

Dr. Seher Awan, President, Mission College

Dr. Jamal Cooks, President, Chabot College

April 24, 2024

[5:00 pm] [Dr. Pam Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Welcome to #EquityChat sponsored by @CollegeFutures w/your @equityavengers hosts @lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil & @DrPamLuster - tonight were' joined by 2 @CalCommColleges CEO's, @SeherAwan13 @go2MissionSC & Dr. Jamal Cooks @chabot_prez @chabot_college on equity strategies #CCMonth24

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Very excited to be joining you tonight. Thank you for having me!

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

Happy to have you both [@SeherAwan13](#) [@chabot_prez](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Thank you both. Good to be in this space with you.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Welcome!

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Glad to share the space with all of these wonderful [#equity](#) minded leaders.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Grateful to be with you, too!

[5:05 pm] [Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q1 @SeherAwan13 Dr. Cooks @chabot_college. As you engage in equity-focused work, what is your walk-up song or anthem? @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

It's a tie for first place for me. "The Greatest" by Sia and "Me Against the World" by 2Pac. Both remind me of the resilience that this work takes as well as the experiences of our students and the world around us. Keeps my head right and ready to lean in and do the work.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

I am a huge 2Pac fan, but I am so feeling the [@Sia](#) song! [#Resilience](#) <https://t.co/iu8tCPGzp0>

"Don't give up (no no), I won't give up (no no)
Don't give up, no no no (nah)
Don't give up, I won't give up
Don't give up, no no no
I'm free to be the greatest, I'm alive"

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

2 very different artistic vibes...but that's the beauty of music and its ability to move us
[#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Absolutely. Music is such a powerful catalyst and can encapsulate so much feeling across genres

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

I always love the full [#EquityChat](#) playlists after the last couple of seasons because the musical interests are so varied and what speaks to each guest as their theme song paints such a vivid picture through the songs and their lyrics.

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Hands down, "Lean on Me," by [@billwithers](#) because, "Sometimes in our lives we all have pain, we all have sorrow. But if we are wise, we know there is always tomorrow. Lean on me." I want [@chabot_college](#) students and our community to know that they can lean me and [#chabotcollege](#).

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

This is the part that I talk about alot [@chabot_prez](#)...no one should feel shame in the need...Please swallow your pride
If I have things you need to borrow
For no one can fill
Those of your needs that you won't let show

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Those are the lyrics I was feeling, too! It takes a lot of asking for help, and I've been realizing that I need to do it more...I look no farther than you.

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

That's such a beautiful sentiment and I do love that song

[5:11 pm] [Dr. Keith Curry \(@lamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q2 @SeherAwan13 Dr. Cooks @chabot_college. In the spirit of #CommunityCollegeMonth, what do you think makes community colleges an integral piece of today's higher education landscape? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

1 For me, community colleges are the key to social justice and economic equity. Our open access, intentional outreach, and building systems to support the most marginalized communities are what make CC's integral to our education landscape. We provide visibility to those who need

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

2 and deserve to be seen and have a seat at the table where decisions are being made. I think CC's also are a key to acknowledging and the systemic racism of our CA Master Plan for Education and we are the only place that is beginning to change systems to support women and BIPOC

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

We have to continue working to show students, families, and communities that community colleges are a viable option for academic and professional success.

[5:18 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Q3 @SeherAwan13 Dr. Cooks @chabot_college. Was there a defining moment or experience that catalyzed your journey to engage in this work at the community college level? @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

1 I remember getting my first job out of college in the EOPS/CARE & CalWORKS department at College of the Canyons. Supporting students on the front lines who were most marginalized really made me feel connected and like I was making a difference. It also gave me meaningful

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

2 perspective. I remember telling a student I was proud of him for doing well on a test and he started to cry. He shared that no one had ever said they were proud of him until that point. It hit me then that just one small interaction, one person who cares, can make a difference.

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

3 It also made me understand my own power and how to leverage that intentionality to create a larger and larger impact on systemic changes I felt needed to occur for students like him and others minoritized groups. I knew then I wanted to keep making a difference wherever I could

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

It is a game changer when you realize your [#power](#) and then start to assert yourself for [#equity](#) work.

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

And then when you create that energy and power...imbue others and demonstrate your own ability to share it, grow it, and thrive in that collective space [#EquityChat](#)

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Absolutely, we need collaboration, inspiration, and continued motivation to continue this [#equity](#) work. Find like minded [#leaders](#), learn from one another, and allow all students to [#shine](#).

