



Finding
Courage

IN CHAOS:

A call for Transformation

Angela Cardinale
Faculty Lecture 2025



About

Angela Cardinale

Angela Cardinale was born at home in Calimesa, CA in 1979, the official cut off year for Gen X. Because her umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck, she started off her life blue from the lack of oxygen. Fortunately for the world, her dad, a carpenter at the time, had read a book on home births. Remaining calm, he knew to tickle her feet until she suddenly turned pink and started crying. It was an uphill battle from there.

Angela has eight siblings, ranging from their late 50s to their early 20s. In 1989, her mom was killed in a car crash, and she's been trying to write a book about her ever since. Angela's stepmom is from Mexico, and Angela spent some time in Yucatan as a child, where she became fluent in Spanish, though she is not so fluent anymore. In high school, Angela played basketball and pole vaulted for the track team. She attended Cal State San Bernardino for three years, where she edited the literary journal *The Pacific Review* and tutored in the writing center. She finished her BA in English Literature at San Francisco State University, becoming the first in her immediate family to graduate from college. She then completed an MFA in Creative Writing at Columbia University in New York.

Angela has been working since the age of 12, first fixing up houses on her

father's property in Calimesa, then as a construction laborer at various housing projects in the desert. She also held the following jobs before working at Chaffey: laundromat cleaner, sign spinner, dancing waitress at Denny's, YMCA front desk clerk, assistant to a professional basketball agent, busboy, assistant to a professional writer, bar bouncer, bartender, library clerk, and assistant editor.

She has worked at Chaffey for twenty years as an English professor and six years as the former faculty leader in Distance Education. At Chaffey, she's served as Secretary on Academic Senate, Chair of the DE Committee, and Adviser to the student Club of Secular Understanding. She's also served on various other committees, including College Planning Council and DPS Advisory, Journalism Advisory, Section 504 and 508, Art Advisory, Library Advisory, Undocumented Ally, Ethics Across the Curriculum, and Technology Committees. She was selected by Chaffey College students as Faculty of the Year and Faculty Adviser of the Year, both in 2015.

Angela has led in applying for and implementing three grants at Chaffey, one of which led to the development of the online student support hub and one that led to dozens of faculty being trained in DEIA practices to create accessible, culturally responsive

course materials. She has presented both locally and statewide on issues such as AI, humanized online instruction, technology tools, course design, Universal Design for Learning, accessibility, and more. She has also worked on digital credentialing research and developing work experience resources for Chaffey. In her community, she has advocated tirelessly for disability rights in the K-12 system, for both her son and for other students with disabilities.

Angela's writing has been featured in the anthology *Wanting: Women Writing about Desire*, the *LA Times*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *RAZED*, *Lost and Found: Stories from New York*, *The Chaffey Review*, and *The Mojave River Review*. Angela is a mom to two incredible adult sons, Ben and Elliott, one who is graduating from UC Berkeley and one who is graduating from high school this spring. She enjoys hiking, pole dancing, writing, and spending time with her awesome partner Casey and their two dogs and three cats.

Introduction

I would like to preface this by saying thank you to my colleagues for electing me Faculty Lecturer, and thank you to Jinny Lee for nominating me. I was unsure about accepting the nomination, but then I thought maybe I wouldn't be elected. But then I was elected and now we're all required to be here, and you only have yourselves to blame. I've also had the pleasure of working more closely with Jinny in Distance Education for the past couple of years, and she's not only a pleasure to work with, but she's a kind and dynamic colleague and human being.

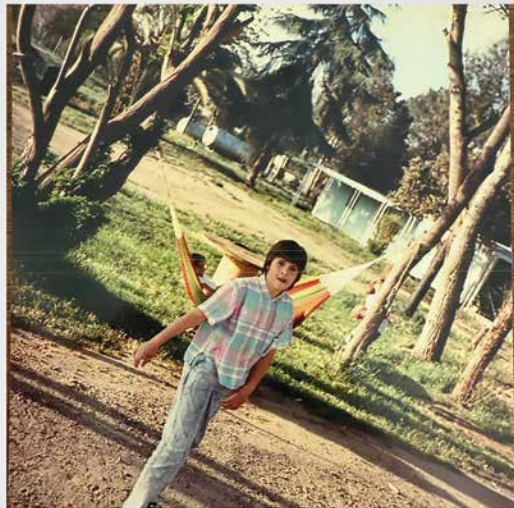
I've watched with admiration as my colleagues before me have given lectures that were exceedingly compelling and engaging. I will do my best to follow them, and I thank all of you for your patience, support, and encouragement. If you text during my speech, I'll take a mental note, but I won't call you out.

My formal educational training is in English: literature, creative writing, and composition. My expertise via experience here at Chaffey and some outside training, in addition to teaching English, is, as you know, in online pedagogy and professional development leadership. I also have some experience teaching and developing resources for the work experience program and have taught both dual enrollment and incarcerated students. The expertise I want to talk about today, though, and maybe use to tie together all of my other training and professional experiences, is the ability to survive and learn from chaos, and transform both personally and professionally to meet the challenges of chaotic times.

This past year at Chaffey has been one of the most difficult in my twenty-year career here, and it is tough to stand up here in front of you at this time. I am grateful for my job, but it is a difficult time at this college, in higher education more generally, and within our broader national politics. I know many of us feel this acutely. I will come back to this, though, and I will propose possible approaches to address some of the challenges we face.

“You don’t have a right to the cards you believe you should have been dealt. You have an obligation to play the hell out of the ones you’re holding.”

—Cheryl Strayed



Childhood

First, I'll start with when I was born. The year was 1979. Just kidding. I'll fast forward, but only by five years, and I promise I will try to make it relevant. The day before I started kindergarten was my fifth birthday. A woman my dad briefly dated, gave me a soft pink plush My Little Pony at my birthday party, just what I wanted. (I never saw that lady again, by the way.) I clutched it to my chest and ran through the house shouting, "I'm going to kindergarten tomorrow!". I watched a lot of tv, and on tv school seemed magical.

The property on which we lived in Calimesa was rural and broken down. My sister and brother and the other kids who lived on the property used to run into dust tornadoes in the field for fun. There was so little to do there, and I often played in the large communal dumpster.

I liked to imagine I was the powerful woman hero cartoon character She-Ra, and I would jump out of the dumpster wielding a used up wrapping paper cardboard tube like a sword, screaming Shera's signature phrase "I have the power!" to the empty field.

I'd also wander the property singing at the top of my lungs, hoping Ed McMahon from Star Search would hear me as he drove by on the 10 freeway, which ran just a few yards behind our property. We lived halfway between Los Angeles and Palm Springs, and for some reason I knew he hung out in Palm Springs. I thought maybe my singing voice would carry onto the freeway and be so arresting he'd have to pull over and invite me to be on the show, where of course I would win and be swept away into a different life. I spent much of my time in my head or watching tv, fantasizing power and escape, though of course I had no power and I had no imminent escape.





