

May 6, 2020 #EquityChat

Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart (@LoweryHart),  
President (@AmarilloCollege)

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Welcome everyone to our 1st #equitychat w/your #equityavengers @lamkeithcurry and me! Our hope is that we will generate conversations about equity and it's impact on our @CalCommColleges @Comm\_College praxis. Our 1st guest is @LoweryHart -welcome Russell! Tell us about yourself!

[@LoweryHart](#) I'm a recovering cowboy (my roots) who found a place to exist in higher education and have spent my career advocating for students need the same space to discover themselves as well.

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Recovering cowboy? Wow I thought once a cowboy always a cowboys

[@LoweryHart](#) Well ... I still have my boots. But, I'm not longer a rodeo champ!

[@saragoldrickrab](#) Here's my favorite piece about this cowboy:

<https://t.co/5LycXGVnYG?amp=1>

[@HannahBanana\\_Pi](#) I love this!

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Happy to add that @LoweryHart is an official #equityavenger...his work speaks for itself! #equitychat @lamkeithcurry

[@LoweryHart](#) Thank you for your example, courage, heart, and friendship. I'm not worthy of an "official" status but I'll work my tail end off to get there! Much, much love my #equitychat friends!

[@LoweryHart](#) #equityChat the work @SDMesaPrez and @lamkeithcurry do every day is a light. Their essence shows us the way to love, honor and support our students to success every day.

[@ahandsintheair](#) I'm blessed to see, feel and be impacted by that light on a daily basis!

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Question #2 . @LoweryHart - What is your why for equity-minded practice? #equitychat @SDMesaPrez #equityavenger @CalCommColleges @Comm\_Colleg

[@LoweryHart](#) #equityChat My WHY is multi-layered.

1. It is very personal. I grew up with a mother who hired and trained multiple bosses. I saw the power of bias and inequity first hand. She is brilliant and was never considered to lead the organizations she build.

[@LoweryHart](#) #equityChat

2. My WHY is about the community in which I was raised & its future is so intricately linked to the success of ALL our neighbors. If I want my community to thrive, & our my family to excel, I have to ensure EVERYONE in my community as the same opportunity for thrive

[@ahandsintheair](#) I absolutely LOVE a good, personal, multi-layered, mom based, community rooted, social justice infused WHY. Thanks for sharing.

[@LoweryHart](#) #equitychat

3. Have you met my students? They are brilliant, amazing, smart, capable, and our systems have not historically honored their abilities and shared opportunities fully. I see that injustice and it breaks my heart - and it will \$ my community economically

[@lamkeithcurry](#) #3 motivates me. Thank you for sharing that one. #EquityChat

[@LoweryHart](#) #equitychat it is the great joy of our positions. We have the privilege to advocate for amazing students by reconstructing the systems FOR them, rather than perpetuate the systems that typical ignore (at best), oppress and even kill (at worst.)

[@lamkeithcurry](#) #EquityAvenger

[@ahandsintheair](#) New favorite quote "Equity is the great joy of our positions." It really is.

[@lamkeithcurry](#) For real. @LoweryHart I will be using that one for sure#equityChat

[@LoweryHart](#) 4. My why starts with the personal and become injustice and inequity shaped my own family, I feel responsibility to use the positions of influence and privilege to systemically and intentionally change the systems that oppress. That is my WHY. #equitychat

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Wow, 1-4. Was outstanding. I admire you and your leadership.

QT [@SDMesaPrez](#) Beautifully stated @LoweryHart ...I was saying to someone that my privilege allows me to be continually surprised by inequities and in particular racism...must be vigilant #equitychat

<https://twitter.com/LoweryHart/status/1258189241638682630?s=20>

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Question#3 @LoweryHart #equitychat How does @AmarilloCollege define equity..how can you see it?  
[@lamkeithcurry](#)

[@LoweryHart](#) 1. So, the @AmarilloCollege journey to equity in learning and succeeding did not initially start with an intentional definition. We knew we weren't doing right by our students so we started listening to them and really hearing them #equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) 2. Our relationship with equity started with our own student success rates. The inequity in our practices were ugly. Instead of deciding what the numbers meant and what we would do, we simply asked our students what systems of support and justice looked like to them. @equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) 3. So, we started trying to build to what our students told us they needed. Fundamentally, they needed systems that supported them towards success. They told us, repeatedly, they often felt like our systems we intentional barriers they had to work around. #equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) 4. So, we build a definition of equity after we starting working toward it. There was a lot of learning in that. It would have been easier if we started with the definition of what we were trying to build up (and tear down.) #equitychat

[@FoothillPrez](#) Have you arrived at such definition of equity?

