incidental, limited, and personal fit. These frames were informed by cultural knowledge about college and social networks. The most common frame that students with limited knowledge used was the incidental frame. Students who employed the incidental frame focused on college attendance and deemphasized differences between colleges. employing this frame focused on college attendance and deemphasized differences between colleges.

Demystifying

As students continue to research institutions of higher education students must have access to information on policies and procedures that are clear and approachable. If students do not have access to this information then it is hard for them to justify attending such an institution. Ward (n.d.) found that although high school completion and college enrollment rates have increased in recent years for minority students, the gap between African-American and Hispanic students and their Caucasian and Asian American peers persists.

Creating a Partnership

When browsing institutional websites, prospective students and their families want to see the partnerships that are created at the institution that will help the students to be successful. Institutions of higher learning can create these partnerships utilizing student-centered outreach programs. School-centered outreach programs, conversely, attempt to restructure and reform the school as a whole, so that all of its constituents will be prepared to undertake the rigors of a college or university program of study (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, and Morrell, 2002).

Validating

Many students of color identify as first-generation. It is important that institutions actively support and encourage students' ability to be successful. Conley (n.d.) found that the likelihood that students will make a successful transition to the college environment is often a function of their readiness—the degree to which previous educational and personal experiences have equipped them for the expectations and demands they will encounter in college. Farmer-Hilton (n.d) also found that there is an importance of intersecting dosages of school-based social capital such as high expectations and experiential learning to help students complete their college-planning activities as well as the need for coping strategies for the psychological barriers of college-bound contexts where college access is not widely available.

Representing

Institutions must reflect a range of racial/ethnic identities and experiences. In the United States in 1997, 36% of Latino students entered college after high school, compared to 46% of White and 39% of African American students (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). College outreach programs provide key access along the academic pipeline, yet little is known about how students access or engage with these programs (Denner et al., n.d.). Students must see themselves within institutions. They want to be able to feel a connection to the institution and for this to happen the university must represent the ethnic groups.

Deconstructing

Finally, institutions must make sure that they are not giving the idea that “whiteness” is the norm. The messages and support that students receive regarding college preparation often vary by student race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and generational status

(Adelman, 2006; Freeman, 1997; McDonough, 2004; Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Wimberly, 2002).

Nicole Holland (n.d.) sought to understand how a social capital framework could help explain how information about postsecondary educational transitions was communicated to, and interpreted by, college-bound students in one large urban school district. Holland (n.d.) found that college planning and preparation for students from traditionally underrepresented college populations must be more cohesive and focused on providing access to academic, financial, and social information that is instrumental in the students' transitions to college.

Framework

The guiding conceptual framework for this study is Bensimon et al.'s (2016) *Five Principles for Enacting Equity by Design*. The five principles provide leaders and practitioners with the skills and knowledge to build equity into their everyday work. The first principle is clarity in language and goals where the measurements are vital to implementing effective and equitable practices. The second principle is that equity-mindedness should be the guiding principle for the language and actions taken. The third principle is that equitable practices and policies are designed to accommodate the student's learning, not to necessarily treat all students the same. The fourth principle is to enact equity there needs to be a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning the assumptions made about the relevance and effectiveness. The fifth and final principle is equity should be enacted not only at the institution but also system-wide. Although these five principles are known the higher education system is still far from being equitable.

The five principles will serve as a guide to examining how equity-mindedness is embedded in Fresno State Outreach & Special Programs web pages. The Fresno State Outreach & Special Programs website is targeted toward K-8 students with a focus on underrepresented minorities. Fresno State Outreach & Special Programs web pages utilize the principles of equity to motivate the youth and build a college-going culture. In examining how equity-mindedness is incorporated into these web pages it is clear that there is work that still needs to be done to ensure that there is equitable access. These five principles of equity must be utilized to make sure that they are reaching all potential students.

