

MEN OF COLOR RESOURCE GUIDE



Introduction

It is important to take a holistic approach to supporting men of color in higher education by addressing their unique needs, providing targeted support services, and fostering a sense of community and belonging on campus.

For the past two academic years, Men of Color Faculty have been engaging in a community of practice and teaching in learning communities that are geared towards increasing the retention and success of our men of color students at RCC. Every assignment, activity and daily practice has been created intentionally with our men of color students in mind. Throughout our years of inquiry, development and research, we have been able to compile a list of high impact practices that will help to improve the engagement and support of our men of color students in and out of the classroom. We hope that you find this resource guide helpful and practical as you navigate how to support the success of these students who have been historically situated at the bottom of most success related data.

We hope that you find this tool helpful and begin to embark or continue on your own journey to helping Men of Color students become more successful on our campus and in the community.

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Collectively, we are Men of Color and Educators.

MOC Faculty Researchers and Participants

Dr. Kristopher Acevedo

Professor Jairo De Leon

Professor Tommie Denson

Dr. Eduardo Perez

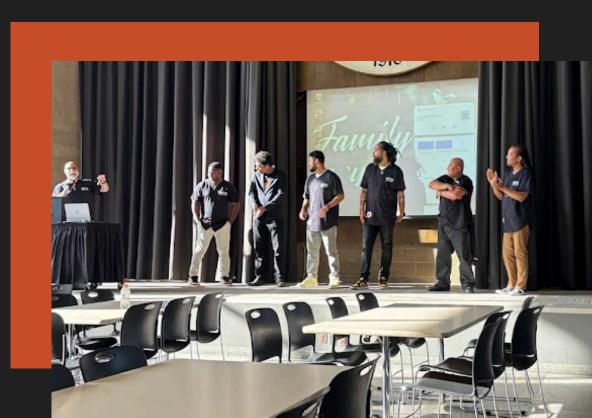
Dr. Miguel Reid

Dr. Corey Timberlake

Dr. Daniel Topete

Dr. Chris Williams

Dr. Ajene Wilcoxson



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Dr. Kristopher Acevedo: As a first-generation, Hispanic Latino, cancer survivor, and former collegiate student-athlete, I am deeply committed to uplifting, mentoring, and empowering students who, like me, navigate higher education while carrying the weight of generational, cultural, and systemic barriers. My men of color students are resilient, talented, and full of potential — often the first in their families to pursue a college education, balancing academic pressures with real-life responsibilities. Having grown up in Section 8 housing, experienced food and housing insecurity, faced academic dismissal, and carried the responsibility of being the eldest in an immigrant family while questioning whether higher education was meant for people like us, I understand firsthand the transformative power of education, representation, and culturally responsive mentorship. By creating inclusive classrooms and fostering critical conversations, I aim not only to teach communication studies but also to nurture confidence, cultural pride, and a sense of belonging that can sustain their academic and personal journeys. I carry with me the faith, scars, and resilience of my family's story — from my mother crossing the border in search of a better life to breaking generational cycles through education and homeownership — and strive to show my students that, with perseverance and community, they can build lives beyond what they once imagined possible.

Professor Jairo De Leon: My name is Jairo Isai de Leon, a firstgeneration immigrant from Ántigua, Guatemala who has overcome many obstacles—language and culture barriers—yet I've been able to successfully navigate the higher education system; it's not easy, but it's not impossible either. Throughout my journey, I had the privilege of accessing key resources—from financial aid to strong faculty support which helped ease the financial burden of pursuing a college education; the only educational debt I've carried came from my master's degree. Because of the support I received, I was able to pursue higher education with purpose and graduate with a master's degree. Now, I'm committed to helping other men of color access and complete their education—ideally, with as little financial strain as possible. As a Latino male and a proud member of the men of color community, I believe it's critical to create pathways and awareness for those who may feel overlooked, uncertain, or unheard; the opportunities are there, we just have to make sure our young men know where to find them and how to use them.