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

I feel like there's some song lyrics in there [@chabot_prez!](#) [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Vulnerability is such a powerful and underrated quality in this equity work as well. When we show up in spaces as our authentic selves, and make ourselves open and available to others, this is transformative

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

4 . I never thought I would be a college president, but I feel so privileged & grateful to have this opportunity to impact equity-minded change at this level.

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

While [#equity](#) has always been at the forefront of my work, a defining moment for me was [#GeorgeFloyd](#). I worked with several leaders to create the Black Excellence Collective 10x10 Taskforce to meet the demands of Black students and staff for the betterment of the entire college.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Your dedication to equity, especially in response to George Floyd's murder... The Black Excellence Collective 10x10 Taskforce sounds impactful. Can you share some key strategies or initiatives you've implemented to promote equity and inclusivity? [#Equity](#) [#GeorgeFloyd](#)

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Through the BEC 10x10, we applied the lessons learned to structure parts of our Guided Pathways, success teams, and barriers that impacted black students around financial aid, academic support, and effective strategies for black students to feel a stronger sense of belonging.

[5:25 pm] [Dr. Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q4 [@SeherAwan13](#) [Dr. Cooks @chabot_college](#). How have you implemented policy and/or programmatic changes to impact racial equity at your institution? [@DrPamLuster](#) [@lamkeithcurry](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) [#EquityChat](#) [#EquityAvengers](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Accountability and courage are the foundation for impactful programmatic change. Asking the hard questions of where we are falling short for students is the first step. From there its questioning our processes and systems. Why do we do it this way? Is it best for students?

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

[@go2mission](#) is also an [#HSI](#) & [#AANAPISI](#) and we continue to push for more for our students. Are we trying to help students or prevent them from engaging?

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

We cannot blame students but need to look inward. From here, we have participatory and intentional dialogue, invest resources, and change systems to create equity-minded change. [#EquityChat](#) [#IKnowMyMission](#)

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

The first, second, and third question should always be "what is best for students?" [#equity](#) minded leaders start there.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

[Amen gif: <https://twitter.com/i/status/1783293823185203214>]

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Starting there is the first step!

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

[@chabot_college](#) is a [#HispanicServingInstitution](#), [#AANAPISI](#), and has new agreements with [#HBCU](#) institutions. The college and I are able to impact racial equity through strong partnerships across the campus and the community.

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

Creating these kind of connections changes the landscape for students [#EquityChat](#)

[5:32 pm] [Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q5 [@SeherAwan13](#) Dr. Cooks [@chabot_college](#). Who are you partnering and collaborating with in your district/community to achieve your racial equity goals? How do they support you with your work?
[@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

I am grateful to have such a supportive Board and Chancellor at [#WVMCCD](#). Our Executive Team at the district also leans in and answers our call for support when it comes to facilities, budget, IT, and other key areas.

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

They support our initiatives, are willing to redesign systems if they aren't serving students, and are self-reflective when we bring up concerns. They are truly partners in this work. Resources, time, and support is what we need & they are here for that [#EquityChat](#)

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

great to hear this [@SeherAwan13](#)..teamwork and dreamwork...[#EquityChat](#)

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

I work closely with the chancellor of my district as well as the president of [@LPCOfficial](#), our sister college, to make sure that [#RacialEquity](#) goals are achieved not only on the [@chabot_college](#) campus but district wide, thus effecting change in the broader communities we serve.

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

ok now...y'all in multi-college districts listening in? [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

LOL

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

It makes such a difference when you have the support from above to push harder and ask the tough questions that support systemic change

[5:39 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Q6 @SeherAwan13 Dr. Cooks @chabot_college. To do this work, we must continue learning and partnering with others. How do you educate yourself and who is informing your practice? @DrTammeil @IamKeithCurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

I enjoy national conferences that give me perspective and get me out of the group think that can occur. Excited to attend and learn from practitioners at NCORE. Reading books by Estela Bensimon and others. Here are some links for some other articles I've really enjoyed.