Methods

Setting

The study took place at California State University, Fresno (Fresno State). Fresno State is the largest state institution in the heart of the Central Valley with a diverse student population, serving over 25, 000 students. Fresno State is designated as both a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Institution (AANAPISI). Fresno State received these designations due to the student population being over 60% Latinx and 18% of students identifying as Asian American. According to Fall 2019 data provided by Fresno State, the university also serves students who identify as African American (1.6%), American Indian (0.3), and White (14.3%). Given the diversity within the Central Valley and the surrounding areas, knowing the ethnic breakdown will assist in determining if equitable practices are being utilized in outreach strategies.

At Fresno State, two departments focus on student recruitment. These departments are Admissions and Recruitment and Outreach and Special Programs. The research will primarily focus on the Department of Outreach and Special Programs. Focusing on the Outreach and Special Programs department at Fresno State allows for a better understanding of whether students are being equitably recruited.

Right from the homepage, a guest can see the diverse students who represent the department and represent the university as ambassadors. The department even offers a way for future students to stay connected with the #FSFutureBulldog as well as ways to connect with social media platforms. The “programs” page of the site offers descriptions and images of the various diverse programs offered throughout the department. The “outreach services” page does offer an image of diverse Fresno State students as well as an easy-to-navigate page for the services and

“virtual services” offered by the department. The “Program and Initiatives” web pages offer detailed information for prospective students and families to find resources. In reviewing these websites I will get a collective idea of what is needed to address the research question.

Instruments

The Equity Web Scan Tool developed by The Center for Urban Education (2020) was the primary instrument used for data collection. The Equity Web Scan Tool investigates whether the page perpetuates racial bias or communicates who is welcome and included in the campus community. The Web Scan Guide approaches websites as artifacts of practice that reflect a sense of community, a sense of belonging, and a sense of learning. (The Center for Urban Education, 2020). The Center for Urban Education (2020) shares that the messages that are conveyed through websites are just as vital to equity-mindedness practices.

The Equity Web Scan Tool has six categories that will be applied to all Fresno State outreach and Special Programs web pages. The six categories of the Equity Web Scan Tool are ***Welcoming***: The webpage is designed to offer students and their families a sense of a welcoming environment where they will be taken care of.

Demystifying: The webpage is written in a way that communicates policies

Creating a Partnership: The webpage clearly shows that the program, department, and/or institution are responsible for playing a role in the student’s success

Validating: The webpage gives a sense of belonging to the student and ensures that they will be successful

Representing: The webpage reflects the diverse racial and ethnic identities and opportunities

Deconstructing: The web page counters the common presentation of “whiteness” as the norm

After an overview of the definitions of the six categories that the Equity Web Scan Tool covers the tool then asks “Yes, No, or NA” questions for each of the categories. There are anywhere between 3-5 questions per category. After each “Yes, No, or NA” there is then the opportunity to share “in what ways”. After the categories, there is the opportunity to then answer open-ended questions to complete, review, and reflect on the responses given during the search process.

Being that the Outreach and Special Programs website is one of the first artifacts that a student and their family will engage with, the web pages must convey a message to students - particularly racially minoritized students - that the university is a welcoming environment. The web pages must demystify the college and explain what the college offers, how it works, and what support students who enroll can expect. Web pages need to convey to students that their abilities and efforts will be validated and their success will come from a partnership between the student and the college. Finally, the web pages should represent the identities and experiences of racially minoritized students to deconstruct the presentation of white students and white experiences as the norm of the university.

Data Collection

To assist in applying the five principles for enacting equity the Center for Urban Education (CUE) Racial Equity Mindedness tools were utilized for data collection. The particular tool that was used was the CUE Web Scan tool. The CUE Web Scan tool focuses on the college website or a specific web page. Using this tool the Fresno State Outreach and Special Programs web pages were investigated to determine whether the page perpetuated racial bias or communicated who is welcome and included in the campus community.

The first equity-minded practice of “welcoming” evaluated the extent to which there were language and/or images that suggested a welcoming tone. This practice also examines whether the information communicated messages that students can perceive as caring for their well-being and success. Additionally, this practice also examines whether web pages communicate messages that students can perceive to make them feel unwelcome. The second equity-minded practice of “demystifying” evaluated how clear and approachable the web pages were. This practice examined whether the information communicated policies were clear to the students.