- Professor Tommie Denson: My name is Tommie Denson, and I'm a professor of statistics at Riverside City College. I'm also a proud advocate with the Men of Color program, where I strive to inspire students who look like me to pursue their goals with confidence and clarity. As someone who has navigated academic and professional spaces where I was often the only Black man in the room, I know how powerful it is to see representation. This work matters because it creates space, builds community, and helps our students believe that their future is worth investing in and that they belong here.
- **Dr. Eduardo Perez:** I am an educator, strategist, and advocate for equity, education, and lived experience. My work is important because it challenges traditional structures that have historically exploited students of color, while uplifting voices that have been silenced within our Hispanic-Serving Institution. I focus on removing barriers and affirming the cultural wealth of our Latiné community. Drawing on my sociological background and institutional knowledge, I move past performative equity to bring about belonging and servingness. Together, we are shaping a more just and human-centered educational experience.
- **Dr. Miguel Reid:** I am an English professor who strives to use his position to help students begin and continue their academic journey with confidence, passion, and a sense of purpose. Although I'm committed to supporting all students, my particular field allows me to work with language-learners from all over the world and students of color, who statistically need the most support. This work is important to me because it was educators who were instrumental in changing the trajectory of my life, and I want others to have the same opportunities.

- **Dr. Corey Timberlake:** I am the hope and the dream of the formerly enslaved. I am America's nightmare: an educated, confident Black Man, devoted husband, proud father, and loving son. Working with men of color in education is vital because they are the bearers of legacy, culture, and future leadership. In a society built to erase and marginalize them, empowering their minds is a revolutionary act. It reclaims Black excellence, restores ancestral pride, and builds self-determined communities rooted in liberation.
- Dr. Daniel Topete: Daniel Topete was born, raised, and currently resides in the San Gabriel Valley in Southern California. He earned a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities in 2016, along with a bachelor's and master's in Chicano Studies from California State University, Los Angeles. His work focuses on Artivism, Chicana/o Latina/o Education, nation-building, assimilation, Chicanx social movements, gender performance, and digital humanities. Daniel is an assistant professor of Ethnic Studies at Riverside City College and cohosts both "The Alchemist Manifesto Podcast" and "The Isthmus and the Borderlands Podcast." His recent and forthcoming publications (Performance Matters Journal titled "Teaching Student-Centered Podcasting: Practice-Based Research and Relational Ethnic Studies in The Alchemist Manifesto Podcast 'The Seeds, the Soil and the Cyber Garden' Series," "Transformative Practices in Critical Media Literacy: Radical Democracy and Decolonized Pedagogy in Higher Education," and "Performing Mexican Identities Between Mobility and Rootedness") explore podcasting in relational ethnic studies, critical media literacy, and performing Mexican identities.

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- Dr. Chris Williams: As a proud male mentor at Riverside City College, I embrace the opportunity to uplift and guide students who, like me, may feel unseen or uncertain in their educational journey. As a first-generation community college student, I once struggled to navigate a system that felt unfamiliar and unwelcoming. The absence of role models who looked like me made it hard to believe that college was a space where I belonged. Despite those challenges, I persevered and committed myself to creating a more inclusive and supportive path for others. Today, I dedicate my life to helping students realize their potential and become the next success story; "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Nelson Mandela.
- **Dr. Ajené Wilcoxson:** I am a long-time educator committed to guiding individuals toward educational, spiritual, emotional, and psychological wholeness. My life's work has centered on cultivating spaces where students—especially men of color—are seen, heard, and empowered. Working with male students of color is vital because our presence affirms their worth, disrupts narratives of invisibility, and nurtures their potential as leaders and healers. I believe in their brilliance, not as something to be earned, but something to be remembered and reclaimed. Supporting them is not a task—it's a calling rooted in legacy, love, and liberation.

