

Guillermo Mayer

President and CEO

Public Advocates

November 15, 2023

[5:00 pm] Pam

Welcome back to #EquityChat sponsored by @CollegeFutures w/your hosts @lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil & @DrPamLuster. We're excited to have Guillermo Mayer @memomayer, President/CEO @publicadvocates. Welcome Guillermo!

[Guillermo Mayer @memomayer · Nov 15](#)

TY [@equityavengers](#) [@DrPamLuster](#) [@Dr.Tammeil](#) [@lamkeithcurry](#) for the opportunity to join this [#EquityChat](#)

[5:05 pm] Tammeil

Q1 @memomayer. As you engage in equity-focused work, what is your walk-up song or anthem? @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

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(1/2) "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy. I was a huge PE fan growing up & this song was also featured in one of my favorite movies, "Do The Right Thing" by Spike Lee.

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster · Nov 15](#)

Our best trained, our best educated....summer of 89

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil · Nov 15](#)

[5:11 pm] Keith

Q2 @memomayer. You're leading efforts to expand college access and affordability for low-income students and students of color. What catalyzed your journey to engage in this work as an attorney? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Guillermo Mayer @memomayer · Nov 15](#)

(1/2) It goes back to high school where I saw how my peers were either tracked into college-bound classes or excluded from them. In college, I helped run MEChA conferences to expose students to college and advocated against tuition increases and exclusive admissions policies.

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster · Nov 15](#)

Groups like [#Mecha](#) make such an impact in the lives of Latino/a students, creating inclusive campus familia and giving access to students to social and educational capital [@EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson DrTammeil · Nov 15](#)

The combination of Advocacy + Exposure=

[5:25 pm] Tammeil

Q4 @memomayer. In your role as a Commissioner at the @castudentaid, how are you trying to address college affordability for students? @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Guillermo Mayer @memomayer · Nov 15](#)

(1/3) By working to simplify and expand the [#CalGrant](#) program & advocating for solutions addressing the total cost of attendance, such as housing, food, transportation & other basic needs.

[Guillermo Mayer @memomayer · Nov 15](#)

(2/3) We need to think about affordability beyond the financial aid check. For ex: most college students are renters. College would be more affordable if cities adopted pro-tenant policies like rent control. A rent controlled apartment saves a student thousands \$\$\$.

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster · Nov 15](#)

Absolutely- I recently heard a community leader say student housing was a waste of resources as students are only here for 4 years....ah hello...community colleges by far need more student housing...or at least affordable...and they LIVE here.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil · Nov 15](#)

We also need to work on including college students to help with eligibility for developers and landlords as counting for incentives and affordability.

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(3/3) @castudentaid is doing fantastic work to address food insecurity by looking to expand access for college students to programs like CalFresh. CA is leading the nation on this. [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil · Nov 15](#)

Yes, we are! Grateful to the [@CalCommColleges](#) & our basic needs heroes for prioritizing and scaling this work. Thanks to the advocates and the [@ccleague](#)'s CEO Affordability, Food & Housing Taskforce for continuing to elevate, advocate, & support the work needed.

[5:32 pm] Keith

Q5 @memomayer. Given the nature of legal challenges to #racialequity in #highered, what should leaders be following in your work? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat

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(1/4) We've turned to race-conscious programs in [#highered](#) largely b/c our K12 system provides unequal opportunities to BIPOC students, resulting in deep racial disparities. The loss of affirmative action forces us to continue confronting the root causes of those disparities.

[Guillermo Mayer @memomayer · Nov 15](#)

(2/4) Our K12 work addresses this by advocating for adequately & equitably funded public schools, fully credentialed & diverse teachers, high quality curriculum & instructional materials, modern facilities in good repair, robust student supports & authentic community engagement.

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(3/4) In [#highed](#) many barriers also remain. That's why we are enforcing equitable placement in transfer-level, college courses for community college students, ensuring students are no longer subject to arbitrary placement tests & advocating for greater affordability.

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(4/4) Finally, we are working for a constitutional right to a quality education that prepares all students from cradle to career & and a [#highered](#) system that is not based on antiquated assumptions of who can & should attend college. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:39 pm] Pam

Q6 @memomayer. To do this work, we must continue learning and partnering with others. How do you educate yourself and who is informing your practice? @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

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I listen to my colleagues, who partner directly with student-led groups, and to trusted partners like [@CollegeOpp](#) [@EdTrustWest](#) [@TICAS\\_org](#) [@CalCompetes](#) [@SMAC](#) [@A2MEND2006](#) [@Umoja\\_edu](#). We are part of an ecosystem with admin, faculty, policy makers, researchers & advocates [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil · Nov 15](#)

Let's go, Fam!

[5:53 pm] Keith

Q8 @memomayer. The road to racial equity is long. How are you sustaining yourself? What practice would you recommend to other #EquityAvengers? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

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At 50 I don't take myself too seriously anymore. I try to build honest & authentic relationships with people in my work. None of us have all the answers but together we can make real progress. Taking time to disconnect from work is essential. Empathy fatigue is real [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster · Nov 15](#)

I'd not pondered empathy fatigue but as someone who feels the world's inequities deeply it resonates [#EquityChat](#)

[6:00 pm] Pam

TY @memomayer @publicadvocates for sharing your work w/#EquityChat @CollegeFutures. Next week, we're offline for the holiday. Join us when we return 11/29 to host our friend @DrLukeWood, President @SacState. @lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster @equityavengers OUT!