The third equity-minded practice evaluated was “creating a partnership”. This practice examined whether or not the web pages communicated through words, images, and tone that the program/department/institution is mutually responsible for student success. The web pages were then examined utilizing the fourth equity-minded practice “validating”, where words, images, and tone were examined to ensure that they would actively support and encourage students’ ability to be successful.

The web pages were then examined with the fifth equity-minded practice “representing” where the web page content and images are examined to see if they reflect a range of racial/ethnic identities and experiences. The sixth and final equity-minded practice is “deconstructing”. For this practice, the web pages are examined to see if there is a counter in the common presentation of “whiteness” as the norm at the institution.

To get the data needed the first step was to review the homepage of the Fresno State Outreach and Special Programs website. After reviewing the first page the next step was to view the mission and vision webpage. After that, the next step was to view the program overview page before reviewing each of the programs’ websites within the department. This was a total of eight program web pages. The final web pages reviewed for data collection were the events web pages.

Data Analysis

The instrument that will be utilized in this study is Document Analysis. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). After utilizing document analysis on the web pages each page was coded into its respective sections of the categories from the CUE Web Scan tool. Each category was then given an overall percentage as it relates to the theme.

Each web page was evaluated individually and then categorized as appropriate. As each page was evaluated words, language, and images were assessed to determine if they were equitable. Although there was a high percentage of equity-mindedness practices being utilized on the web pages that were evaluated there are some improvements that can be made.

Limitations

Due to the number of programs within the department, only the department web pages and the home web pages of each program were evaluated utilizing the CUE Web Scan tool. This does limit the data collected.

Findings

The Fresno State Outreach and Special Programs office is specifically targeting k-8 students and their families as well as the home of many programs that focus on recruiting underrepresented minorities. These recruitment programs include the African American Initiative, Native American Initiative, Central Valley California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP), Dream Success Center, Educational Opportunity Center, Educational Talent Search, and Upward Bound Programs. Each program offers specialized services to motivate prospective students while building a college-going culture. The findings are organized according to the six equity-minded practices examined in The Equity Web Scan Tool. All key findings can be found in the tables contained in the appendix.

Welcoming

In examining “welcoming” practices, 58.3% of the web pages used language and images that suggested a welcoming tone. On the program web pages, one can find images of students who can relate to those who may come from a marginalized background. For example, right when you visit the main page for Fresno State Outreach and Special Programs you are greeted by an image of the student ambassadors, all of whom are of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Also on the home page, visitors will see the social media of the department where many stories and images are shared of current Fresno State students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. As you explore the various programs you will come across programs like the African American Initiative homepage, where they showcase pictures of students from this racial/ethnic background. By utilizing these images the department is suggesting a welcoming tone since prospective students and their families can see themselves represented within the student population that is being served.

While continuing to examine the web pages utilizing the equity-mindedness of “welcoming”, each of the program websites was evaluated to see if the information that was being communicated to the students was in a way that the students could feel that the program would care about their well-being and success. Right from the beginning Outreach and Special Programs is very clear on their homepage that the staff intentionally offers programs that reach out to underrepresented minorities. While continuing to browse through the web pages the Native American Initiative also showcases the mission of providing Native American students access to higher education through advocacy, outreach, assistance, and advising. Another program within Outreach and Special Programs that makes sure to communicate to students that they care about their well-being and success is the Dream Success Center which stresses its dedication to serving AB540, undocumented, DACA students, and students with mixed immigration statuses through its mission to “empower students through a welcoming and supportive environment. They ensure access and success through Advocacy and Outreach, and Holistic services on personal, social, and academic support.”

Finally within the equity-mindedness practice of “welcoming” the web pages were then evaluated to see if any of the web pages would make racially minoritized students feel unwelcome. Through the evaluation of the web pages, there was no evidence of anything that would make racially minoritized students feel unwelcome. Although not all web pages may be clear in the navigation of some of its programs that would not constitute a student feeling unwelcome.

