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Minority Male Community College Collaborative

Examining the Experiences of Men of Color at San Diego Mesa College
Final Report of Student Focus Group and Interview Findings
December 2015

INTRODUCTION

The Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3) at San Diego State University was contracted by Mesa College to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the experiences of men of color (e.g., African American, Latino, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American). The assessment entailed collecting quantitative and qualitative data from students, and qualitative data from faculty. This project is a part of Mesa College's efforts to redress persistent inequities and outcome disparities in student success that disproportionately affect men of color.

The purpose of this report is to share findings that emerged from the qualitative assessment of men of color's experiences at Mesa. In line with the purpose of this project, the four overarching questions below guided the qualitative inquiry with students:

1) What are some salient challenges that are experienced by men of color at Mesa?

2) What factors (e.g., people, programs, campus services, resources, etc.) that are situated within the campus context enable men of color to persist at Mesa despite the challenges they face?

3) What factors (e.g., people, programs, campus services, resources, etc.) that are external to the campus context enable men of color to persist at Mesa despite the challenges they face?

4) What advice would men of color offer to campus leaders and administrators regarding how they can best support them?

METHOD

Data Collection: Data collection for this project occurred during the Spring 2015 and Fall 2015 semesters. Students who identified as "men of color" and were currently enrolled in credit-bearing courses were purposefully selected by Mesa College administrators to participate in the project. A total of 28 students participated. Twenty-six of the 28 students participated in one of five focus groups that were conducted. The remaining two participants were interviewed individually. These two students were originally scheduled for focus groups, but were the only

students to attend during the time at which the focus group was scheduled.

All of the participants agreed to have their conversations audio recorded, and were assured that the insights they provided would be treated confidentially by our project team. All of the audio recordings were transcribed for data analysis. During the focus groups, we also completed a "Community College Insights Protocol" matrix. The matrix included the guiding questions that informed the study, organized in discrete columns. Completing the matrix enabled us to capture the participants' perspectives in real time. The matrix also allowed the participants to see that the insights they shared were not only being recorded, but also being recorded accurately.

We relied on the audio recordings and completed matrices for each focus group to construct this report. Prior to the focus groups and interviews, we informed the participants (both verbally and in writing) that their participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were informed that they could opt out of answering questions they did not feel comfortable answering, and could discontinue their involvement in the project at any time without consequences. None of the participants who began the project discontinued their participation. As an incentive for their participation, each participant was given a $7.00 gift card that could be used at the campus coffee shops. Participants were also fed pizza, snacks, and water during their focus groups as an incentive.

Participants: The 28 men of color who participated in the project represented a wide range of diversity on the basis of race/ethnicity (Table 1), age (Table 2), enrollment status (Table 3), units completed (Table 4), employment status (Table 5), educational goal (Table 6), and participation in developmental education (Table 7).

Table 1: Racial/Ethnic Composition

Race/Ethnicity	Number
African American	17
Latino/Mexican American	7
Multiracial/Multiethnic	2
Southeast Asian	1
Pacific Islander	1

Table 2: Participants' Age

Age	Number
18-23	22
24-28	3
29-33	1
40+	2

Table 3: Enrollment Status

Status	Number
Fulltime (12+ units)	22
Less than Fulltime (less than 12 units)	6

Table 4: Total Units Completed

Units Completed	Number
0	1
1-14	7
15-29	6
30-44	2
45-60	5
60+	7

Table 5: Employment Status

Hours Worked Per Week	Number
Not Working	10
10-19	3
20-29	9
30-39	4
40+	2

Table 6: Educational Goals

Goal	Number
Transfer	19
Certificate	1
Associate Degree	2
Not Stated	6

Table 7: Developmental Education

Subject	Number
Math	4
Reading	0
Writing	2
Multiple Subjects (2-3)	8
None	8
Not Stated	7

Data Analysis: All of the data that were collected for this project were transcribed for data analysis. Each of the transcripts was uploaded into *Dedoose*—a qualitative data analysis software program that enables multiple researchers to work collaboratively on analyzing a dataset. Data were coded deductively by at least two researchers. Although we took a deductive approach to analyzing the data, we also sought concepts and insights that could not be adequately coded using our previously established codebook.