[@LoweryHart](#) 5. @AchieveTheDream has informed our definitions of equity & deepened our understanding of the work. Our guiding definition now is to ensure each student intentionally & systemically gets what she needs to succeed. This work forced us to reimagine our existence. [#equitychat](#)

[@lamkeithcurry](#) I am so excited @compton\_college is joining @AchieveTheDream @drkastout

[@LoweryHart](#) Welcome to a network dedicated to equity!

QT [@SDMesaPrez](#) The process for establishing our definition of equity @sdmesacollege was more important than the words we finally put together. Words matter [#equitychat](#) [#dialogfirst](#)

<https://twitter.com/LoweryHart/status/1258191550431006721?s=20>

[@ahandsintheair](#) True. Our journey to equity was reflective, inspired and transformative. It provided great clarity about who we thought we were, who we actually were and who we wanted to become. [#equitychat](#) Now is always a great time to do this work.

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Question#4 @LoweryHart [#equitychat](#) @SDMesaPrez. @AmarilloCollege is known for its “no excuses” approach to supporting students, how did this effort start?

[@LoweryHart](#) Our @AmarilloCollege reformation started with two things: [#NoExcusesU](#) & Damon Lopez driving philosophy that ALL students can succeed & it's OUR responsibility to build systems/ supports to ensure it. @donnabeegle deep understanding of poverty & its alignment with equity [#equitychat](#)

[@LoweryHart](#) No Excuses is NOT the destructive metaphor of “pull yourself up by the boot straps.” It is for us - educators. We cannot accept excuses for failure. If a student fails it's because we didn't have the right person, process or policy in place to ensure their success. [#equitychat](#)

[@lamkeithcurry](#) I agree. [Right-facing fist]

[@LoweryHart](#) No Excuses is really a network that started at Los Pen Elementary in San Diego. Damon Lopez was the principal. he built this philosophy of high expectations with supports to reach those expectations. Fundamentally, it's a relationship model not a curricular one [#equitychat](#)

[@LowerHart](#) So, when you embrace “no excuses” you are committing that YOU are the one who has to take responsibility, change, lead, love, build, support - do whatever it takes to love a student to success.

@AmarilloCollege is a place to love deeply and I'm so proud to see its power daily.

[@ahandsintheair](#) Are you a pastor on the side? You are preaching tonight! [Raising hands]

[@lamkeithcurry](#) [#church](#) [#EquityChat](#)

[@ahandsintheair](#) "No Excuses", from an educators perspective, sounds like a great place to start.

[@LoweryHart](#) No Excuses for educators IS freeing. You no longer feel a need to protect politics, territories, positions - you are free to protect students. [#equitychat](#)

[@lamkeithcurry](#) I think many presidents get caught up in the politics, territories, and positions and forget why they are in these jobs.

[@ahandsintheair](#) Looks like I just got my second favorite quote...."No Excuses for educators IS freeing. You no longer feel a need to protect politics, territories, positions - you are free to protect students." #equitychat

[@sdmesathestand](#) Love, love, love this!!! [Red heart]

[@sonyamarie228](#) We have to remember to teach our students how to swim and give them a life jacket that fits. Many times we drive the boat to the middle of the shark infested water, toss them in after they have told us they can't swim and tell them not to drown or get eaten by a shark.

[@donnabeegle](#) Meet people where they are, not where we want them to be and watch them bloom!

QT [@SDMesaPrez](#) Love that you refer to it as a reformation...it takes a real commitment to upend the status quo #equitychat

<https://twitter.com/LoweryHart/status/1258193696807432194?s=20>

QT [@SDMesaPrez](#) And [@LoweryHart](#) you know I love [red heart] to love our students! [@DrPollard\\_MC](#) we are always down for more love in our communities. #equitychat

<https://twitter.com/LoweryHart/status/1258194903609364480?s=20>

[@LoweryHart](#) Transformation is rooted in love. We can truly love our students, institutions, communities and our country to success. #equitychat

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Question#5 [@LoweryHart](#) As a college President you have competing demands, how do you prioritize poverty informed efforts? #equitychat [@lamkeithcurry](#)

[@LoweryHart](#) 1. Our work with [@donnabeegle](#) and then [@saragoldrickrab](#) was born from listening to our students. Here is how we started our #equitychat that helped us reimagine what was possible and understand what #realcollege meant on a daily basis.

[@LoweryHart](#) 2. We reviewed our data and it was embarrassingly bad. Our students were suffering academically. So, as the #recoveringfaculty member that I am, I did focus groups, interviews, and surveys to find all the "Academic" interventions I already knew our students needed #equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) 3. You know what our #RealCollege students told us? the reason they failed in the classroom, had nothing to do with classrooms - housing, food, transportation, childcare, utility payments, legal (because we criminalize poverty in this country.) THIS CHANGED ME #equitychat

[@ahandsintheair](#) A lot of time is wasted trying to figure out what to do. If we ask, our students will tell us exactly what they need. Creating space for students to share their stories and express their needs is critical to our work. If we ask...they will tell us!