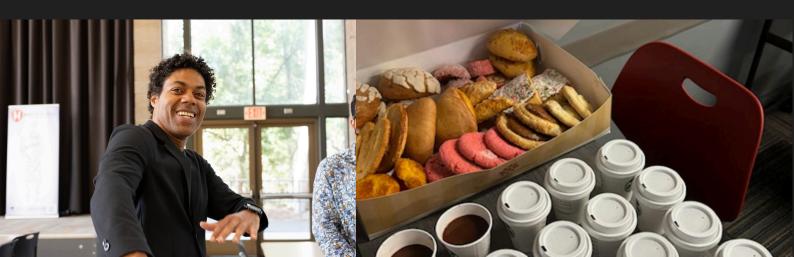


culturally responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching means incorporating diverse perspectives, experiences, and examples in your curriculum to make it more inclusive and relevant to men of color. The term was coined by researcher Geneva Gay in 2000, who wrote that "when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference for students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly."

Liberatory Outcomes: This program is designed to empower Men of Color by cultivating a liberatory educational experience rooted in academic confidence, cultural pride, and social justice. Participants will strengthen their belief in their scholarly abilities while deepening their understanding of systemic inequalities through critical consciousness. They will engage in meaningful exploration of their racial, ethnic, and Indigenous identities, embracing mental well-being and strategies for resilience. Through active community involvement and a focus on future academic and professional goals, participants will be inspired to contribute to positive change. Above all, the program centers the celebration of JOY—especially Black and Brown Joy—as a powerful source of strength, healing, and empowerment.

Academic Excellence Rooted in Cultural Identity: This program empowers Men of Color to achieve academic excellence while staying grounded in their cultural identities and lived experiences. By blending rigorous scholarship (theory) with culturally relevant learning, participants engage in coursework and activities that affirm who they are and where they come from. The program fosters critical thinking, research skills, and intellectual curiosity—all essential for success in community college and beyond. Whether working toward transfer to a four-year university or pursuing professional goals, participants are equipped with the tools to excel academically while drawing strength from the rich histories, traditions, and contributions of Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. This approach ensures students see themselves as scholars whose voices and perspectives shape their academic journeys.



culturally responsive teaching cont'd...

Cultivating Belonging Through Compassionate Learning: This program creates a learning environment where Men of Color are seen, valued, and respected as whole individuals. By fostering authentic relationships, cultural validation, and compassionate support, the program moves beyond transactional education to one rooted in care and connection. Participants are encouraged to bring their full selves into academic spaces, with their voices, stories, and experiences honored as essential to the learning process. The program celebrates cultural holidays, traditions, and milestones that reflect the diverse backgrounds of Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, creating spaces where cultural pride is uplifted. In addition, participants engage in personal cultural introductions, allowing them to share their heritage, family history, and identity in meaningful ways that build community and understanding. Through mentorship, community-building, and culturally responsive practices, the program nurtures a sense of belonging and psychological safety. By humanizing the educational journey, students are empowered to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Empowering Equity-Minded Scholars and Change Agents: This program equips Men of Color with the tools to recognize, challenge, and disrupt bias and inequity within the classroom and curriculum. By fostering critical consciousness and encouraging open dialogue, participants learn to identify stereotypes, microaggressions, and systemic barriers that impact their educational experiences. The program advocates for inclusive teaching practices and diverse course content that reflects the histories, contributions, and voices of marginalized communities. This is done through engaging activities such as case studies, which allow participants to analyze real-world scenarios, reflect on lived experiences, and develop strategies for addressing inequities in educational and community settings. Students are empowered to speak up, ask critical questions, and advocate for equity-minded approaches that benefit not only themselves but all members of their academic community. Through this work, participants develop the confidence to be agents of change—shaping classrooms and institutions that are more just, inclusive, and reflective of their lived realities.

build relationships

"Enhanced relationships between faculty and men of color engender positive attitudes about schooling among students, which has been associated with a host of desirable academic and psychosocial outcomes." (Wood, et al. 2015)
Take the time to get to know your students, including men of color, on a personal level. Building positive relationships with them can help create a sense of trust, respect, and support in the classroom.