My early childhood was chaotic. Both of my parents' new spouses were abusive to varying degrees to my siblings and me. My stepdad and mom, whom I spent every other weekend with, were also low-level drug dealers, though I didn't know that at the time. The photo of me on the title of the presentation is from the last summer I saw my mom, when I was 8 years old. I spent the whole summer in that bathing suit and often swung on this rope swing over a steep cliff in the hills above Lake Elsinore where she and my stepdad rented a house. My dad was depressed about the divorce but married my stepmom very soon after. She'd escaped a traumatic past in Mexico and crossed the border under harrowing circumstances. She married my much older father who had five kids and was very poor. They would both agree that it was a marriage born out of survival. My dad was tuned out, and my stepmom, who was angry about her circumstances, took it out on us kids.

I don't harbor anger towards my parents. My dad was the child of poor Sicilian immigrants, and his own father was a violent alcoholic. My stepmom grew up in extreme poverty and violence as well. I believe they did the best they could and better than their parents, but it is difficult to undo generational trauma, and I've carried that with me, as many of us and our students have.

At school, though, I shone. Most of the other kids had wild circumstances, too. Living off grid or cooking meth or being desperately impoverished was the norm in Calimesa in the 1980s.



If our parents cared about our education, they were often too distracted to be available or show interest. I soaked up everything I learned and was hungry for affirmation of any kind. That probably wasn't healthy but as a result, I quickly excelled. At school, I gained access to books, and I read voraciously, even winning a reading contest with a prize of meeting a Care Bear at Pizza Hut, one of my fondest early childhood memories.

Though my dad and stepmom worked towards some stability, circumstances prevented it, and we moved a lot. From kindergarten to sixth grade, I moved six times and attended seven different schools, even living for several months in a motel. Turmoil was a way of life for all the adults in my life, and that became the norm for us kids, too. I was 10 when my mom died in a car accident. She was only 36 and had had five children and been married five times by this point.

As I became a teenager, I started to realize that the life I had growing up wasn't the life I wanted as an adult. I worked diligently to escape. To me, escape had always been available through education, particularly reading and writing. Books allowed me a mental escape, and school was one of the primary places where I received validation and support, where I had access to information about other ways of being, and where I was valued for my thoughts and opinions rather than simply my ability to perform manual labor. I know many of our students experience this, too. And maybe many of you did as well.

“Life shrinks or
expands in
proportion to
one’s courage.”

—Anais Nin

Education

As a first-generation college student, I stumbled quite a bit, both socially and academically. I didn't know basic things other people seemed to know, and I made classic first-gen errors like mispronouncing words because I'd only ever read them and never heard them spoken aloud. What saved me were some of the mentors I found, especially at Cal State San Bernardino, like poet Juan Delgado and Writing Center Director Carol Haviland. I became an editor of the literary journal there, and I tutored in the writing center. I even met Charles Williams way back then. He's older than me, of course, so he was a grad student and I was an undergrad. He later encouraged me to apply to be an adjunct and then a full-timer at Chaffey. This kind of encouragement and the connections I formed in college helped me to believe in myself and has truly made me feel capable and like I belonged in a world that was totally foreign to me: academia.

I went to Columbia University for graduate school, and that was where I truly learned about socioeconomic inequality. I'd been made fun of for my shoes and even accused of stealing for looking poor before, but now I was attending school with people whose great-grandparents had railroad fortunes. I had professors who wrote for *The New Yorker*, and owned giant apartments overlooking Central Park. A woman in my program complained about always having to go to Paris for winter break. I had met rich people before, but I had never before met people whose parents while they were in utero put them on the waitlist for the preschool that led to the private school that led to the boarding school that led to the Ivy League. It was a world I hadn't known existed, and in which I definitely felt like an outsider.

I initially thought I wanted to get into publishing. However, I couldn't do the prized internships at the big magazines and publishing houses, because I didn't know anyone and even if I did get one, they were unpaid, and I couldn't afford to not work for money. I juggled three jobs at all times throughout higher ed, and it blew me away that some of my peers had family members

that simply wrote a check for the \$35,000 annual tuition, (which is now \$68,000), students like me who didn't work and lived alone in beautiful apartments on the Upper East Side. Instead, I worked on campus at several of the libraries, as a manuscript editor, a research assistant, and also as a bouncer, bartender, and server at the same restaurant, depending on the night. I also volunteered to teach in a program that helped adults without high school diplomas prepare to earn their GEDs. That experience is what made me realize I wanted to teach people to whom I could relate, who could really use the support and mentorship, just as I did. It's the reason I wouldn't want to teach anywhere other than at the community college level.

Higher education gave me a path into a rewarding career in which I get to mentor others along their own paths. It also gave me a financial security I never knew growing up, and I am eternally grateful for that. When I was a kid, my dad used to carry around a little tube of pink glue in his pocket in case his tooth fell out, so I have never taken dental insurance for granted. This career has been a means of transformation for me, a way of finding order within a lot of chaos, as it is for so many of our students.

I thank higher education for granting me access to opportunities and mentors and experiences that I would have never had otherwise, and for helping me to figure out what I am passionate about for my career. I had many professors and students that made me feel as though I didn't belong, so the ones who made me feel like I did, meant more to me than they will ever know. I try to carry this into every day of work here.





Who are our students?

Social mobility is complex, and other factors like institutional and societal barriers related to race, ethnicity, disability, foster status, veteran status, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender, and previous incarceration play a significant role as well of course, and, of course, there is a great deal of intersectionality in these demographics. So, who are the students we serve? Statewide, 35% of our students are first-generation and I know many of you are first-gen, too. 65% of our students in the CCC system are considered socioeconomically challenged as well.

Is higher education still a path to social mobility for our students? Yes. First of all, we serve a lot of students:

- With more than 2 million students at 116 colleges, the California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the country
- 29 percent of University of California and 51 percent of California State University graduates started at a California community college. (CCC Briefing Binder 2019)
- CCCs are the state's primary entry point into college in the state
- CCCs are the primary system for delivering career technical education (CTE), workforce training, adult education, English as a second language (ESL), and lifelong learning opportunities for our communities

Return on Investment

Is college worth it?

- For every dollar students spend on their community college education, they gain \$5 in higher earnings in the future. (EMSI EIR 2021)
- Graduates with an associate degree from a California Community College will see an increase in earnings of **\$11,100** compared to those with only a high school diploma. (EMSI EIR 2021)

We do a lot of good and are valuable, and I especially believe that to be true of the community college system.



However, there are some other troubling statistics. I believe that just complimenting ourselves without examining the ways in which we can improve, especially at what I would argue is a revolutionary time in higher education, is problematic.

- Enrollment decline: The CCC system has lost about 300,000 students since 2019, an 18 percent enrollment decrease. As of 2021, enrollment was at its lowest point in 30 years, though we're recovering some of that.
- Only 36 percent of students completed their studies within six years, which is below the national average of 40 percent.
- Poor transfer rates: Between 2017 and 2019, only one in five eligible students transferred to a UC or CSU school.
- Enrollment declines have been particularly steep among certain groups:
 - Native American students: 25.8 percent decline
 - Black students: 20.9 percent decline
 - Filipino students: 19.8 percent decline
 - Latinx/e students: 18 percent decline

I'm proud to work in a system that genuinely provides significant opportunities for students, but we have some work to do. We need to focus on not only increasing enrollment, but access and equitable outcomes for our students. Additionally, we have some urgent work to do to remain relevant in this moment of rapid transformation. I will come back to this a bit later, again providing suggestions for how to address these concerns.