[@LoweryHart](#) It's soooo truth. We spend so much time, energy and \$ building what we think students need when we could just listen to them. Listen. Learn. THEN act.

[@donnabeegle](#) So true Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart. This week I interviewed a single mom who is trying to get educated to provide for her 3 children. Her experiences are a wake up for what we need to do to change lives. It starts with being poverty informed so we CAN listen. <https://t.co/nBnlsrIRx?amp=1>

[@LoweryHart](#) 4. So, our students told us poverty was their biggest barrier to academic success. Poverty became our #equitychat rallying cry. We started with poverty training through @donnabeegle. She gave us a common language & understanding of generational poverty and how we had to adapt

[@LoweryHart](#) 5. Every @AmarilloCollege faculty and staff received poverty training. We knew we had to build #realcollege systems if we were going to ensure our students tasted academic success. Fundamentally, you can't learn if you are hungry, or without a bed #equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) 6. So, our #equitychat started with hiring social workers, building social barriers into our early alerts, connecting advising, social workers, tutors, and faculty in a systemic response to connecting our students to #realcollege supports - food, housing, emergency aid, MONEY.

[@LoweryHart](#) 7. By placing poverty at the core of our #equitychat work, we fundamentally rebuild @AmarilloCollege around loving our students to success by systemically, intentionally, and personally embracing the WHOLE student, not just the part of our students who sat in our classes.

[@ahandsintheair](#) #lovingourstudentstosuccess #equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) 8. Our journey towards equity, and we have closed almost ALL of our equity gaps, really started with seeing, understanding, listening, hearing, celebrating, and LOVING the student we have (not the one we used to have, or wished we had.) LOVE your students #equitychat

[@sdmesathestand](#) Yes!!! "LOVING the student we have (not the one we used to have, or wished we had.) LOVE your students" #equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) 9. you want to act on equity then purposefully, systemically, intentionally build LOVE into your work. Love your students. Their response to your love will be magical and can transform an institution. I use LOVE in our #equitychat because its PERSONAL. Our work is personal. LOVE.

[@ahandsintheair](#) I am so glad that loving leaders like you are leading community college campuses, modeling the way, inspiring others to act and creating conditions that matter for our students to succeed. Thanks for sharing a part of you with us tonight!

[@FoothillPrez](#) Oh so true about love... #OwlLove to you and your college for the focus on loving students!

QT [@SDMesaPrez](#) And @LoweryHart in the beginning were you focused on "fixing students?"#equitychat <https://twitter.com/LoweryHart/status/1258196934420037634?s=20>

[@LoweryHart](#) Right. We thought STUDENTS were the problem, not us. But, they helped us understand we were their biggest barrier - they were hungry, housing insecure, living in the war zone of poverty and WE were their BIGGEST barrier. #equitychat

[@sonyamarie228](#) We spend a lot of energy in assessing ways to force students to conform to us (I stitutiin) and not enough energy looking at how we need to adjust to fit our students and meet their needs.

[@sonyamarie228](#) \*institution

[@sonyamarie228](#) We need to stop asking ourselves if students are college ready and start asking ourselves if we r student ready.

QT [@SDMesaPrez](#) And that's the model we are hoping to follow as we @sdmesacollege "mesanize" the @AmarilloCollege way. #CREAM #RealCollege #bustingbarriers #EquityChat <https://twitter.com/LoweryHart/status/1258198798368673792?s=20>

[@ahandsintheair](#) I feel some action steps (and a song) coming on!

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Well clearly we could #equitychat with @LoweryHart all night! TY @LoweryHart and everyone please keep reading and tweeting your responses as we bring this live section to an end. TY Russell for being a fabulous 1st guest on #equityavenger #equitychat

[@ahandsintheair](#) I thoroughly enjoyed this!

[@sdmesathestand](#) Thank you [@LoweryHart](#)! The Stand Coordinators are a giddy fan base of yours!

[@donnabeegle](#) Listen to this student, a single mom who illuminates the complexities of poverty and how she fell through the cracks. We can train to ensure this does not happen! <https://t.co/nBnlsriRx?amp=1>

QT [@SDMesaPrez](#) Any final thought @LoweryHart @lamkeithcurry #equitychat

[@LoweryHart](#) I love the exchange of ideas with colleagues who are passionate about students and know their equity is truly our collective future. Thank you for including me. I am honored by the wisdom I've read from you all this evening and will fight even harder to for #equitychat. Much [Blue heart] [Blue heart]