Limitations: Despite our efforts to conduct this project in the most methodologically sound and rigorous manner possible, we encountered several limitations that are worth noting. First, although the sample was very diverse, we would have liked to have had more students participate. Second, African American students are overrepresented in the project's sample, whereas Latino, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander students are underrepresented.   Finally, a critical mass of the participants fit the profile of a "traditional" college student—being between the ages of 18-22 and enrolled fulltime. Published literature and research on men of color in

community colleges indicate that these students tend to be in their late 20s and attend less than fulltime.

KEY FINDINGS

Three overarching thematic categories emerged from the focus groups and interviews with men of color at Mesa College:
- Challenges Students Experienced
- On-Campus and Off-Campus Support
- Students' Advice to Campus Leaders

These categories were salient across the interviews and focus groups. In this section, we discuss each of the themes and present the thoughts, feelings, and experiences participants shared to support the findings presented.

Challenges Student Experienced

The focus group participants were asked to discuss challenges they experienced on an ongoing basis that they believed had a significant impact on their experiences and success in community college. There were several challenges that emerged as salient during these discussions:

- Challenges with Classroom Faculty
- Challenges in the Classroom
- Environmental Challenges
- Academic Challenges
- Challenges with Counseling Services
- Challenges with the Campus Climate

Challenges with Classroom Faculty

The participants identified three main challenges they experienced with faculty members: (a) faculty not delivering material effectively, (b) faculty not providing enough support, and (c) faculty not addressing the individual learning needs of students. Regarding challenges related to faculty delivering material, students felt course content was not taught in a way that enabled them to see its practical relevance. One student stated, "[Course] material is not practical enough, I'm a veteran and I am used to information being more hands on." Another student stated, "classes are not engaging." Students also explained that

faculty members did not provide enough support, and they did not feel comfortable reaching out to professors to ask for help. For example, one student explained that he did not feel comfortable asking for help in the classroom because "teachers are not patient." Similarly, three other students described faculty members as unsupportive due to their lack of "care." They described a "lack of encouragement," "lack of responsive and caring faculty," and "lack of motivation from faculty."

The participants also felt as though their faculty members did not do enough to address their individual learning needs. Students believed that faculty had a "set way" of teaching and working with students, and were rigidly committed to this way. The following two students illustrated their experiences with faculty members not addressing their learning needs, and the feeling of being singled out:

> S1: I did not grow up with a computer at home, the first time I had access to a computer was at Mesa and a professor gave out the instructions and I didn't know what to do.

Similarly, a participant who had taken an introductory computer science class had this to say regarding faculty not addressing his learning needs:

> S2: He asked me "what languages are you familiar with?" At the time I didn't not know what he was talking about now I know what he was talking about, but he gave everyone a break and he came up to me and asked what computer language I was familiar with. I felt singled out. I think this is the kind of thing that should be covered on an introductory course.

Challenges in the Classroom

With regards to students' experiences in the classroom, the participants explained that they face challenges related to racist stereotypes, not feeling welcomed to ask questions, feeling pressured to prove themselves, and being singled out as the only man of color in the classroom. With regard to encountering racist

stereotypes, one student shared: "There is this stigma that [students of color] don't want to learn … I've been in classes where professors think that I don't want to learn…" Similarly, other students described feelings of having to prove to faculty members that they wanted to learn. Students explained that these feelings were evoked only because they were men of color. One student stated, "When I go to class I feel the pressure to have to prove myself to the professor that I want to learn, instead of the professor having an open mind to the fact that I do want to learn."