“We all have an
unsuspected reserve
of strength inside that
emerges when life puts
us to the test.”

—Isabel Allende

DE

TRANSFORMATION

Distance Education Transformation

This is the part of the lecture in which I establish my credibility as someone who thinks about change a lot, professionally and not just personally. I've taught online at Chaffey since 2005. I'd been an adjunct at Chaffey for only one semester when a full-timer was going on medical leave. Because I had some online experience, I was asked to take her online courses as well as teach my own, for a total of six courses as a new instructor with an infant at home. I was only 25 and pretty fresh out of grad school and totally intimidated. One of that professor's classes was an Honors course in Shakespeare which I *definitely* wasn't qualified to teach. But I was already married with a child and was determined to get a full-time position, so I said I could do it. So, much like many of you experienced in March 2020, I too was thrown into online teaching quite suddenly. Back then, there wasn't any formal training or existing support that I knew about, and that remained the case for many years. I stumbled along and figured it out, but I made mistakes. One example of this is that I never created content that was accessible on even a basic level until maybe six or seven years ago because I didn't even know what that was or that I was supposed to do it.

Some of us remember that Distance Education was a hot mess for a long time. There had been a historical lack of support and inconsistent leadership, funding, training. Back in the early 2010s when I served on a Distance Education Faculty Inquiry Team, we were looking at disparities of as much as 40% between online and in-person courses in some disciplines. And enrollment was growing massively year over year for many years prior to the pandemic.

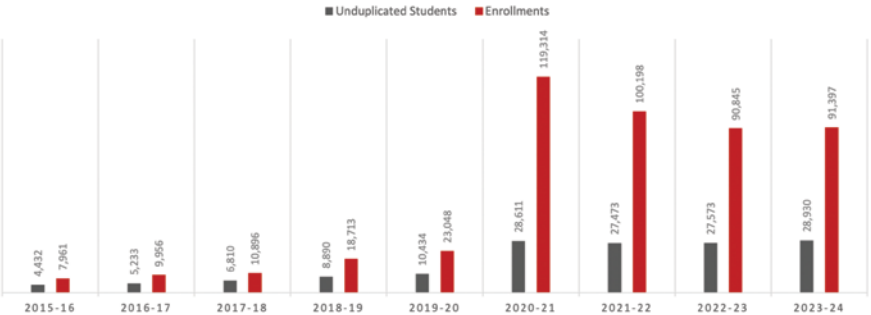
For the decade preceding my involvement with Distance Education, I was frustrated by the lack of support, training, and resources from the area. I thought, if I ever get the chance, I want to make DE better, and I got that opportunity in spring 2018, when I was hired for what was supposed to be eight hours a month to support the transition from Moodle to Canvas. I was already teaching an overload with six classes. I also had just been on sabbatical and had never really used Canvas much before. However, I applied for and obtained the FOSA, probably without much competition. I also talked Vicki Tulacro into applying with me, and together we went through an extraordinarily challenging time trying to make DE better for faculty amidst extremely uncomfortable work conditions due to personnel issues. Realizing zero training or resources had been developed, I spent my spring break that year creating training and resources from scratch, which eventually led to what is now the faculty support hub and our certification to teach online.

Vicki eventually and wisely ditched DE, but for me what went from 8 hours a month turned into a full-time FOSA in fall 2019 and then a permanent instructional specialist position during the pandemic.

Before we get to the pandemic, I'd like to show you what growth was like prior to the pandemic, because it was significant.

DE Growth

Online Courses
Unduplicated Number of Students and Enrollments, 2015-16 through 2023-24



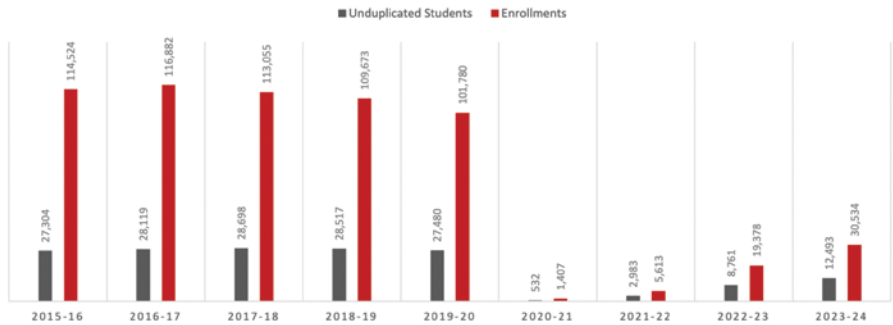
	Number of Unduplicated Students and Enrollments								
	Academic Year								
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of Unduplicated Students	4,432	5,233	6,810	8,890	10,434	28,611	27,473	27,573	28,930
Number of Enrollments Generated	7,961	9,956	10,896	18,713	23,048	119,314	100,198	90,845	91,397

Source: Chaffey College Institutional Research Success and Retention Dashboard.

In April 2020, in the midst of one of the most challenging times in my professional career, my partner of several years suddenly and unexpectedly broke up with me. I know this is shocking because I’m great. As a result, I moved twice with my two kids over the course of just a few months, during a time when I was on Zoom many days for 10-12 hours a day. I cried nearly every day for many months, but I pulled it together and worked probably something like 60 hours a week for many weeks to support the College because I knew it was needed and I care fiercely about our mission, our students, and you, my colleagues. I remember I once opened a Zoom training and someone joined and just immediately began crying. Then I started crying. And we just cried together.

F2F Decline

Face-to-Face Courses
Unduplicated Number of Students and Enrollments, 2015-16 through 2023-24



Number of Unduplicated Students and Enrollments

	Academic Year								
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of Unduplicated Students	27,304	28,119	28,698	28,517	27,480	532	2,983	8,761	12,493
Number of Enrollments Generated	114,524	116,882	113,055	109,673	101,780	1,407	5,613	19,378	30,534

Source: Chaffey College Institutional Research Success and Retention Dashboard.