- **Give positive feedback:** highlight what students are doing well as well as areas they need to improve on. Ask them to meet you during your Student hours or after class to support them in areas that they need additional assistance in.
- Share your Own Journey: Students feel connected to professors that they can relate to. Share some of your own personal stories throughout the semester or during the first day of class. Ex: whether or not you are a community college graduate, a parent, love to hike, listen to music, workout, etc.
- Group Assignments or Activities: Building community in the classroom is essential for the success of many students. Helping them build relationships with students so that they have someone other than you to lean on in the class if they need assistance. You never know which connections will support them throughput their educational journey.
- Support Them During Events: Get involved outside of the classroom. Support them during clubs, activities, research conferences, sports events, ASRCC, etc.



encourage participation and engagement

Create opportunities for men of color to actively participate and engage in class discussions, group activities, and projects. Encouraging their involvement can help boost their confidence.

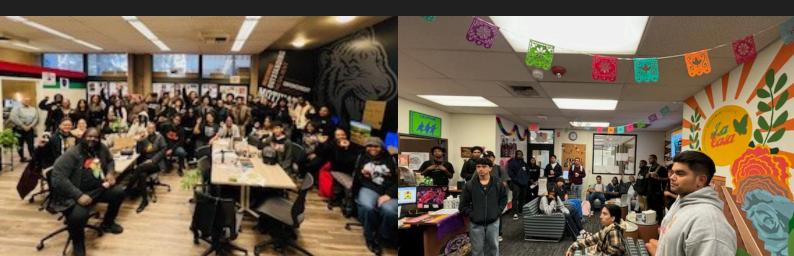
- Create Culturally Relevant Dialogue: Foster classroom discussions that center on topics meaningful to the lived experiences of Men of Color. Encourage participants to share perspectives that reflect their cultural backgrounds, community challenges, and personal narratives. By making dialogue culturally relevant, students are more likely to feel connected, heard, and invested in the learning process.
 - Roundtable on Mental Health with a Psychotherapist (students engage in open dialogue about mental health, wellness, and cultural stigmas with a professional who understands the unique experiences of Men of Color)
- Honor Multiple Ways of Participating: Recognize and validate diverse forms of engagement beyond traditional classroom participation. This can include reflective writing, artistic expression, storytelling, and community-based projects. Providing varied avenues to contribute ensures that all students—regardless of communication style or comfort level—can fully participate and showcase their strengths.
 - Music Moves the Mental Activities (students reflect on and discuss how selected music impacts their emotions, mental health, and sense of presence, using music as a medium for expression and mindfulness)
- Encourage Life Outside the Classroom: students participate in culturally affirming community events such as La Casa Male Pláticas and Umoja engagement center events, fostering connections, cultural pride, and brotherhood beyond academic spaces
- Create a Liquid Syllabus: Increases student participation and sense of belonging, creates opportunity for connection before class and provides an opportunity to welcome students to the class and content in a more visual and appealing way.



connect to resources/services

Connect men of color in your classroom with resources and support services on campus, such as tutoring, counseling, career services, and student organizations. These resources can help them overcome academic challenges and thrive in their studies.