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

"Liberatory Community College Leadership: Education, Decolonization, and Emancipation" - Edward C. Bush, Abdimalik A. Buul, & Byron D. Clift Breland

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Cultivating Genius- Gholdy Muhammad On Being Presidential- Susan Pierce Servant Leadership= Robert Greenleaf Strengths Based Leadership- Rath and Conchie Fish-Lundin, Paul, and Christensen

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"Queer Students' of Color Sense of Inclusion Inside Community College Classrooms" - Nirah Wagh

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"Racelighting: A Prevalent Version of Gaslighting Facing People of Color" - Frank Harris III & J. Luke Wood

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"White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" - Peggy McIntosh

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"Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box" - Arbinger Institute

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

I do a lot of reading on leadership, communication skills, and team building. I believe that these three topics help others follow a leader. One is not a leader if others do not willingly follow. The key is building trust, having a shared vision of [#equity](#), and building your team.

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Shared vision, trust, and communication are so important. Love the Crucial Conversations training and have brought that to [@go2MissionSC](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Teambuilding is also so important, I definitely agree. We have to make time for this intentional equity work or else it will get lost in the day to day and emails. I love getting off campus for leadership retreats

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Cultivating Genius- Gholdy Muhammad On Being Presidential- Susan Pierce Servant Leadership- Robert Greenleaf Strengths Based Leadership- Rath and Conchie Fish-Lundin, Paul, and Christensen

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

Love it when we get recs! [#EquityChat](#)

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[#bookclub](#) time

[5:46pm] [Dr. Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q7 [@SeherAwan13](#) [Dr. Cooks @chabot_college](#). We all have a vision of the future we want to live in. What is your freedom dream for higher education and what gives you hope for its future? [@DrPamLuster](#) [@lamkeithcurry](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) [#EquityChat](#) [#EquityAvengers](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

What gives me hope is our students. Speaking with them, interacting with them. They are just so amazing and inspiring. I feel so grateful to be in service to them & I feel good that we are educating professionals who care, want to make a difference, & will be at the table

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

where decisions are being made. My vision is to create a college that doesn't exist yet, one without equity gaps and 100% success rates. Then to be able to empower others to create systems that have these outcomes.

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

And of course, dismantling the patriarchy and the Eurocentric society we currently live in to do more for those who need our love and support, especially women of color
[#EquityChat](#) [#burndownthepatriarchy](#)

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

YES!!!

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Also, I hope that we all can start from a place of grace, understanding, and kindness as we do this work. We know that it is hard work, but we must always keep in mind that it is heart work. As long as we keep that in mind, the future is bright and we all win.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Heart work--"The future is bright, and we all win!"

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

heart and hard all wrapped up together

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

This truly is [heart] work.

[5:53 pm] [Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q8 @SeherAwan13 Dr. Cooks @chabot_college. 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

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Honestly, I can always do better with self-care, especially when life gets hectic. But working out, making time for me and my health and wellness, spending time with family and in the outdoors help. One thing I would recommend highly for everyone is EMDR.

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

It's a type of mental health therapy that helps resolve trauma and is such a powerful tool to support mental health and create inner peace. Highly recommend along with acupuncture! Also loved these books, definitely recommend! [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

"Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle" - Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

And anything by Brene Brown

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Self-care isn't only about equity to others, it's also about equity to ourselves.

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

I have time to myself in the mornings when it is quiet and peaceful, which allows me space to be still and be thankful for the life that I am able to live as an [#equity](#) leader in [#higher](#) education at [#chabotcollege](#).

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

So agree! Gratitude is such a powerful mindset

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Every morning, I read, journal, and meditate. I exercise and do a little housework. This is all by 6:30am. We do so much for others, that finding time for yourself is important.

[Dr. Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

Wow! Consistency is key, and you are demonstrating it! [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Self-care really does need to be the first-time full-time job. If we don't make time for ourselves, no one else will, especially in these roles and what is required to make true, sustainable change happen

[6:00 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

TY @chabot_prez & @SeherAwan13 4 sharing your work on [#EquityChat](#)-w/focus on students & our colleges collective efforts. Next week we are hosting a fantastic student, but not ready to reveal just yet, so until then... @lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil & @DrPamLuster @equityavengers OUT!

[Dr. Seher Awan \(she/her/ella\) @SeherAwan13](#)

Thank you so much again for having me! Such a joy to chat with you all. Wishing everyone a wonderful night

[Dr. Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

TY!

[Jamal A. Cooks @chabot_prez](#)

Thank you for the opportunity to share and I look forward to support the [#EquityAvengers](#) in the future. I appreciate you all.

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

TY! We enjoyed hearing from you both!