- 71% increase in online and a 3% decline in F2F enrollments between 2017 and 2019
- 1048% increase in online and 73% decline in F2F enrollments over the last 10 years

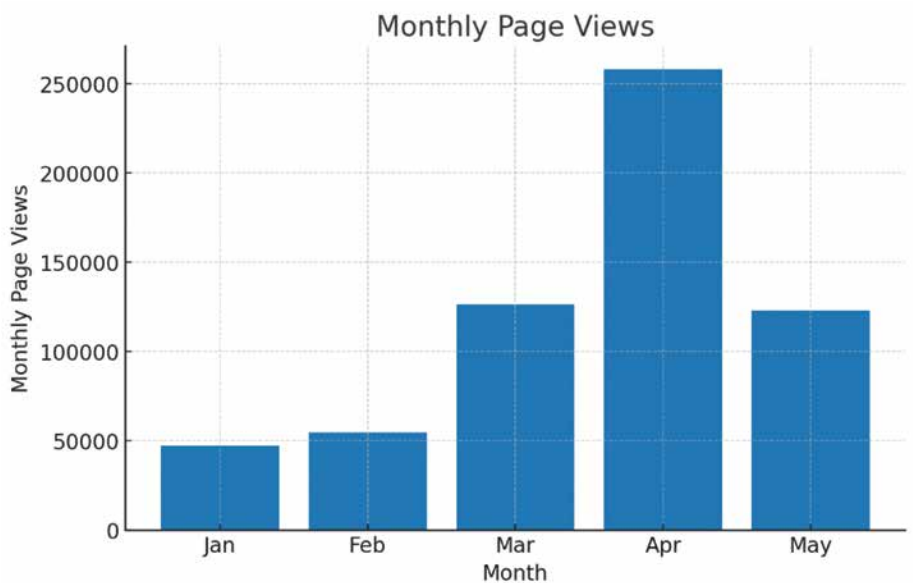
2020 Accomplishments

That difficult year, our small team worked with other groups across campus to do the following: train approximately 800 people to teach remotely in 3 weeks and join the CVC consortium as a teaching college, one of the first three in the state. (Chaffey College is now a top three enroller in the CVC exchange in the state.) We established local POQR, established POQR Academies, overhauled the certification to teach online, researched and created a formal proposal for the Digital Equity and Innovation Hub, created a DE Coaching program and hired 30 coaches. Luckily, we had already launched the Student Support Hub in January 2020, which we leveraged heavily during the pandemic and is a primary means of online student support today. Our student support hub is one of the most robust in the state, and we have been asked to present statewide on its implementation.

- **Launched the Student Support Hub**
- **Trained approximately 800 people to teach remotely in 3 weeks**
- **Created a DE Coaching program and recruited 30 coaches within the first month of the pandemic**
- **Joined the CVC consortium as a teaching college, one of the first three in the state**
- **Established local POQR and POQR Academies**
- **Radically overhauled the certification to teach online**

Student Support Hub 2020

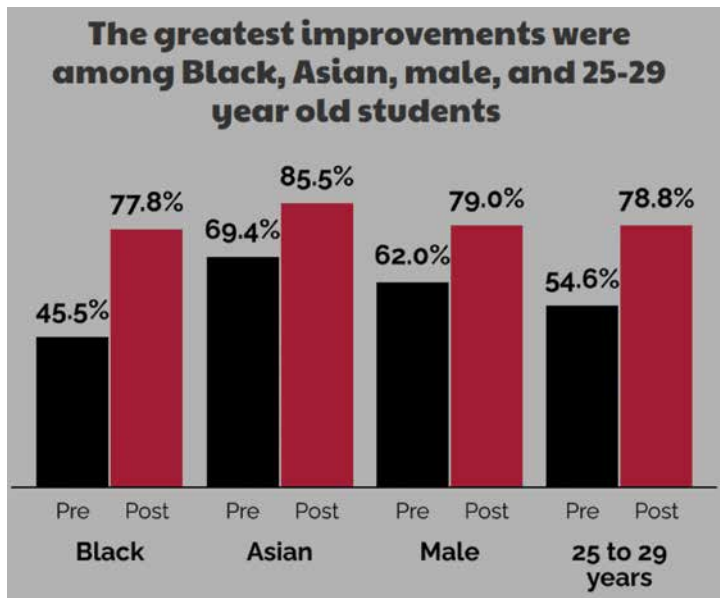
In the past six years, I also directly led in obtaining and implementing three major grants, including the most recent Culturally Responsive Practices and Pedagogy grant. Thanks to funding from this grant, I developed training and recruited and trained 9 coaches to train 61 faculty from every ACC in accessibility, universal design for learning, and culturally responsive teaching practices, all evidence-based approaches to addressing equity in our courses. These faculty will all be creating and sharing resources in the Canvas Commons for all faculty to learn from and incorporate in their own teaching.



POCR Academies

One of the most exciting data points comes from the Peer Online Course Review (POCR) initiative. When faculty POCR-align their courses, their students experience a 12% increase in success rates, and that number shoots up to 29% for some of our most disproportionately impacted students. Our research team's approach, thank you Amanda Admire, as well as similar results have been duplicated at three other colleges. The approach we developed at Chaffey for implementing and measuring POCR outcomes is also being considered for use as a model statewide by CVC and the Chancellor's Office

I am very proud that my work in a leadership role has had measurable, systemic improvements in equitable outcomes at Chaffey.

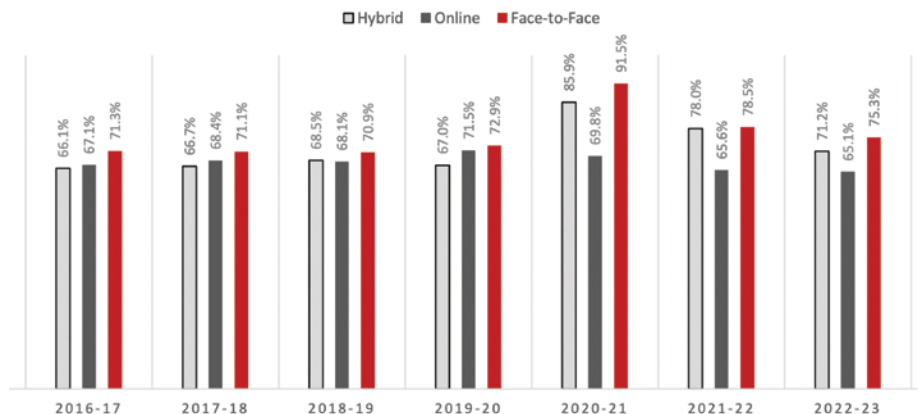


Our Approach

How did our team take a struggling area to a successful one in a relatively short time, even through extraordinary growth and a pandemic?

- Regular qualitative and quantitative feedback from stakeholders, in partnership with IR
- Transparent, iterative processes that are responsive to evolving needs
- Constant improvements based on the assessments, like our Student Support and Faculty Support Hubs and Online Certification to Teach, with transparent communication to stakeholders
- Relationship-building both across campus and statewide - IT, Student Services, student support areas, OTC attendance
- Response to constructive and even not constructive criticism (mutiny of accessibility training example)
- Hard work and collaboration within the team, particularly Alisha Serrano, Matthew Morin, Trelisa Glasatov, Adriana Arce, Rhiannon Lares, Sabrina Sanchez, Shannon Jessen, Jon Ausubel, Vicki Tulacro, Leona Fisher, Jinny Lee
- Learning from models doing it better than us
—Miracosta example

Comparison of Course Success Rates Hybrid, Online and Face-to-Face Courses, 2015-16 through 2023-24



This is not to say that gaps don't persist, and this area deserves and needs continued support and institutional investment to sustain these impressive outcomes.

