

Educational Equity and Justice at CSUN

CSUN is an institution that belongs to the public and predominantly serves students of color, economically disenfranchised, working class and first generation. In 2021, students of color made up approximately 75% of the California State University, Northridge student population and over 50% of our students are Pell Grant eligible. In contrast to students, however, faculty of color only constitute 17.7% of the teaching population at CSUN. If we do not account for faculty in Ethnic Studies departments, where people of color are often concentrated, this is reduced to approximately 14%.¹ Race and ethnicity provide us only a partial understanding of the landscape at CSUN as it relates to educational equity and justice. Other axes of power to consider include gender, sexuality, class, religion, legal status, nationality, (dis)ability, and language. How people experience belonging depends on their social positionality along these axes of power. These also shape institutional policies and practices that either foster or challenge equity and justice.

As the CSUN Faculty Senate's Educational Equity Committee (EEC), we believe that to move the campus community in an equitable direction, we need to develop a commonsense understanding of what we mean when we claim educational equity and justice. This also requires accountability and transparency in how decisions about equity are made, implemented, and practiced. Above all, equity does not mean treating everyone the same. An equity perspective takes into account history and context to understand how some individuals and communities have privileges and advantages that are often denied to others and maintains that these have been constructed at the interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels over time.

An equity approach also demands that we place at the center those who are most vulnerable. This requires attention to ensuring that the University creates a culture that combats gender-based violence in all forms, including upholding Title IX and addressing allegations of sexual misconduct in a timely manner and in ways that center the needs of the individuals who have been harmed; advancing CSUN's Title IX and civil rights training, awareness, prevention, intervention, compliance and accountability; refuting retaliatory actions broadly defined to harassing behavior that affect job duties and working conditions; supporting the development and teaching of equitable and inclusive curriculum; increasing the number of faculty and staff of color equipped to educate and support our student population; redistributing funding to support units across the University, including Ethnic Studies departments and student services that support vulnerable student populations; and making student experiences equitable, including promoting belonging, and providing meaningful financial support that meets students' needs. We all benefit when we collectively work to meet the needs of those most at the margins.

To effectively address inequities and foster justice at CSUN also warrants intentional and extensive consciousness building that provides a critical perspective of how CSUN constructs and

¹ All numbers are taken from CSUN Counts.

reproduces relationships of power. An equity lens also accounts for the history and labor of those that have challenged the institution to do and be better. Critical self-reflection is central to carrying out our mission of ensuring that all students have equitable opportunities to realize their educational goals. This perspective should inform changes in policy and practices, including allocation of resources. We need to move beyond performative inclusion and invest in changing the material conditions that lead to inequities at CSUN.

Finally, and above all, we must engage our work from a care-first approach that centers the humanity of the people that make up the CSUN community. We must challenge dehumanizing and alienating practices that reduce our community members to workers who are only valued if perceived to be “productive” by existing standards, and students to numbers who either promote or reduce the reputation of the institution. These transformative community building efforts that we are calling for must be collective, accessible, and transparent.

As the EEC, we promote an equitable educational and working environment that fosters justice and inclusive excellence by:

1. Providing equity-informed analysis of CSUN policies and practices,
2. Recommending justice-based solutions to systemic inequalities that plague our University,
3. Advocating for equity-driven recruitment and retention practices for students, faculty, staff, and university leadership,
4. Championing equity and justice in our curriculum, pedagogies, extra-curricular activities, and instructional practices,
5. Advancing the University’s commitment to ongoing equity training and professional development, and
6. Promoting respect and dignity for the diverse communities we serve.

2021-2022 Educational Equity Committee:

Anwar Alroomi, Civil Engineering and Construction Management
Elline Deogracias, Undergraduate Student Representative
Martha D. Escobar (Chair), Chicana/o Studies
Marquita Gammage, Africana Studies
William Garrow, Deaf Studies
Jinah Kim, Communication Studies
Lissa Ramirez-Stapleton, Deaf Studies
Kiana Requena, Graduate Student Representative
Suzanne Spear, Health Sciences
Teri Todd, Kinesiology
John Valdovinos, Electrical and Computer Engineering
Shiva Parsa (Executive Secretary), Educational Opportunity Program
Theresa White (Faculty Senate Executive Committee Liaison), Africana Studies