Demystifying

The second equity-minded practice evaluated is “*demystifying*”, 66.7% of the web pages explained the purpose of the programs in clear and plain language while 25% did not, and 8.7% of the web pages were not applicable for the first category of the equity-minded practice. When one

views the mission and vision web page for Outreach and Special Programs they are very clear about the mission and vision for their department. They also list additional goals so that way anyone can find what they plan to accomplish through their work. For those interested in their Outreach Services for k-8 students the web page offers clear and detailed information that provides all of the information that one would need to request a tour, schedule a presentation or student panel, and they can request the department set up an information booth at an event. An example of a program that did not have clear language on its purpose was the Central Valley Cal-SOAP homepage. Although it shares about the resources for the students it does not tell a visitor about the program and the services that are offered. Application materials were not accessible on the homepage for those who are looking to apply to Central Valley Cal-SOAP.

25% of the program web pages used academic jargon that students with little familiarity with higher education may not understand. An example of this is the Central California Educational Opportunity Center where which uses words like, “TRIO outreach program”, “United States Department of Education”, and “post-secondary education programs”. Although many have possibly heard of these words before using words like this can make students feel uncomfortable. Another example of a program that utilizes academic jargon is the Dream Success Center. The Dream Success Center uses words like “holistic” and “Undocu-Ally”. Students who are looking for services that are offered by the Dream Success Center may feel intimidated when they come across these words.

Creating a Partnership

The next equity-minded practice evaluated was “*creating a partnership*”. 66.7% of program web pages that were analyzed suggest that the programs seek to assist students in their educational journey. An example of this would be Fresno State Upward Bound which provides

academic, career, and personal development activities for high school students so that they can easily transition to post-secondary education. Another example of “creating partnerships” would be the Educational Talent Search web page where they list all of the services that are offered as well as an explanation of what the program is so that interested students and their families can become familiar with the program. The final example would be the Dream Success Center. The Dream Success Center offers AB540, undocumented, DACA students, and students with mixed immigration statuses an orientation to the university as well as other support services throughout their tenure at the institution.

58.3% contribute to this by clearly communicating the resources that are available for racially minoritized students. Right on the Outreach and Special Programs homepage, there are direct links to the early outreach programs and services as well as the annual events for youth and their families. The Central Valley Cal-SOAP web page is another source that shows the resources available for racially minoritized students. Because this program directly works with those from rural populations with a majority of first-generation students it shows resources such as tutoring services and financial aid workshops. Another example of a program that communicates the resources available is the Fresno State Educational Talent Search home page which shows right away the services that are available to those students who participate.

100% of all of the web pages that were considered provide information for students while using a respectful tone. When you start exploring the Outreach and Special Programs homepage you can see right from the mission that they are respectful and care for the students they serve. The mission of “Outreach and Special Programs (OSP) is to dedicate its efforts to early outreach, special initiatives, underrepresented groups, and diversity. OSP will encourage and create a college-going culture through exposure, promotion, and activities by partnering with school

districts and community organizations”. On the African American Initiative web page the program has its mission and vision which showcases that there is respect for students and their families through this initiative. “The African American Initiative will devote its efforts to reaching out to African American students in bridging the gap between youth and college life by building a community among students, faculty, staff, families, and community partners through academic support, networking, and mentoring. The African American Initiative strives to increase the outreach to students and families in the community, help prepare more college-ready students, increase the enrollment of African American students to campus, and increase the graduation rates among African American students for undergraduate levels and beyond”. This is also the same for the Native American Initiative. When guests visit the website they are greeted by a land acknowledgment created by Dr. Leece Lee-Oliver, a Fresno State faculty member, scholar, and activist whose work is dedicated to understanding how American Indians, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized peoples experience and respond to national policies and societal beliefs that pose challenges to their sovereignty, safety, and security.