The pandemic was a really difficult time for all of us, regardless if someone broke up with you suddenly because of an argument about *Harry Potter*. We were pressured to innovate in ways that we never before have during a time when we were all struggling to various degrees. I'm so proud of so many of us for taking on that challenge, whether we wanted to or not, and we all transformed to some extent together. I am proud of the work that we did during that time. We now have a robust online student support hub that offers live support to all students, in some cases 24/7. Some of you experimented with hyflex and remote instruction when asked to do so and even when not asked to do so. Areas like auto-tech partnered with student workers and staff from ACD to produce high quality multimedia lessons, and computer science experimented with virtual reality. Biology prototyped online lab kits and chemistry is doing so now. Math created one of only a handful of POCR reviewed courses in the CVC exchange. The Success Centers have evolved then evolved again to develop online tutoring offerings. Our ZCT team has worked tirelessly to advocate for zero- and low-cost resources, particularly crucial for all students

Success Rates, Hybrid, Online, and Face-to-Face Courses

Ethnicity	In-Person	Online	Hybrid
African American	69.9%	64.0%	71.6%
Asian	78.1%	80.9%	80.3%
Caucasian	78.5%	66.1%	79.3%
Latinx	70.6%	70.1%	71.1%
Native American	67.7%	54.7%	23.1%
Pacific Islander	83.0%	50.3%	37.5%
Two or more races	74.5%	74.0%	74.2%
Unknown Ethnicity	72.2%	66.7%	68.3%
All Students	72.4%	69.9%	72.8%

Source: [Chaffey College Institutional Research Success and Retention Dashboard](#).

Success Rate = The percentage of all enrollments resulting in a grade of A, B, C, P, IA, IB, IC, IPP.

but especially online students. DPS has worked diligently to recover the 40% of students with disabilities we lost during the pandemic and support those who remained. Counseling now offers comprehensive online services and ITS supported in major initiatives like our CVC application and administration as well as major upgrades to technology in classrooms.

Although the past several years have been difficult, it's been immensely satisfying seeing the progress we've made and working to creatively solve problems together, to take the failing program that DE once was and work together to make it one that I'm proud of. I got the opportunity to work with deans, faculty, staff, and students from nearly every area, and I learned a great deal about all the good work we do institutionally.

I had been initially quite nervous to step into a full-time leadership role. I love teaching, but I am grateful to have had the opportunity to improve things at a systems level, and to have had the opportunity to transform into a leader. While I don't want to go through the pandemic again, I believe the current times still call for nearly the same level of urgency to foster innovation and solve problems creatively.

Revolution

“There is only one historical parallel to the present in terms of the magnitude, scope, and rapidity of change—the Industrial Revolution when higher education was transformed. It is an error to say higher education is doomed. However, it is simultaneously facing profound demographic, economic, technological, and global change. Every college and university in the U.S. will be affected. Some institutions will close. Others will be able to adapt to changes. Still others will be disrupted by the changes.”

—Arthur Levine

Dean Andrew Long recommended Arthur Levine's book *The Great Upheaval: Higher Education's Past, Present, and Future*, and I highly recommend it because it will discuss the following in much more depth. “Arthur Levine is a scholar of higher education at New York University's Steinhardt Institute for Higher Education Policy, a senior fellow and president emeritus of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and president emeritus of Columbia University's Teachers College.”

First, here's a timeline of key moments in the history of higher education in the United States, focusing on the Industrial Revolution and other significant events:

Harvard was founded in 1636 and for hundreds of years, college was reserved for only the elite. In 1862 and 1890, the Morrill Land-Grant Acts were passed providing federal lands

to establish colleges focused on agriculture, mechanical arts, and military sciences, broadening the scope of college, though obviously women and BIPOC were largely excluded. In the 1900s-1930s, there was explosive growth in enrollment and in the 1930s, the curriculum changed to match the needs of the Industrial Revolution. When the GI Bill was passed in 1944, colleges welcomed older more non-traditional students, and this continued to expand. In 1989, University of Phoenix began the first fully online college, largely catering to working adults. In 2009, a second GI Bill was passed, again expanding opportunities for non-traditional students.

Levine's book argues that we are in the throes of a new industrial revolution, what some have termed the 4th Industrial Revolution. Just as publishing, music, and television and film industries have had to significantly change to adapt to the pressure of this revolution, so, too, will higher ed.

Video: What is the Fourth Industrial Revolution?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9rZOa3CUC8>

(6 minute video)

What stands out to you about this video?

Here's what stands out to me:

- Rapid change
- Digital divide issues
- Exacerbated inequality

Higher education is not separate from industry or global changes, and must respond to stay relevant and ensure equitable outcomes for our students.

Changes

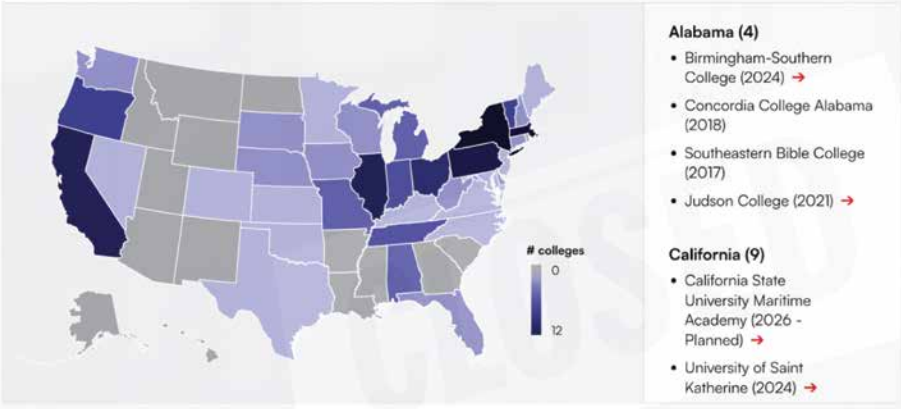
According to Levine, several key factors are leading to a revolution in higher education:

- 1. Demographic changes:** A projected 15 percent decline in U.S. college students is expected between 2025 and 2029, forcing institutions to adapt their enrollment strategies.
- 2. Economic pressures:** Institutions face financial challenges, leading to closures, mergers, and the need for innovative sustainability strategies.
- 3. Technological advancements:** The integration of AI and other technologies [add others] is transforming teaching, learning, and administrative processes.
- 4. Shift to a global, digital knowledge economy:** This transition is causing a fundamental reshaping of higher education structures and demands.
- 5. Changing student needs:** There's an increasing demand for anytime, anyplace, unbundled, low-cost, individualized instruction that fits learners' circumstances. Sonya Christian's email highlighted this: "According to a Gates Foundation report, both high school students and adults who are not in college prefer educational pathways that are shorter, cheaper, and more directly linked to specific job opportunities."
- 6. Rise of non-traditional or highly responsive providers:** There's dramatic growth in non-collegiate providers of postsecondary education and an explosion of their enrollments, like Coursera.
- 7. Focus on outcomes and competencies:** The emphasis is shifting from time-based learning to outcomes-based, learner-centered education, like the ACES work and some of the state and national initiatives around CBE, like Calbright.
- 8. Workforce alignment:** There's a growing need for market-aligned, shorter-term learning experiences that provide just-in-time credentials. We also need to have "one foot in the classroom and one foot in the street" as Levine puts it, to continue to seem relevant to students and industry.

A telling factor indicating needed change is public confidence:
“Gallup found in 2023 that only 36 percent of Americans have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in higher education—down about 20 percentage points from 2015.”

