

October 6, 2021 #EquityChat

Dr. Adela de la Torre (@PrezdelaTorre), President of San Diego State University (@SDSU)

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Welcome back to another #EquityChat sponsored by @CollegeFutures and hosted by @SDMesaPrez & @lamkeithcurry. We're excited to continue highlighting our @calstate colleagues with @PrezdelaTorre @SDSU. Welcome Dr. de la Torre!

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) Thank you, @SDMesaPrez and @lamkeithcurry. Very excited to join #EquityChat over the next hour!

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Q1 @PrezdelaTorre. Our education, background, and experiences make us who we are. What are three things about yourself that are essential to what makes you, you? @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) Familia first. My family is first, and is part of my cultural DNA. I've also found it essential to surround myself always with mi comunidad de gente, or my community of people. (1/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) Whether they are at different universities, in different fields, or in different places in their lives, I always draw strength from my community of support, particularly Latina women, as we can share experiences, mutual understanding, and support each other. (2/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) It is a tremendous help when you are often "first" in a role, in a profession, or in a career. There isn't a community for you to join, so you have to make it yourself. (3/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) And actively creating these communities around myself allowed me to emerge as a leader, and to feel supported even when I was the "first" and only Latina in a space. #EquityChat (4/4)

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Q2 @PrezdelaTorre. Tell us about @SDSU, and your work as President @SDSU. @SDMesaPrez @CollegeFutures #EquityChat

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) .@SDSU is at a once in a lifetime moment. We are undergoing our first major expansion in nearly 90 years, in Mission Valley, and we have an aggressive enrollment growth and expansion plan for SDSU Imperial Valley. (1/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) We are about to celebrate our 125th anniversary as San Diego's oldest university, our 100th athletics season, and reaching a half MILLION SDSU alumni, with more than half working as leaders right here in San Diego. (2/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) Our strategic plan has allowed us to recently enroll both the largest and most diverse cohort in SDSU history, and has led to a record breaking start to the year for our researchers, and for philanthropy. (3/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) I could not be more excited for the future, and how we leverage this success to further improve the quality of life for each and every one of our students and faculty, and for San Diego at large. #Students at Our Core #EquityChat (4/4)

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Q3 @PrezdelaTorre. What is your definition of equity? How is equity-minded practice embedded in your work? @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) We often talk about diversity like it's a numbers issue. That there are aspirational goals and metrics by which we achieve parity with our state, and with who we serve. Or we talk about graduation and retention gaps by socioeconomic status. (1/6)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) SDSU does exceptionally well in these metrics, of course--we are in the top 10 nationally for graduation rate performance and were number one nationally in 2019 across all universities, public and private. (2/6)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) But this argument misses out entirely on the issue of equity, and of the quality of life. Equity is about empowerment, and about change to systems not numbers. (3/6)

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[@PrezdelaTorre](#) At a minimum for a university, this means that those who walk on your campus feel welcome, feel visible, and feel valued. (4/6)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) But empowerment means customized student support pathways which adapt to the needs, skills, and assets of the student, not the needs of the advisor, or of a one-size-fits all model. (5/6)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) It means creating cultural and identity centers and then listening to what they have to say. It means that every student has the support they need to contribute, to meet their own goals, and to connect ideas... to action... to change. #EquityChat (6/6)

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Q4 [@PrezdelaTorre](#). With the changing landscape of higher ed, how has [@SDSU](#) applied an equity lens to reopening plans, instruction, and student support? [@SDMesaPrez](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) #EquityChat

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) A year of living with a global public health emergency created unique challenges not just for this current year of repopulation, but frankly it has exposed many of the weaknesses of higher education in general. (1/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) The return to campus this fall was essential to so many of our students, and especially our Pell and middle-income students, who often didn't have access to the types of spaces and resources which supported successful remote learning. (2/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) To support this return, we marshalled dozens of goal-specific working groups, and we made it our mission to call, text, email, and talk with every one of our students. Equity means we meet the students where they are, not where we are. (3/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) This was done through a new #SDSUCares program, and thousands of personal phone calls and text messages were one of our single most effective tool in ensuring every student was vaccinated and supported--financially, emotionally, and academically--to return to campus. (4/4)

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Q5 [@PrezdelaTorre](#). You recently had your three-year review as President [@SDSU](#) and lauded for a number of key initiatives achieved under your leadership. Which one are you most proud of? [@lamkeithcurry](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) #EquityChat

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) I am especially proud of the significant Graduation Initiative progress at SDSU, and that we are on track to eliminate all equity gaps by 2025. We've also exceeded many of our other 2025 targets already--four years early! (1/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) And there is so much more I must acknowledge. Through our strategic plan, we are improving our ability to meet the long-term education and economic needs of our region and state. (2/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) Our faculty are securing more federal dollars for research to address the many challenges of our time: climate change, health disparities, social justice and equity issues, and more. (3/4)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) All of this work is transformative and bold, and exactly what our communities need for a better future. #EquityChat (4/4)

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Q6 [@PrezdelaTorre](#). What are some creative ways that [@SDSU](#) has utilized HEERF dollars? [@SDMesaPrez](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) #EquityChat

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) First and foremost, I was especially grateful to be able to distribute tens of millions of these dollars in direct emergency aid to our students. We have one more distribution to go: all SDSU students will be receiving additional HEERF aid from SDSU in the spring. (1/3)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) And we were also able to be equity minded on the institutional front and use this support to add more course sections and expand our COVID-19 related research. (2/3)

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) We upgraded more than half of classrooms with smart technology. And we bolstered testing and vaccination efforts. 95% of ALL our students were vaccinated before the start of this semester — the highest in the CSU system. #EquityChat (3/3)

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Now if we could just get windows in the Ed building!

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[@SDMesaPrez](#) Q7 [@PrezdelaTorre](#). What are you currently reading and what book(s) should we consider reading?

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[@PrezdelaTorre](#) While I don't read fiction that often, I just finished Mexican Gothic and loved it! It's by Mexican Canadian author Silvia Moreno-Garcia.

[@lamkeithcurry](#) Q8 [@PrezdelaTorre](#). We're at our last question for the evening. What gives you hope? [@lamkeithcurry](#)

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[@PrezdelaTorre](#) This one is easy to answer. Students. They have such hope and energy for the future that I can't help but be inspired by them. #EquityChat

[@SDMesaPrez](#) TY [@PrezdelaTorre](#) for joining us tonight on #EquityChat & sharing your insights & practices @SDSU!

Please join us next week as we welcome [@mrmicahali](#), Pres. [@ComptonUnified](#) - Past Pres. & Conference Chair

[@CABSE_](#). TY [@CollegeFutures](#) [@lamkeithcurry](#) [@equityavengers](#) Out!

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) Thank you for having me, Dr. Luster. I appreciate your leadership, and your commitment to education!

And thanks to everyone following the conversation. (1/2)

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Wonderful to host you!

[@PrezdelaTorre](#) Again, with SDSU's 125th anniversary in 2022, I personally invite you to celebrate with us, and become part of the Aztec family. Follow us on social for details this fall. #EquityChat (2/2)

[@SDMesaPrez](#) Thank you!