Fall 2023 Equity Reflection

Richard Gentry

Professor & Department Chair
CNC, ET, IMMT, & MET Programs
Mechanical-Electrical Technology Department
Technology & Innovation Division
Sacramento City College

Question #1

What have you done to improve your understanding of anti-racism, equity, equity-mindedness, and/or equity as it relates to your field and the LRCCD? This might include, but is not limited to the following:

- **curriculum review related to anti-racism, decolonization, and equity,**

- **participation in anti-racism and equity-related workshops/institutes,**

- **review of professional materials and best practices for equity in your field and/or**

- **review of your student success data**

In the past two years, I've noticed subtle but positive shifts in the diversity of enrollment in our programs, indicating that our outreach is making an impact. While the cohort sizes are small, making statistical interpretations challenging, our success rates continue to outperform campus and division averages.

Workshops and committees often focus on topics that may not directly relate to the hands-on, technical nature of our courses. However, the universal takeaway has been the importance of creating a comfortable and inclusive classroom environment. While the department has faced issues in this regard, I am pleased to say my classrooms have generally been free of such challenges.

On the curriculum front, my work with the Affordable Education Resource Committee has evolved significantly. I've advocated for Open Educational Resources (OER) across the campus and influenced our department to adopt more OER-based courses. I even developed a new OER textbook for my drawing course. Additionally, we utilized grant funds to purchase copyrighted textbooks, making them available in the library for all students.

As for fostering open conversations about equity and racism, my approach has been to maintain an open, encouraging, and non-judgmental demeanor. Students with concerns often seek me out, and we navigate through appropriate channels to address these issues, which often pertain to classroom management by past instructors.

Question #2

How have you used and/or how will you use these understandings to improve your practice and/or help close opportunity gaps?

I have fine-tuned my primary courses in drawing and applied math to further create an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Strategies such as 'Think, Pair, Share' and 'Learn, Apply,

Assess' encourage diversity of thought, foster collaboration, and allow students to recognize the value of collective wisdom. These techniques also promote an atmosphere where everyone's input is valued, and I often find myself learning from the students.

Although the pandemic has made it difficult to track specific outcomes, my courses typically perform better than the campus average in terms of success and retention rates. I take this as a positive indication that these strategies are paying off, even if exact metrics are hard to pin down.

Our shift to Open Educational Resources ensures that students have necessary materials from day one. We've also secured textbooks in the library, removing another potential barrier to success.

When students approach me with concerns, if it's within my purview, I champion for change publicly. If it isn't, I guide the student through the resolution process and provide them with the support they need.

Implementing competency-based assessments has been challenging due to time constraints, but it's paying dividends. Where we've implemented this, we've noticed higher success rates in subsequent courses. In my drawing class, I've even begun utilizing 3D-printed objects for in-class assignments and exams, though I'm still finessing the details for the final exam.

Question #3

What additional training and resources, whether offered by LRCCD or others, would be helpful in continuing your development of anti-racist practices?

To continue improving anti-racist practices and overall equity within the MET Department, several critical areas require attention and resources:

1. **Hiring and Staffing:** One of the most significant challenges we face is the diminished number of tenured faculty, down to 2 from 4, while adjunct faculty has increased by 10. The lack of a robust, diverse, full-time faculty directly impacts our ability to engage in meaningful outreach and focus on providing a high-quality educational experience to our diverse student body. Therefore, prioritizing the hiring of more diverse and full-time faculty should be of utmost importance to meet these goals.
2. **Advertising and Outreach:** Our advertising efforts have been hampered by district-wide requirements that limit the efficacy of our online campaigns. Fortunately, a third-party advertising agency is now reviewing these constraints, offering hope for more effective outreach in the future. Improved advertising targeted at specific communities could play a key role in enhancing diversity and inclusion within our program.
3. **Professional Development for Instructors:** Adjunct faculty often do not have the time nor are they compensated to undertake essential training modules. Offering paid, specialized training opportunities would not only improve instructional quality but also

create a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment, contributing to higher student success rates.

4. **Administrative Support:** While the initiative to hire a temporary clerk is appreciated, a significant investment of time and resources is necessary to bring them up to speed. A streamlined and efficient onboarding process, possibly crafted by those who understand the unique challenges of the MET Department, could reduce the training burden on existing staff, freeing us to focus on our primary mission: educating students.

By addressing these areas, we hope to create a more equitable environment that is both welcoming and conducive to the educational success of all students, irrespective of their background.