College closings and mergers by state

Each state is colored by how many of its public and private nonprofit colleges have closed or merged, or have announced plans to, since 2016.



The good news is public confidence is still fairly high for community colleges, and I think community colleges are uniquely positioned to pivot to meet the demands of this current revolution. **How are some institutions responding? And what kinds of institutions are really growing right now?**

Three Examples

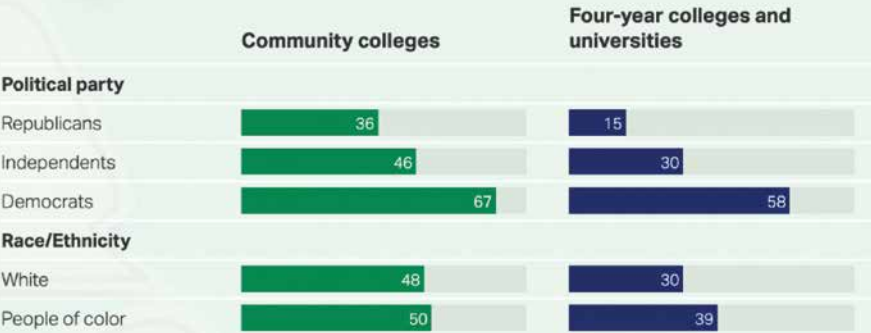
- Arizona State University Online
- Empire State University
- Coursera

All of these institutions have diverse, non-traditional learners and are primarily online.

Confidence in Community Colleges and Four-Year Universities in the U.S., by Political Party and Race/Ethnicity

Please indicate how much confidence you have in ...

% Great deal/Quite a lot of confidence



Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Lumina Foundation-Gallup Confidence in Higher Education survey, June 3-18, 2024

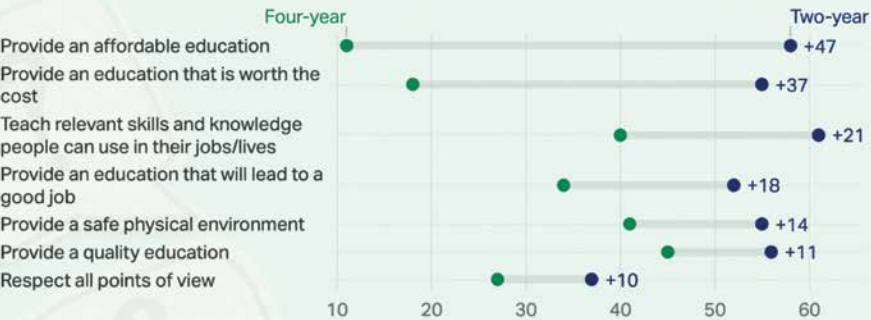
[Get the data](#) • [Download image](#)

GALLUP

Americans More Confident in Two-Year Institutions Than Four-Year Institutions Across All Factors Measured

Please rate the level of confidence you have that most [two-year/four-year] colleges or universities can provide each of the following.

% Great deal/Quite a lot of confidence



Lumina Foundation-Gallup Confidence in Higher Education survey, June 3-18, 2024

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GALLUP

“American higher education is one steeped in tradition, and it is steeped in a tradition that is elitist and narrow and served a very, very small swath of the... population in this country. And to the extent that we cling to tradition for tradition’s sake, we are clinging to an elitist and sexist and racist and truly just exclusionary view of what higher education actually should be or could be today.”

—Dr. Lisa Vollendorf,
President of Empire State
University

Dr. Vollendorf is President of Empire State University, SUNY’s innovation campus. It serves primarily working learners, is primarily online, and strives to maximize user experience, transferability, and pathways for students.

POTENTIAL

APPROACHES

Continued Barriers

Students report the following barriers to success in higher education:

- financial stress
- being a first-generation American
- lower confidence in the preparation offered by fully online coursework
- lack of helpful guidance and career support, particularly accessible to gender nonbinary and/or older students
- difficulty transitioning into higher ed
- lack of familiarity with academic culture and practices
- college environment is alienating and sometimes hostile
- challenges accessing resources regarding transfer requirements
- system tends to displace and exclude the cultural knowledges, skills, and capital of certain groups of students

Continued Gaps

And there are persistent gaps.

- Cost remains a significant obstacle for Black students in pursuing higher education.
- Black students are more likely to have full-time jobs or significant family caregiving and wage-earning responsibilities while in college.
- Nearly a quarter of U.S. adults ages 25 and older, 23.4%, had a bachelor's degree as their highest level of educational attainment in 2022, according to the report. Yet that was true for only 12.8% American Indian or Alaskan Native adults, 14.5% of Hispanic or Latine/x adults, 17.3% of Black or African American adults, and 19.5% of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander adults.
- Meanwhile, more than a quarter of White adults, 26.1%, and one third of Asian adults, 33.1%, had a bachelor's degree as their highest level of attainment in 2022. These racial and ethnic disparities continued at the master's, professional and doctoral levels.

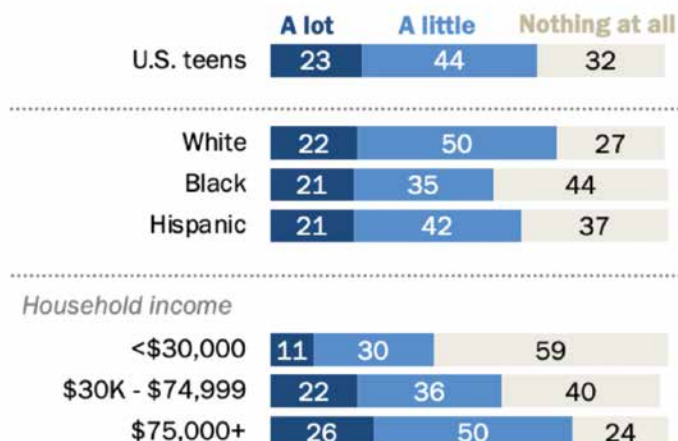
Given the rapid changes and challenges of current times as well as pervasive and persistent systemic barriers, meaningful equity work must be comprehensive and real. This includes addressing the digital divide as rapid advances occur in technology; real investment in online education, processes, and student support; an understanding of and commitment to addressing user experience, accessibility, and universal design, and ensuring maximum transferability and meaningful programs that connect to real-world career opportunities through well-designed initiatives like outcomes-based education and credit for prior learning. I want to next delve more deeply into all of these.

What Can We Do Institutionally?

- **Digital Divide.** Increased technology creates access and opportunities for our students. At the same time, it can present barriers. We know this is particularly true in San Bernardino County. In Chaffey's 2021 survey, 80% of students told us that the single most helpful resource for them were wi-fi hotspots. Just weeks later, Chaffey ended the wi-fi hotspot program. It has taken years of advocacy from many areas on campus, including the Distance Ed team, as well as years of input via needs assessments from students for the College to start checking out wi-fi hotspots and Chromebooks once again. It is four years later. We can't be that slow to respond when our students indicate a need. We need a sustained commitment to not only continuing to check out technology but offer ongoing and robust technology support, particularly for both students and adjunct faculty, regularly assessing needs and efficacy and gaps of these programs.
- **Emerging Technologies:** The institution and faculty have an obligation to understand the ways in which AI impacts their disciplines and careers related to their disciplines to adequately prepare students for careers that will expect employees to be able to ethically and effectively leverage AI. When students are taught how to leverage AI, it can also help close equity gaps, especially for people with disabilities or those who are disproportionately impacted in an educational setting. Not addressing AI exacerbates the digital divide. If you'd like, I programmed a chatbot you can use to help with developing AI digital literacy assignments for your students. You can scan the QR code to give it a try.