- Campus Knowledge: In your syllabus have a link to the Student Support Hub in Canvas that gives students access to resources such as the engagement centers, tutoring, career exploration, financial aid, basic needs resources, etc.. Or embed activities that directs students to seek counseling for an educational olan or other resources on campus that will benefit their success in your class.
- Encourage Participation in Student Governance and Institutional Committees: Support students in running for student government positions, serving on college-wide committees, or participating in institutional initiatives such as the Equity Minded Learning Institute (EMLI) and the Association of Latinx Advocating for Student Success (ALASS). These roles empower students to represent their communities, advocate for equity, and influence campus policies that directly impact student success.
- Incorporating Family Building Activities or Events: Family Legacy night was developed to allow students, (most who were first gen) to a dinner where they could invite their families to hang out, learn about resources on campus and also connect them to dual enrollment opportunities for their siblings or adult education for their parents who did not graduate high school. Creating a college going culture for Men of Color is essential for legacy building. Think about ways to incorporate their families and/or communities into their assignments or discussions.
- **First Five:** Every week introduce important dates and deadlines that are vital to a student's success such as registration, transfer, campus/events, scholarship opportunities that they may have not been knowledgeable about.



provide mentorship and support

Offer mentorship and support to men of color in your classroom, whether through one-on-one meetings, academic advising, or connecting them with resources on campus.

- **Set Up Individual Student contact:** Make space to meet with students individually to check in with them or to go over assignments or tests.
- Career or Pathway Advisement: You are an expert in a particular field, not just teaching. Talk about the options or pathways in your field. Building social and networking capital for our students is a necessity. Many have not been exposed to opportunities outside of their immediate environment.
- Integrate Real-Life Conversations Into Lectures: Dedicate 10-15 minutes at the beginning of class to discuss real-life challenges students may be facing. This could include stress management, time management, balancing work and school, or handling family responsibilities. Use these discussions to seamlessly transition into your academic content for the day. This approach not only makes learning more relatable, but it also creates a safe space where students feel heard and valued.
 - Supplement Curriculum With Growth-Focused Literature

Incorporate supplemental reading that promotes personal and emotional development in alignment with your course goals. For example, The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz can be used in courses such as Career Exploration or Life Planning. This book offers principles that help students build a stronger sense of identity, accountability, and emotional intelligence. When tied into lecture topics, this material serves as a powerful reinforcement tool, helping students connect personal growth to academic and career success.



address biases and stereotypes

Be mindful of your own biases and stereotypes, and work to create a classroom environment that is free from discrimination and prejudice. Encourage open dialogue about diversity and inclusion, and promote respect and understanding among all students.

- Replace Deficit-Based Language with Asset-Based Framing: Avoid framing students through what they "lack" (underprepared, at-risk). Instead, acknowledge and affirm their strengths, such as resilience, cultural knowledge, and leadership potential. Use language in both verbal feedback and written materials that reinforces high expectations and belief in their capacity to succeed.
- Build Trust Through Relationship and Engagement: Take time to know your students as individuals. Show genuine interest in their goals and experiences. Relationship building fosters trust and counters the stereotype of faculty as distant or unsupportive authority figures, which can be particularly meaningful for men of color who may feel marginalized in academic settings.
- **Reflect on Interactions with students:** Be mindful and aware of how you address situations with students. Did your interaction or action begin with a bias or assumption of the student? Personally address your biases that you have about men of color and develop a plan on how you will manage these biases or influences.
- Implicit Bias Training: Engage in professional development on unconscious or implicit bias so that you can provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for men of color. These trainings will help you identify your unconscious biases and help to limit the influences that biases have on your behavior or interactions with students.



celebrate cultural heritage

Recognize and celebrate the diversity and cultural heritage of men of color in your classroom. Consider incorporating cultural celebrations, guest speakers, and projects that highlight their backgrounds and contributions to the academic community.

