

**5:00 PM – Dr. Pam Luster (@DrPamLuster)**

**Welcome to #EquityChat! Tonight, we're honored to host Dr. Linda García, Exec. Dir. of the Center for Community College Student Engagement (@CommCollSurveys). Dr. García's work has transformed how we engage & support comm college students. Let's dive in! @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry**

**5:06 PM – Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson (@DrTammeil)**

**Q1 @CommCollSurveys, as you engage in equity-focused work, what is your walk-up song or anthem that reflects your passion and drive? #EquityChat @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry**

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys·4m](#)

Every student brings their own unique background, culture, and needs to our campus. Some are thriving, while others are struggling to reach their academic goals. This is precisely why "Celebration" resonates so deeply with my commitment to equity work.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil·36s](#)

Every student does! I love this classic song, too! It's an excellent equity song!  
[youtube.comKool & The Gang - Celebration](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kool&TheGang-Celebration)

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys·4m](#)

And let me tell you these stories evoke a range of emotions – from joy to deep concern – as they reveal the various challenges students face on their academic journeys.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys·5m](#)

I absolutely love this question! My go-to anthem is "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang, and I actually work it into my keynote presentations whenever I can. In my work, I'm constantly sharing both data and real student stories about their college experiences.

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This culture of celebration helps create an environment where every student feels seen, valued, and supported, regardless of their starting point or the challenges they face along the way.  
[#EquityChat](#)

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when they make the brave decision to enroll, as they navigate their academic journey, when they achieve important milestones, and ultimately when they graduate.

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The song embodies the spirit of true inclusion and welcoming all people, regardless of their path. I believe in celebrating our students at every step: when they make the brave decision to enroll, as they navigate their academic journey, ...

5:14 PM – Dr. Keith Curry (@iamkeithcurry)

Q2 @CommCollSurveys, your personal journey is inspiring. How have your lived experiences shaped your leadership and your commitment to advancing equity in higher education?

#EquityChat @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster

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I understand firsthand both the challenges first-generation students face and the incredible impact that mentors can have in helping students see their own potential.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 7m](#)

These experiences taught me to recognize that every student brings their own unique story and circumstances to campus. As the first-generation student, especially the first in my family to earn a doctorate...

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instilled in me a deep appreciation for educational opportunity and the transformative power it holds. I carry with me my grandfather's words "she will go to college" and my parents' endless encouragement

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 7m](#)

Now as Executive Director of CCCSE, I'm committed to ensuring our work helps colleges create environments where all students feel they belong and have genuine opportunities to succeed, regardless of their background or starting point.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 7m](#)

The struggles and triumphs of my family's journey continue to fuel my passion for advancing equity in higher education. [#EquityChat](#)

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 9m](#)

My lived experiences have profoundly shaped my approach to leadership and equity work in higher education. Growing up hearing stories of my grandparents' sacrifices - from my father's family working as migrant workers to my maternal grandfather's courageous journeys from Mexico –

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to further my education as a reminder that each student's success represents the hopes and dreams of generations.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil · 11m](#)

I've been doing a lot of personal reflection on the saying, "You are your ancestor's wildest dreams." Your grandfather igniting that prophecy has such a profound generational impact.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 3m](#)

I love that! I always think about my ancestors, and I am beyond grateful for them for paving the way to create opportunities for their future generations - me. :-)

5:21 PM – Dr. Pam Luster (@DrPamLuster)

Q3 @CommCollSurveys, CCCSE's research highlights the importance of student engagement. What are the most impactful strategies colleges can implement to foster meaningful engagement and equity for all students? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @IamKeithCurry

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Each letter stands for a theme that matters. D – Direction Matters. Students need to have an academic plan to guide them to the finish line. E – Expectations Matter. Expressing high expectations to students expresses "I believe in you."

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 33s](#)

You can do this." S – Student Support Services Matter. Students shared support services are a safety net. I – Intentionality Matters. Being intentional to connect the background and experiences of students into the learning environment keeps them engaged.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 6s](#)

E – Equity Matters. An example students shared was the struggle with food and housing insecurity. If basic needs are not met, it's an absolute challenge to focus and persist on their academic journey.

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G – Guessing No More Matters. Entering students are not aware of the supports and resources available to them. So, they are guessing what their next steps should be with not enough information.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 13s](#)

N – Not Optional Matters. Students shared if something is important to their journey, then make it mandatory such as advising and orientation.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 1m](#)

About four years ago, we celebrated CCCSE's 20th anniversary. As a team, we reflected on what CCCSE has learned from students about what matters to their experience. Many themes emerged, which can be found on our webpage.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil · 12m](#)

Wow, 20 years!?! I can't believe it! There is something profound about listening to and centering student voices. We are so grateful for how you've supported institutions in better-serving students.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 57s](#)

In short, I like to share a word to help folks remember most of the themes. That word is "designer."

