

Susanna Cooper

Executive Director

Wheelhouse, UC Davis

May 29, 2024

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

Welcome to #EquityChat sponsored by @CollegeFutures w/your @equityavengers hosts @lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil & @DrPamLuster. Tonight we welcome @UCDWheelhouse Exec Director Dr Susanna Cooper...welcome Dr Cooper!

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I'm honored to be here! Thanks so much for having me. Especially great to be in company with the Avengers.

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

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

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Without question: Higher Ground by Stevie Wonder. Gets me going every time.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Among the many [@StevieWonder](#) classics!

"Lovers keep on lovin'

Believers keep on believin', um yeah

Sleepers just stop sleepin'

'Cause it won't be too long, oh, yeah, yeah

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah"

<https://t.co/ENIWBS7CRg>

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Don't get me started. I saw him do the Songs in the Key of Life cycle in Las Vegas pre-Covid. It was a religious experience!

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Ooh, I'm jealous!

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

Q2 @UCDWheelhouse. On your first chat, you defined equity as “working to make the spaces we inhabit equitable.” Was there a defining moment or experience that catalyzed your journey to engage in this work?
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Can I get a 2-fer? 1/2 I had a moment mid-career when visiting a federally funded migrant preschool in Esparto where I understood how a smart & equitable public investment could help change the lives of children/family/ community. It was visceral. I'll never forget it.

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2/2 Multiple defining moments -- through the eyes of CCC leaders, understanding how hard but necessary it is to make change, and the reasons -- their students -- why they push the rock up the hill. It continues to inspire me, and we are on our 8th year of this work!

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

Q3 @UCDWheelhouse. You recently held a gathering for @CalCommColleges AANHPI CEOs. Can you tell us about the work @UCDWheelhouse is doing to support affinity CEO groups, and why this is important for advancing #racialequity? @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityAvengers

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1/2 Such an important new strand of work for us. Started with a group of Black CEOs who asked us to host a retreat for them. We hosted AANHPI CEOs in April and will host Latinx CEOs in September. We are trying to create 'holding environments' for these powerful groups of peers...

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2/2... to have urgent conversations they may not be able to have elsewhere. As with our CEO & Advancing Leaders Institutes, they are building connections, shared strategies & ideas they carry forward. Relationships matter, and we do our best to set the table for lasting ones.

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

Q4 @UCDWheelhouse. In #EquityChat S1, you shared highlights from your work on student parents and study on CCC leadership/institutional response to COVID19. What highlights can you share from your recent reports? @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityAvengers

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OMG so much. We are deep in examination of innovation borne of pandemic desperation. Read about some of this on the national ARCC Network blog: <https://t.co/XypwiVU32H>

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

I'm proud of the work the [@OfficialEVC](#) faculty did during the pandemic to humanize the curriculum and their instructional praxis. It was humbling and some of the most rewarding work I've been part of.

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More here on innovation at Cosumnes River College: <https://t.co/6hWC1K4Maa>

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My colleagues Michal Kurlaender, Francisco Rodriguez and Ed Bush have authored an article for Change Magazine -- out next month -- stay tuned!

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Can't wait!

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

Q5 @UCDWheelhouse. Within the current national climate, what advice would you give current and aspiring college presidents/leaders as they navigate through difficult challenges? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat

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Is there a tougher job in America today than college president? Cultivate your trusted circle, build your network. They'll be there for wisdom, advice and emotional support when you need it. And find something outside the presidency that feeds you.

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

Q6 @UCDWheelhouse. 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

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1/2 On the research side, I learn from so much good work being done by our [#ARCC](#) network colleagues, [@CommunityCCRC](#), National Student Clearinghouse, scholars in the Wheelhouse Research Network.

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2/2 On the leadership side, hands down it is the CEOs and aspiring leaders in our institutes -- we learn way more from them than they do from us. I did a set of CEO interviews recently on presidential derailments. Front-row seat to real-time challenges.

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

Q7 @UCDWheelhouse. 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 @iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

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1/2 Dream: That this radical idea of a truly open-access institution becomes a reality, made real by the resources it actually takes to have the freedom to focus on college. That the colleges are places where all students know they belong.

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2/2 Hope: That we as a society had the gumption to put forth this radical idea gives me hope we might one day realize it. I'm inspired, more than I can say, by college leaders who are fighting to make it happen.

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

Gumption is highly underrated-also takes conviction of purpose, and flat out faith that we can lead these amazing life-changing institutions. [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

So true!

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So agree!

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

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

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Morning walks with my husband, deep breathing, the kids, the grandkids, the garden, the dog, birds on the American River. I work hard, but I work smarter than I used to, and I'm protective of that time to restore. It helps me come back to the work with energy.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

I love this for you!

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This is what work for me. I don't know that I have advice for others. Just take care of yourselves. We need you in this fight for the long haul!

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

TY @UCDWheelhouse Dr Susanna Cooper for joining us on #EquityChat, your work is critical in leadership and scholarship for @CalCommColleges ! Join us next wk as we welcome @TCCpres Dr. Ivan Harrell! Until then @lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster @equityavengers OUT!

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Loved it! Thanks so much for having me!