Other students explained that they were singled out in class because they were the only man of color in the classroom. One student explained how he experienced being singled out during discussions about racial issues. "I mean like even if they say, 'slave,' everyone looks at you and I'm like, 'I wasn't even born during that time, how am I supposed to know?'" Another student shared his thoughts about how he often anticipated he might get picked-on by his professors and classmates for being the only male of color in the classroom. He explained:

> My whole life, I've been going to schools where it's been like, out of the whole population at school, it's like 2% Black, and I feel like every school I went to was like that. Even here [at SDMC], like, there's a big community of people of color, but when you get in the classes you're, like, singled out because you'll be like the only Black or the only Latino in class. And you're sitting there, like, "Dang! This teacher is gonna pick me out of everybody in class and he is gonna pick on me or do this, or just be biased." That's just always on my mind.

Environmental Challenges

The participants discussed various environmental challenges that interfered with academic performance. Environmental challenges are best understood as those that are primarily external to the college, but have an observable impact on students' experiences within the college.

Some of these challenges were related to students' friends and family members. For example, students talked about challenges such as losing a family member or caring for family members, balancing personal relationships, and being disconnected from

friends and family due to living away from home. Several students reported finding it difficult to focus on school due to experiencing the death of family members or having family members with serious health issues. As an example, the following three participants shared their challenges:

> S1: My great-grandmother just passed away and, after that, I kinda just lost my drive and I really can't focus. My mind is not really there in class.

> S2: My mom was actually just diagnosed with breast cancer last semester and it's continued through this semester. So it has, like, kept me away from school. I've been trying to spend a lot of time with her and take her to appointments and stuff.

> S3: I've had at least five family members die in the past five years, so that was a big one for me, because I just, like, withdraw from everything and it's hard to focus.

Students also talked about feeling pressured to meet their family members' high expectations of their academic careers and their own personal disillusion with their college degrees. One student expressed his thoughts about the value of his college degree and his disillusion when seeing other people not being able to find employment after college graduation:

> Sometimes I feel like I'm staying in the same place and like I haven't moved an inch toward making progress, because I see a lot of people that graduated from college with bachelor's and master's [degrees] and they're still not able to get a job or able to become successful. And it's like damn, they spent all this money and all these loans on school and still can't get a job?

Students also reported challenges related to balancing work and school, finances, and transportation. Some students reported having to work full-time while also going to school full-time. Other students discussed challenges with transportation and having to plan around their bus schedule. For example, a student stated: "Having to plan your day around the bus schedule [is difficult].

You always have to have your route planned out before you plan anything else."

Homelessness is another environmental challenge that emerged from the inquiry. Two of the 28 participants reported experiencing homelessness during the time they were enrolled at Mesa. One of the participants was no longer homeless, yet the effects of being homeless since the age of 15 persisted.

> I have battled homelessness since I was 15. And I was homeless for 2 years prior to moving out here, like just staying at my grandpa's house and he didn't want us there. And trying to stay at my aunt's house and friend's houses. And things like that. So when I moved out here [to San Diego] my friend took me. He was like, you know what, come out here, come to school. So till a month ago I lived on their couch.

The participant also discussed the financial hardships he continued to experience while enrolled at Mesa.

> I just recently moved. And it is still an issue because yeah I got the money to pay to live there but I still have to focus because I had no support for money before moving here so it is like I am constantly check-to-check having to worry about bills and it is not like all of a sudden because I moved here it is easier and better it is still a struggle that I'm dealing with.

Disclosing their homeless status was difficult for these students. One student shared: "I never wanted to tell anyone. Who is going to want to go reach out and tell people 'hey I'm homeless I don't have nowhere to go?'" The negative stigma associated with being homeless served as a barrier to seeking campus support. Moreover, participants who experienced homelessness reported that not knowing where their next meal will come from or where they will sleep each night adversely affected their academic performance in college.