5:28 PM – Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson (@DrTammeil)

Q4 @CommCollSurveys, what do you see as the biggest challenges higher education, and specifically community colleges face in achieving equity, and how can institutional leaders address these barriers? #EquityChat @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry

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Nonetheless, we advocate for college leaders and their teams to disaggregate data by different demographic categories to see which students may need additional support.  
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63% of survey responders that working full-time would cause them to withdraw. Also, life circumstances can be a challenge. Many community college students are parents, first-generation students, or working adults who need flexible schedules and comprehensive support services.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 1m](#)

Limited institutional resources can make it difficult to provide adequate childcare, mental health services and academic support. These are some challenges. To address barriers...it's important to look at what the data show. Colleges collect a lot of data.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 1m](#)

Financial accessibility is a challenge. Many students struggle with paying for college, textbooks, living expenses, etc. Many work full-time while attending college, which can impact their academic performance. In fact, CCSSE asks students what would cause them to withdraw.

**5:35 PM – Dr. Keith Curry (@lamkeithcurry)**

**Q5 @CommCollSurveys, your work with the Texas Pathways Project focuses on creating student-centered pathways. How can colleges better align their efforts to improve completion and equity outcomes? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster**

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Clear program paths, proactive support, teaching that connects with ALL students, and actually using our data to spot who's falling through the cracks.

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The magic happens when these pieces work together, not as random initiatives. When we get it right, every student can see themselves succeeding. [#EquityChat](#)

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 3m](#)

The key is integrating equity-minded practices into every aspect of the pathways framework, rather than treating equity as a separate initiative.

**5:41 PM – Dr. Pam Luster (@DrPamLuster)**

**Q6 @CommCollSurveys, you've worked with institutions across the country. What promising practices or innovations have you seen that can help close equity gaps in student success? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry**

**5:47 PM – Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson (@DrTammeil)**

**Q7 @CommCollSurveys, to do this work, we must continue learning and partnering with others. How do you stay informed, and who inspires your practice? #EquityChat @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry**

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 3m](#)

The people on the ground at the colleges doing the heavy lifting continuously inspire my practice and the work of CCCSE. [#EquityChat](#)

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 3m](#)

We met in person and virtually with all the college teams, and I was so encouraged by their commitment to the work. The coaching colleges clearly motivated the participating colleges, and vice versa.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 4m](#)

a distinction given to colleges that work intentionally to accelerate Latino student success.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 3m](#)

Because of that partnership, we were able to help these colleges use their CCCSE data as a tool and an information source in this process. This was an interesting project because each college had a coaching college that had already received the Seal.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 4m](#)

Partnerships are key in the work of student success. I'll give you an example. Last year we partnered with Excelencia in Education to provide technical assistance to eight community colleges in their work to achieve the Seal of Excelencia—

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil · 10m](#)

Replying to [@CommCollSurveys](#) [@DrPamLuster](#) and [@lamkeithcurry](#) [@ds\\_excelencia](#) and <https://edexcelencia.org> are doing outstanding work nationally to support colleges with Latino Student Success! I am proud to have served at colleges doing the work and getting their support!

**5:53 PM – Dr. Keith Curry (@lamkeithcurry)**

**Q8 @CommCollSurveys, looking ahead, what gives you hope for the future of higher education and what's your vision for fostering equitable student success? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster**

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 5m](#)

We interview many students who see higher education as something that will change their lives. And if they are successful, it will change their lives. But we also know that many of our students bring with them significant challenges.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 5m](#)

Therefore, our work needs to be about meeting every student where they are and ensuring they have the support they need to succeed.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 5m](#)

In a recent focus group we conducted, we asked students to finish this sentence: “College is like ...” One student responded in this way, “College is like a dream. You come in and make your dreams come true.”

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 5m](#)

The first step in creating equitable conditions for students is viewing them holistically — and understanding the external challenges and barriers to success they face.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 4m](#)

When our students tell us they are struggling with basic needs, with their mental health, with childcare, we must listen to what they are telling us. We can’t guess what will help them be successful, we have to ask and then act on what we learn. [#EquityChat](#)

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 4m](#)

and we have to be intentional about putting equity-minded practices into action.

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 4m](#)

Understanding the inequities students experience is only the first step in helping them achieve success. For there to be equity in student outcomes, we have to be intentional about making students aware of the support services they need...

[CCCSE @CommCollSurveys · 4m](#)

There should also be an obligation to make all students feel welcome in their college communities by incorporating equity-minded practices into coursework and campus activities. Students want their cultural experiences to be reflected in the learning environment.



[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

As a group of [@equityavengers](#) passionate about supporting students in meeting their basic needs, foundational to their educational pursuits, you've said it perfectly. We must listen, learn, and act.

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster·2m](#)

TY [@CommCollSurveys](#) for joining us tonight and sharing your amazing work w/our students. We look forward to supporting you all! Stay tuned this week to hear about next week's guest-Watch this space [@equityavengers @Iamkeithcurry @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster](#) OUT!