Most teens have heard of ChatGPT, but awareness varies by race and ethnicity, household income

% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who say they have heard ___ about ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence (AI) program used to create text



Note: White and Black teens include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic teens are of any race. There were not enough Asian American teens in the sample to analyze responses separately. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 conducted Sept. 26-Oct. 23, 2023.

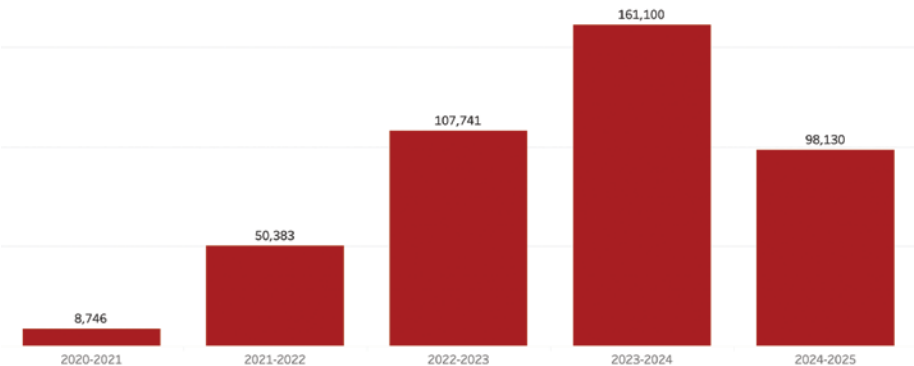
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- **User experience:** Our systems are clunky to navigate. Each click is a barrier. During the pandemic, there were very good people doing all they could to meet student needs in a crisis. However, we're now five years past this crisis, and we need to pause and create an institutionalized system to comprehensively and systemically evaluate all of the technology platforms we have, what they do, whether or not they serve students and institutional needs adequately, whether or not we are leveraging them fully, etc. We need a user experience audit of every in-person and online experience our students have—where are they getting confused? Or turned away? Where are we asking them to duplicate processes? Where are we sending them to web pages that have inadequate information? Where are we making them click more than necessary to do something simple? And who and how do we streamline all of this? We are losing students to places like Arizona State University or Coursera, where it's easy and intuitive to register for classes and access just-in-time support. There are technology solutions to break through barriers and help both ourselves and students understand and move past pain points; however, this requires an understanding of and urgency around and investment in user experience. This is more important now than ever, and community colleges might be uniquely positioned to be just as responsive. We still have public confidence, and the work CVC has done to online allow students to register at multiple CCCs statewide is really incredible. And maybe the fully online competency-based CCC Calbright, our own innovation college, will be able to scale to address some of the gaps for underserved populations of working learners identified previously.
- **Outcomes-based education:** The work that has been done around ACES here at Chaffey, led by Matt Morin, Trelisa Glasatov, Laura Picklesimer, and supported by Rhiannon and Adriana in DE is remarkable. The risk of outcomes-based education via micro- or digital credentials is that they are not verified nationally (as they are in Canada) and can therefore turn into cheap, meaningless job training. The beauty of ACES, in contrast, is that it is a start towards credentialing students for the work they do in the curriculum and instruction we've already designed, making all the instruction we do career education.

ACES Highlight

Next steps for ACES would be counseling students on how to understand these credentials, how to articulate to potential employers, and how to carry this over into the workforce. We would also want to devise a strategy to meet with industry partners regularly to ensure these credentials are meaningful and discuss and address gaps. Matt and Tre also worked with Canvas directly to devise a strategy to seamlessly integrate outcomes assessments into our learning management system. This has not been done at any institution in the country in this way, and when they present on this at conferences, people listen. I've seen CSU constituents rush the stage like they were at a Pearl Jam concert. We've lost Matt and Tre and we inexplicably created institutional turmoil around our career services at a crucial time. We're only just now rebuilding this, and most of us aren't sure why that all happened. Matt and Tre's work is innovative and requires sustained and consistent support and investment.

ACES Assessments



- **Credit for Prior Learning:** CPL awards credit for prior work experience that articulates with curriculum. This, too, is an equity initiative in that it recognizes and validates work experiences of our students. This, like outcomes-based assessment and all innovative initiatives, requires vision, investment in infrastructure, and leadership. I would like to recognize, again, Matt Morin, as well as Nicole DeRose, Angela Burke-Herrick and Shireen Awad, for their thinking and work around this topic.
- **Institutional Diversity Initiatives:** Institutional diversity initiatives should be intentionally designed and consistently implemented so that the most diverse, talented, innovative staff and faculty are empowered to become leaders and evolve within the institution. Leveraging one's own power to grant personal allies management opportunities, oftentimes with minimal or no process, is not an equity initiative. However, creating a transparently and intentionally designed mentorship program that fosters professional growth opportunities for diverse staff and faculty would be an equity initiative and would support the kind of innovation for which I'm advocating.



Aero Highlight

Next, I want to highlight a program that is already doing outcomes-based education and moving students into well-paying jobs, Aviation Maintenance Technology. Per Arthur Levine's comments, "Higher education succeeds best when it has one foot in the library...and one foot in the street." This program is doing exactly that. In 2022, the FAA created the option to shift from time-based completion to assessment/competency-based completion for students. Aviation Maintenance was the first and remains the only program in the region that switched to this approach, largely because it was a lot of hard work for the faculty within this small program. As a result of their dedication, students now move through the program in 3 semesters rather than 2 years. Because the department has developed strong work experience relationships and industry partners, students also often get jobs with commercial airlines immediately upon completing the program. The faculty in the area have also worked intentionally to recruit and support diverse students, and the program maintains integrity with its commitment to teaching to FAA standards, solidly grounding students in both theory and practical application. Students in this program have a high pass rate and excellent rates of job placement, but the program also presents unique challenges for both our faculty and student body. Students engage with complex material and develop sophisticated skills—some requiring careful supervision in laboratory settings—across an intensive schedule. I believe this exemplifies the type of innovative, equity-focused program that deserves continued investment from our College, particularly through enhanced faculty staffing and expanded support resources. Thank you to Christopher Byars for meeting with me to discuss the exciting work you are doing in this discipline.

"Higher education succeeds best when it has one foot in the library...and one foot in the street."

What kind of institutional culture facilitates innovation?

Between 2005 and 2010, Nokia lost the smartphone battle. This was “not as a result of poor vision...but at least partly due to a “fearful emotional climate” in which “frightened middle managers [were] scared of telling the truth.” As one manager put it, “the culture was such that they wanted to please upper levels...to give them good news...not a reality check.” This culture is major reason for Nokia’s failure to compete as the technology world changed rapidly around them.