Only 16.7% of the web pages offer contact information for a specific practitioner that students may contact should they have any further questions. Not only do most programs not offer specific practitioner contact information but 0% of the web pages provide any “frequently asked questions” section. Because there is no “frequently asked questions” section nor specific contact information this can cause students to potentially discourage students from the programs and even possibly the institution.

Validating

The “*validating*” equity-minded practice was the shortest practice evaluated as it was only evaluated if web pages included language and/or images that communicated support for the

student's academic efforts and goals. 66% of web pages provided a sense of belonging. An example of one of the program's web pages that provides a sense of belonging is the Dream Success Center. On the Dream Success Center homepage, there are links to several resources including campus support programs, financial aid, legal services, campus resources, and academic success tools. The Cal-SOAP homepage also is an example of offering a sense of belonging when it comes to having direct links to tutoring services as well as financial aid opportunities. The Educational Talent Search is another program that right from the homepage a student would find a sense of belonging because they would immediately know the services and resources that are available to them. Because Educational Talent Search focuses on assisting, and encouraging students from disadvantaged backgrounds to graduate high school and enroll in and complete their post-secondary program there are images of students touring California State University, Fresno as well as an image of a student who is in graduation regalia standing in recognition at a graduation ceremony.

Representing

The next equity-minded practice evaluated was “*representing*”. While analyzing all of the web pages 0% of the web pages featured any stories or student experiences. Although there were no personal stories or anecdotes, 83.3% of these web pages did offer images of racially minoritized students. The African American Initiative showcased photos from program events that featured students who were African-American presenting. The Fresno State Outreach and Special Programs homepage features a diverse group of Fresno State students which showcases the diversity of the campus. Although the students can potentially see themselves within these images it would be more powerful for the students to see first-hand accounts of racially minoritized students. The Native American homepage offered a welcoming environment by showcasing the land

acknowledgment, “The Fresno State campus sits amid the San Joaquin Valley, a valley rich in the traditions and representation of Native American peoples and cultures. We are grateful to be in the traditional homelands of the Yokuts and Mono peoples, whose diverse tribal communities share stewardship over this land,” created by Dr. Leece Lee-Oliver of California State University, Fresno.

Deconstructing

The final equity-minded practice evaluated was “*deconstructing*”. None of the web pages that were analyzed reflected a view of white students as the “normative” college students served. The web pages also did not reflect a view that racially minoritized students were viewed as the “other”. The programs do a great job of representing the students that they serve. An example of deconstructing that was seen was the Native American Initiative webpage. Right on the homepage, there is a carousel of images from events where there are many diverse students who are participating in the initiative activities. The African American Initiative home page is also similar as it showcases many students who are participants in the events that are put on by the initiative staff. Many students are showcased on the webpage who could identify as a part of the African-American community. Finally, the Dream Success Center showcases “deconstructing” not in images but rather in their words. The Dream Success Center stresses its dedication to serving our AB540, undocumented, DACA students as well as students with mixed immigration statuses. It also offers resources for not only, AB540, undocumented, and DACA recipients but also resources for the campus community so that they can become allies for these students.

Discussion

This study sought to examine how equity-mindedness is embedded in Fresno State Outreach & Special Programs web pages. The Fresno State Outreach & Special Programs website is targeted toward K-8 students with a focus on underrepresented minorities. The results indicate that the web pages utilize the principles of equity to motivate the youth and build a college-going culture. Although there is evidence of equity-mindedness being incorporated into these web pages there is work that still needs to be done to ensure students feel represented at the institution.

An examination of the findings indicates that the Fresno State Outreach & Special Programs does embed equity-mindedness in most web pages but there are some pages that according to the CUE Web Scan tool are not providing the equity-mindedness it should. These findings also show that although the department may not be aware of the implementation of equity-mindedness practices they are already utilizing some practices for their program websites. This finding supports previous research that suggests inequality in higher education is a structural problem that is hidden or revealed through the use of language imbued with political and social meaning (Bensimon et al. 2016). What this current study adds to the existing literature is higher education institutions are working to make sure that they are moving towards a more equitable lens.