- Incorporate Cultural Celebrations and Heritage Events: Acknowledge and celebrate significant cultural holidays and traditions such as Día de los Muertos, Juneteenth, Lunar New Year, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and César Chávez Day. Hosting in-class celebrations, campus-wide events (RCC Taste of Nations), and collaborative projects around these occasions fosters cultural pride, community bonding, and cross-cultural learning.
 - Communication Studies: Students give informative or commemorative speeches honoring MLK Jr., César Chávez, or Black/Brown historical figures.
 - Integrate Student Cultural Introductions and Storytelling: Create opportunities for students to introduce their cultural backgrounds through personal narratives, family histories, and storytelling activities. Beginning the semester with cultural personal introductions and incorporating oral histories or auto-ethnographic projects allows Men of Color to share their lived experiences, affirm their identities, and build meaningful connections with peers.
 - Sociology: Conduct oral history interviews with family/community members to understand generational social change.
 - Invite Culturally Relevant Guest Speakers and Community Leaders: Enhance classroom engagement by inviting guest speakers, community activists, elders, and scholars who reflect the cultural backgrounds of your students. These speakers can share experiences, provide mentorship, and highlight the contributions of communities of color to various academic disciplines and social movements.
 - Statistics: Bring in a data analyst who works on equity-focused research (e.g., educational equity gaps).
 - **Design Culturally Responsive Projects and Course Content**: Embed textbooks, assignments, articles, and discussions that reflect the histories, contributions, and voices of Black, Latino, Indigenous, and other communities of color. Projects that explore local community issues, ancestral knowledge, and cultural art forms allow students to engage academically while celebrating their heritage, fostering both intellectual and cultural growth.
 - Ethnic Studies: Design community-based research projects exploring racial justice, immigration, or cultural revitalization efforts.





create an inclusive environment

It is important to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for men of color on campus. This can include offering culturally relevant programming, providing mentorship and support services, and promoting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of campus life.

- Build a Safe and Supportive Community: Establish a learning environment where trust, respect, and mutual support are foundational. Encourage students to uplift one another, share resources, and collaborate in ways that reflect cultural values of community and collectivism. A safe/brave space nurtures the confidence students need to actively engage and take intellectual risks.
- Incorporate Interactive Learning Activities: Use engaging activities— such as case studies, group projects, debates, and role-plays—that promote active participation. These methods encourage collaboration, critical thinking, and peer-to-peer learning, while allowing students to apply course content to real-world situations that resonate with their lives.
 - Theoretical Frameworks and Real-World Case Studies (students apply culturally relevant theories to real-world scenarios, analyzing challenges and proposing solutions that reflect lived experiences)
- Supporting Spanish Speaking Students: Professor Perez allows for communication in both Spanish and English: emails, student feedback, and he does his best in conversational Spanish.



foster a sense of belonging

Building a sense of belonging and community among men of color on campus is essential for their academic success. The science behind belonging says that it's a "developmental process that is rooted in basic human needs to be safe and respected" and to be able to show up as our authentic selves (Vaccaro & Newman, 2022)

- Welcome and Check In: At the start of the week or the class, check in with the students whether it is about personal weekend adventures, thoughts about assignments or progress in their overall goals. Let them be heard and also share a bit of your feelings.
- Incorporating Ice Breakers or Group Projects: Giving students an opportunity to get to know their classmates in between lecture content. Allowing students to work in groups where they can hear and learn from different and/or similar perspectives.
- Class: "I really want you to succeed and I have noticed that you haven't submitted "X" assignments or you haven't been as focused in class... Is there anything that I can assist with to ensure you are connecting to the material or any content that I can cover with you?"
- Express Gratitude: Thank students for sharing or speaking up. Acknowledge their presence for making it to class (even if they are a little late). Thank them for turning in their assignments or highlighting work that is exceptional or an improvement from a previously turned in assignment.



create space for leadership

Encourage men of color to get involved in campus organizations, clubs, and leadership opportunities. This can help them develop valuable skills, build a sense of community, and enhance their overall college experience.

