

Notes from meeting of San Diego Concilio and Mesa College leadership, September 2023

VIA EMAIL

To: Ashanti Hands, President, San Diego Mesa College

Hello Ashanti,

I'm attaching our notes from our SD Concilio meeting with you and your leadership team at Mesa College on September 1, 2023. Please let me know if we erred in documenting any points or if we omitted anything significant.

I regret that we didn't have more time to discuss some of our SD Concilio's priorities, including the hiring and retention of Chicano/Latino faculty (both full-time and adjunct), institutional support for Chicana & Chicano Studies, and expansion of the very successful Puente Program model. During our SD Concilio meetings with local community college leadership this year, we find that current levels of Chicano/Latino faculty are unacceptably low, and that institutional resources are generally insufficient to meet student demand for Chicana & Chicano Studies courses and participation in the Puente Program.

We appreciate the many valuable initiatives taking place to serve Chicano/Latino students at Mesa College, including those that seek to transform the curriculum. We hope to continue the dialogue between your leadership and our organization.

Sinceramente,

Patrick Velasquez
Co-Chair, SD Concilio

Meeting: San Diego Concilio and Mesa College
September 1, 2023

Attendance: Eduardo Aguilar, Octavio Garcia, Norma Cazares, David Ramirez, Alberto Ochoa, Patrick Velasquez, Ashanti Hands, Isabel O'Connor, Larry Maxey, Lorenzo Legaspi, Toni Parsons, Hai Hong.

Ashanti Hands provided an overview of the presentation by Mesa College, including structure of change, support services, and areas of improvement.

This is Ashanti's second year as president of Mesa College. Being a "College of Equity and Excellence" has been the focus at Mesa since 2014.

Mesa's plan is important, was developed in collaboration with USC. It reflects "courageous leadership," equity as action, is radical and bold about serving students, and avoids centering whiteness.

Toni Trejo Parsons: Servingness is critical. She has spent two years coordinating HSI grants that provide access to success, curriculum, diverse staff, and policy changes. Equitable outcomes are critical as are needed structural change, including changing white supremacy policies.

Mesa is completing its mission statement.

Mesa had a Title V grant, Proyecto Éxito, that institutionalized elements including faculty development (LOFT), a summer orientation (CRUISE), curriculum redesign in Math, English, and ELAC, and a student center (Avanza).

From 2016-2021, Mesa had an HSI Title III grant with Conexiones, pathways, a STEM center, peer mentoring, and a Latinx Alliance.

Mesa's current grant, in its second of three years, is a Title III grant, Equity, Excellence, and Éxito. It grows previous initiatives, including professional development, curriculum redesign, and a new STEM program.

The grant has served 700 students in peer mentoring with 3,000 unduplicated contacts.

Isabel O'Connor: Mesa has identified STEM "bottlenecks," and will focus tutoring on students of color. Mesa's Puente Program has added Math to its program features.

Toni Parsons: gaps in student success outcomes are not fully closed although Mesa initiatives have had success. Mesa remains focused on its data to close the gaps.

Ashanti Hands: Mesa's support programs include Puente, EOPS (50% Chicano/Latino students), CRUISE (50% C/L students), and Borderless Scholars (90% C/L students).

Isabel O'Connor: Mesa has one Puente Program cohort that serves 25 students. It has a Puente Club and hopes to provide an affinity space for the cohort. There are three dedicated faculty for Puente. Mesa has discussed expanding Puente, a "high touch" program. The cost is prohibitive.

Mesa's "Guided Pathways" has success coaches and other elements of the Puente Program.

Ashanti Hands: Mesa "LOFT" provided faculty training with a focus on equity.

Isabel O'Connor: Mesa is trying to decolonize its curriculum. They added a faculty member to Chicana & Chicano Studies, Jennifer Moreno. They are looking to grow the department in light of the state requirement, to increase course offerings.

Hai Hong: Mesa's peer mentees, overall and specifically Chicano/Latino students, have a higher success rate than a comparison group (success=A, B, C, or P grade). Mesa is reducing its gap in student scholarships. An area for improvement is student employment after graduation (annual income and likelihood of earning a living wage). In terms of employee diversity, from 2014 to 2022, there was little growth in underrepresented tenured/tenure track or adjunct faculty.

Ashanti Hands: Mesa added 16-17 new faculty with enhanced effort to diversify. Mesa is changing its process of recruiting and hiring faculty to change the institutional culture.

Lorenzo Legaspi: Mesa provides training in DEI for all search committees.

Isabel O'Connor: The CSU process to approve transfer courses is questionable, has been problematic. SDCCD has advocates with the CSU Chancellor's Office. Mesa is committed to hiring faculty for Native American Studies.