In line with Bensimon et al.'s (2016) *Five Principles for Enacting Equity by Design*, the results from the study show that there is a high percentage of equity-mindedness that plays a role in the office's recruitment strategy. Although some program web pages do not apply the five principles for enacting equity, there is evidence that there can be an improvement. Although communication was not conducted with prospective students the study does provide new insight into the importance that equity-mindedness plays in the perception of the institution.

The study conducted focused on just one of two offices that focus on student recruitment. It is beyond the scope of this study to address the question of whether this office has a huge impact on the enrollment of students as their target population is K-8 students and families. Although there is this limitation, this office and the way that their websites are viewed will play a role in how the institution is perceived by these future students and their families.

Further research is required to establish whether equity-mindedness implementation of program websites is a factor in whether students and their families have a positive or negative perception of the institution.

Implications

This study has several implications for future research and practices. I will offer two implications for research and three implications for practice. Concerning research, the current study focused only on websites. Future research could focus on how equity-minded practices are reflected on the social media platforms of admission offices. This is important because current college students may be engaged and receive college information through various social media platforms that are beyond static web pages. How universities are utilizing these social media platforms can either make students feel represented or not represented. Future research should also include multiple perspectives from staff and students. The current study had a limited perspective. It is important to include the perspective of other folks as well because they are on the receiving end and they can give a perspective if equity-minded practices are being utilized.

In regards to practice, admissions staff should ensure that websites are utilizing equity-mindedness practices. Admissions staff can ensure the use of equity-mindedness practices by utilizing The Center for Urban Education's (CUE) Web Scan tool. From the research, it is important to have ongoing structural opportunities for students to provide feedback on equity-minded practices. This can be done by the department hosting annual forums for students to participate in. Furthermore, admissions staff should receive ongoing professional development on equity-mindedness practices on websites. This can be accomplished by staff participating in training offered by the Center for Urban Education (CUE) and other associations.

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Appendix

Table 1

Welcoming	Does the web page use language and/or images that suggest a welcoming tone?	Is the information communicated in such a way that a student could feel that this program/department/office cares about their well-being and success? A racially minoritized student?	Does the web page send messages that may make racially minoritized students feel unwelcome ?
Home Page https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/index.html	Yes	Yes	No
Mission and Vision https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/missionvision.html	Yes	Yes	No
Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/programs/index.html	Yes	Yes	No
K-8th Early Outreach https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/services/index.html	No	No	No
African American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/aai/index.html	Yes	Yes	No
Native American Initiative	Yes	Yes	No

https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/nai/index.html			
Central Valley Cal-SOAP https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/cal-soap/index.html	No	Yes	No
Dream Success Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/dsc/index.html	Yes	Yes	No
Educational Opportunity Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/eoc/index.html	No	Yes	No
Educational Talent Search Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/talentsearch/index.html	No	Yes	No
Upward Bound Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/upwardbound/index.html	No	No	No
Upcoming Events and Conferences https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/events/index.html	Yes	Yes	No
Total	Yes - 58.3% No - 41.7%	Yes - 83.3% No - 16.7%	Yes - 0% No - 100%

Table 2

Demystifying	Does the web page explain the purpose of the program/department/office in clear and plain language?	Does any part of the web page use academic jargon that a student with little familiarity with higher education may not understand?
Home Page https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/index.html	Yes	No
Mission and Vision https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/missionvision.html	Yes	No
Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/programs/index.html	Yes	Yes
K-8th Early Outreach https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/services/index.html	No	No
African American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/aai/index.html	Yes	No
Native American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/nai/index.html	Yes	No
Central Valley Cal-SOAP https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/cal-soap/index.html	No	No
Dream Success Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/dsc/index.html	Yes	Yes

Educational Opportunity Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/eoc/index.html	Yes	Yes
Educational Talent Search Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/talentsearch/index.html	Yes	No
Upward Bound Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/upwardbound/index.html	No	No
Upcoming Events and Conferences https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/events/index.html	N/A	N/A
Total	Yes - 66.7% No - 25% N/A - 8.3%	Yes - 25% No - 66.7% N/A - 8.3%