This story is one of many like it covered in Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School Amy Edmondson’s book *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Edmondson is the Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School, and her book focuses on the role psychological safety plays in fostering innovation in institutions.

So what kinds of institutions foster the type of innovation and responsiveness we urgently need in this time of upheaval and revolution?

- **Open Communication:** Employees feel safe to openly share ideas, concerns, questions, and mistakes without fear of punishment or humiliation.
- **Trust and Respect:** Teams operate with mutual respect and trust, creating an environment where team members feel valued and confident to take interpersonal risks
- **Learning Mindset:** Encouraging a culture focused on learning rather than blaming or shaming when mistakes happen. This approach transforms errors into opportunities for growth and innovation.

- **Inclusivity and Belonging:** Diverse voices are welcomed and valued. All team members feel comfortable contributing, promoting more creative and innovative thinking.
- **Leader Humility and Vulnerability:** Leaders who acknowledge their limitations and show vulnerability create a safe environment for others to do the same, fostering innovation and experimentation.

Barriers to Psychological Safety

Creating a psychologically safe environment in the workplace is essential for fostering innovation and team performance, yet several barriers can obstruct this crucial development. Recognizing and addressing these barriers is vital for leaders aiming to cultivate a supportive and open organizational culture.

- **Fear of negative consequences:** Fear of criticism, embarrassment, or retaliation prevents employees from speaking up or taking risks.
- **Hierarchical Structures:** Rigid organizational hierarchies where employees feel unable to challenge authority or propose new ideas due to fear or perceived repercussions.
- **Culture of Blame and Punishment:** Organizations where mistakes lead to blame, criticism, or harsh consequences instead of being treated as learning opportunities discourage experimentation and risk-taking.
- **Lack of Supportive Leadership:** Leaders who do not model vulnerability, humility, or openness inhibit psychological safety and limit innovation.
- **Excessive Performance Pressure:** High-pressure environments focused solely on short-term outcomes and metrics can suppress creativity and discourage employees from suggesting innovative ideas.

What can we do as individual faculty?

We are in a time of revolution both in higher education and our broader politics, and maybe even in our personal lives. We might feel overwhelmed and like there is nothing we can do to make a difference. But there is work we can do or continue to do that would make a real difference.

What Can We Do Individually?

- Infuse equity practices into our teaching–humanize our online courses, take POQR, work on course design, leverage technology, address accessibility, and implement universal design for learning and culturally responsive pedagogy,
- Infuse digital literacy into our teaching, addressing AI and social media literacy etc. Bonnie Spears call out.
- Infuse outcomes focus and career preparation explicitly into our conversations and curriculum, building on the work of ACES and the program and course level outcomes started by Tre.
- Demand more from our leadership. We deserve to work in a psychologically safe environment that invests in meaningful innovation and equity initiatives, uses data to drive decisions, and cultivates diverse and innovative leaders in a fair and transparent manner.
- Participate in advocacy efforts locally.

Conclusion

My family is diverse in many ways: ethnicity, race, ability, socioeconomics, sexual identity, so this work is not only professionally important to me; it is personal. My son Elliott has multiple learning disabilities, and has faced enormous barriers, including from his own schools and instructors, for nearly his entire life. Both of my kids identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. I identify as neurodivergent. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are not bad words. I believe we have an obligation more now than ever to commit to real equity work supported by data that results in measurable outcomes, in our individual classrooms, our professional interactions, our institution, and within our communities. Given the kind of revolution we're in, and given the kind of regime we're all currently being oppressed under, this is more critical than it ever has been before.

My experience in the past several years in a leadership position at Chaffey has been tumultuous and has been a wake-up call for my own personal transformation. I had hoped to be empowered to continue to contribute to the work of institutional transformation in a leadership capacity. Since that is not possible here (and, by the way, this has been extremely painful and triggering for me), I have been focusing on the work of yet another personal transformation. For me, this involves stepping away from many of the committees on which I served, radically overhauling my classes to meet needs of this higher education revolution, pouring my energy into my students, working on my writing projects again, and continuing to pursue interests outside of my formal role, like more deeply exploring the implications of AI and the impacts it will have on teaching, learning, and student support and more broadly in our lives.

And also learning pole dancing.

When I said I was a first-generation college student at the beginning of this speech, I was actually lying. My eldest sister Nikki is. I just didn't know it back then because we had separate childhoods. Nikki and I have different fathers and she was raised with our mother.

She was in her late teens when our mom died, and had lived on her own since she was 16. She was alone, with no family support. After our mom died, she soon became pregnant with her first child. Nikki went to community college and became an RN. Higher education afforded her a means out of truly dire circumstances and a path to a successful nursing career that has spanned decades.

My sister Sally is also here. Sally was involved in the December 2015 San Bernardino shooting, causing her severe PTSD for many years and triggering a lot of the childhood trauma my siblings and I share. After many years of wrestling with the aftermath of that event, she returned to college, earning a master's degree in instructional design and has now worked for both Priceline and Cal Baptist University in this capacity. She has a fulfilling career that she loves after so many years of struggling.

My niece Kristina is also here. Kristina's dad, my brother, has struggled with addiction his whole life. Kristina was born into tough socioeconomic circumstances in which becoming a teen mother or abusive relationships or substance abuse were not only common; they were the norm. With little support from her immediate family, Kristina was determined to change her circumstances. After high school, she attended community college, then transferred to Cal State San Bernardino to complete her Bachelor's degree in History. I am so proud to say that she is currently completing her PhD at UC Riverside and is currently an adjunct history professor at Cal State San Bernardino.

Several of my former students or students who were in the club I advised the Secular Understanding Club, are also here: Billie, Salinger, Patrick, Madiha, Val, Holly, and Paola. These are just a few of the students whom I have admired a great deal for their work ethic and intelligence, whom I have watched grow and transform and overcome real obstacles through higher education, facing and overcoming barriers, some presented by our own institution.

Higher education was a path out of poverty, trauma, and difficult life circumstances for many members of my siblings and me. I know its value because we have experienced it and I've witnessed it in so many of my students. I know so many of you have experienced and witnessed it, too. That students and the general public doubt higher education's ability to change lives is alarming. We can change

that, but only if we aren't complacent. We are in the midst of a revolution, and we need to respond accordingly or be left behind. The stakes are so high.

Thank you for listening, for considering what I have to say, and for so much support, especially in these tough past few years. I want to thank all of my supportive colleagues and former students, many of whom are also close friends outside of work. And, you know what? I want to thank the haters, too. Thank you for all attending today and listening to me for this long.

I want to thank my colleagues and former students who are here to support me as well as my amazing partner, Casey Alexander, and my awesome kids, Ben and Elliott. Ben and Elliott are graduating from college and high school this year, and I couldn't be prouder of both of them. My sister Nikki, my niece Kristina, and my sister Sally and brother-in-law Kevin for loving me and supporting me and being here today.

I also want to thank Lissa Napoli, Emily Martinez, Michael Gilland and the rest of Academic Senate and the theatre crew. So much work goes into this, and I appreciate your support and expertise and kindness.

Thank you.

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