- Promote Involvement in Cultural and Identity-Based Organizations: Encourage students to join organizations and clubs that affirm their cultural identities and provide leadership opportunities. Participation in programs such as Umoja, Puente, La Casa, A²MEND, Undocu-Allies Club, Student-Parent Club, LGBTQIA2+ Association for Student Success & Equity (LASSE), and Male Mentoring allows Men of Color to organize events, lead initiatives, and build networks rooted in cultural pride and community empowerment. Involvement in regional groups like the Riverside Latino Network and celebratory events such as Raza Grad, Black Grad, and Lavender Grad further nurtures leadership while honoring cultural heritage.
- Expose students to state and national leadership opportunities that sharpen advocacy, communication, and professional skills. Life-changing experiences include attending conferences hosted by The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), The Alliance of Hispanic Serving Institution Educators (AHSIE), Excelencia in Education, and ESCALA Educational Services. Oncampus keynote events such as "African American Womxn's History & Healing with Dr. Joy DeGruy", "Supporting Successful Reentry Conference (RCC, UC Riverside & CSU San Bernardino)", and "Defining Servingness in Practice at Hispanic Serving Institutions with Dr. Gina Ann Garcia" provide invaluable exposure to thought leaders, expand networks, and inspire action.
- Highlight Mentorship, Peer Leadership, and Community Engagement: Promote opportunities for students to mentor peers, lead campus initiatives, and engage in community-centered leadership. Roles in Male Mentoring, Umoja, Puente, La Casa, and other engagement centers encourage students to uplift others while developing confidence and purpose. Through these spaces, students foster brotherhood, cultural celebration, and community activism that extend beyond the classroom and into their everyday lives.



reimagine what success is

Often success can be defined outside of the parameters that higher education has developed to deem what "Success is":

- Success for our men of color may look like just showing up to class.
- Success for our men of color may look like them reaching out and asking for help for the first time in their lives.
- Success for our men of color may look like building relationships with other classmates in the class through dialogue, discussion, case studies, study groups, etc.

According to a few of our men of color students in our learning communities. Success looks like:

- "Success in higher education, when looking for liberatory outcomes, isn't just about meeting the needs of business or being economically stable. It's about making sure that students have the skills, attitudes, and opportunities to live better lives—both professionally and personally." Adrian Gomez
- "What success looks like to me in higher education would be by being financially stable and doing the things you love to do on your free time and being able to give back to your family or your community." Antonio Gonzalez
- "For me, success in higher education is centered in leaving with more than a little bit of knowledge and a degree; it's about gaining the consciousness that would allow me to become a force of action on issues affecting my communities as a mixed Mexican and Black man. While traditional notions of learning outcomes hinge on meeting institutional or business needs, I define true success by liberatory outcomes that center human need, such as critical thinking, cultural understanding, and social justice. It has to be an education that will prepare me for a career and, further still, for life-one wherein I am effecting change. In such a life is where, in a very vital sense, paying respects to who I am would mean standing up for my community, overcoming any obstacles with poise and purpose that may come in my way." Evan Coates
- "Personally, finding success in higher education makes me cultivate free results that put personal development ahead of traditional norms. By focusing not only academic success but also the development of thoughtfulness, self-awareness and resilience, liberatory goals are to inspire students as complete people. I personally promote free results that stress personal growth over accepted standards in order to succeed in higher education. I believe liberatory aims to inspire kids as whole individuals by emphasizing not only success in school but also the growth of self-awareness." Esomchi Ozonoh

MOC resources

Wood, J. Luke, et al. Teaching Men of Color in the Community College: A Guidebook. Montezuma Publishing, 2015.

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In Honor Of Dr. Oliver Thompson



WE CARRY THE TORCH FOR YOU...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR IMPACT AND LEGACY THAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND IN SUPPORTING MEN OF COLOR ON CAMPUS AND IN OUR COMMUNITY.

By implementing these best practices, you can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for men of color in the classrooms, ultimately helping them succeed and reach their full potential.



This Work wouldn't have been possible without the support and leadership of:

Dean Dr. Thomas Cruz-Soto (Dean, Student Services)

Dean Herbert English (Dean, Counseling & Special Funded Programs)

Dr. Monique Greene (Associate Professor, Counseling and PERC

MOC Coordinator)

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