Table 3

Creating A Partnership	Does the web page suggest that the program/department/office seeks to assist students in their educational journeys? Racially minoritized students in particular?	Does the web page provide information on resources for racially minoritized students in particular? Is this information clearly communicated?	Does the web page use language that is respectful in tone?	Is the contact information for a specific practitioner provided for students who have additional questions?	Does the web page feature or link to a “frequently asked questions” section?
Home Page https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/index.html	Yes	Yes / Yes	Yes	No	No
Mission and Vision https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/missionvision.html	Yes	No / No	Yes	No	No
Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/programs/index.html	Yes	Yes / Yes	Yes	No	No
K-8th Early Outreach https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/services/index.html	No	No / No	Yes	No	No
African American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/aai/index.html	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes	Yes	No

html					
Native American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/nai/index.html	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Central Valley Cal-SOAP https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/cal-soap/index.html	No	Yes/Yes	Yes	No	No
Dream Success Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/dsc/index.html	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes	No	No
Educational Opportunity Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/eoc/index.html	No	No/No	Yes	No	No
Educational Talent Search Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/talentsearch/index.html	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes	No	No
Upward Bound Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/upwardbound/index.html	No	No/No	Yes	No	No
Upcoming Events and Conferences https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/events/index.html	Yes	No/No	Yes	No	No
Total	Yes - 66.7% No - 33.3%	Yes - 58.3% No - 41.7%	Yes - 100% No - 0%	Yes - 16.7% No - 83.3%	Yes - 0% No - 100%

Table 4

Validating	Does the web page include language and/or images that communicate support for students' academic efforts and goals?
Home Page https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/index.html	Yes
Mission and Vision https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/missionvision.html	Yes
Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/programs/index.html	Yes
K-8th Early Outreach https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/services/index.html	No
African American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/aai/index.html	Yes
Native American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/nai/index.html	Yes
Central Valley Cal-SOAP https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/cal-soap/index.html	Yes
Dream Success Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/dsc/index.html	Yes
Educational Opportunity Center	No

https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/eoc/index.html	
Educational Talent Search Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/talentsearch/index.html	Yes
Upward Bound Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/upwardbound/index.html	No
Upcoming Events and Conferences https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/events/index.html	No
Total	Yes - 66.7% No - 33.3%

Table 5

Representing	Does the web page feature the stories and/or experiences of racially minoritized students? If not, whose stories and/or experiences are featured?	Does the web page feature images of racially minoritized students?
Home Page https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Mission and Vision https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/missionvision.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	No
Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/programs/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
K-8th Early Outreach https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/services/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
African American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/aai/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Native American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/nai/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Central Valley Cal-SOAP https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/cal-soap/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	No

ate.edu/cal-soap/index.html	<i>featured</i>	
Dream Success Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/dsc/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Educational Opportunity Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/eoc/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Educational Talent Search Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/talentsearch/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Upward Bound Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/upwardbound/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Upcoming Events and Conferences https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/events/index.html	No <i>No stories or experiences were featured</i>	Yes
Total	Yes - 0% No - 100%	Yes - 83.3% No - 16.7%

Table 6

Deconstructing	Does any part of the web page reflect a view of white students as the “normative” college student?	Does any part of the web page reflect a view of racially minoritized students as the “other” (i.e., as different, as not belonging)?
Home Page https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/index.html	No	No
Mission and Vision https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/missionvision.html	No	No
Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/programs/index.html	No	No
K-8th Early Outreach https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/services/index.html	No	No
African American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/aai/index.html	No	No
Native American Initiative https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/nai/index.html	No	No
Central Valley Cal-SOAP https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/cal-soap/index.html	No	No

Dream Success Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/dsc/index.html	No	No
Educational Opportunity Center https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/eoc/index.html	No	No
Educational Talent Search Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/talentsearch/index.html	No	No
Upward Bound Programs https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/upwardbound/index.html	No	No
Upcoming Events and Conferences https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/outreach/events/index.html	No	No
Total	Yes - 0% No - 100%	Yes - 0% No - 100%