Students who had an undocumented citizenship status also experienced significant environmental challenges related to poverty, unemployment, and career planning. Moreover, students felt as though the college did not provide the support

and services that were necessary to overcome the effects of these challenges. For instance, one student shared that student services personnel at the college were not helpful or knowledgeable about the Deferred Action for Children Arrivals (DACA) provision that enabled students with an undocumented status to obtain employment and some relief from the constant threat of being deported. Also, because disclosing one's status as undocumented comes with substantial risk and the possibility of being deported, reaching out to campus personnel for support was not a strategy these students regularly enacted.

Students also noted that being a college student with undocumented citizenship status came with significant financial pressures and few options to obtain financial support to pay for classes, books and other educational expenses. One student discussed his decision to drop classes in order to reduce the cost of books for the semester: "The Board of Governors (BOG) fee waiver paid for my classes, but I didn't have money for my books so I figured [that] if I dropped some of my classes I wouldn't have to spend so much on books." Students whose status is undocumented also had to contend with uncertainty regarding what their career options will be upon completion, because the status would not enable them to obtain employment. As one student noted:

> I want to be a plastic surgeon so I was looking at videos of plastic surgery and looking at the stress that it might cause in me it makes me doubt whether that is what I want to do. But I still like what I want to do so I don't know if that would be [possible].

Thus, being able to engage in career planning was a privilege that was not afforded to these students.

Academic Challenges

The academic challenges students experienced were related primarily to not having the study and test taking skills to do well

in their courses, difficulties taking online classes, and prerequisite courses. In regards to test taking, one student shared:

> I'm taking this political science class and I got like 60 or 70 percent on both of my last tests, and I got another one coming up. I just don't know what I'm doing wrong because I'm taking notes and I'm also reading the book and material, but I still don't know what I'm doing wrong. But I'm getting the essays right, it's just the test.

Other students shared difficulties with online classes, and explained challenges related to "lack of direct communication and feedback from faculty" and "delayed responses from faculty members." In regards to taking prerequisite courses, students stated challenges with "time completion" and they explained that the time that it took for them to transfer was much longer due to having to take these courses.

Challenges with Student Support Services

The focus group participants also reported challenges with campus counseling services that negatively impacted their academic progress and success. Some of the issues that participants experienced included transferring units from other community colleges, registering for classes, getting appointments with academic counselors, accessing tutoring services, and receiving support from the financial aid office. For example, there was a resounding agreement from participants about the difficulties they've had in transferring credits from other community colleges where they were dually enrolled or previously enrolled. Other students shared difficulties with registering for classes. The following three students described their challenges with transferring units and registering for classes:

> S1: I was at [campus] and I completed 24 credits. Only 7 of them transferred.

> S2: Not being able to get the right classes so that I can actually transfer. That's always a problem every semester.

> S3: I had trouble just trying to figure out how to register for classes in general. This is technically my fifth semester but my

ex-girlfriend used to do everything for me. She'd do my class schedule for me and tell me what day and time to show up. So when I was trying to get back in, I just showed up and thankfully my teacher recognized me and he was like, cool, just keep coming and I'll put you in my class and show you how to do it [register]. Then again, that teacher was Black and probably the coolest person on this campus.

Like student 2 above, student 3 also had difficulties with enrolling in classes. However, he had a positive experience with a faculty member of color who took the time to teach him how to enroll in classes. In this report we will further illustrate how faculty members of color have created positive experiences for the participants.

In regards to academic counseling services on campus, students expressed getting the "runaround" from counselors, such as giving students inaccurate information, and referring students to the wrong services and locations. The following two students shared their frustration with the academic counseling services on campus:

S1: Counselors here are just [not helpful]. I kid you not, I saw a counselor twice this spring. I should be going to SDSU, instead, I gotta wait till 2016 to reapply again.

S2: When I applied to SDSU and submitted the supplemental application, I was asked if I filled out the ADT [Associate Degree for Transfer]. I did not know what an ADT was, I did not get this information from my counselor.

Challenges with the Campus Climate

The participants discussed campus climate issues and challenges they experienced. Students felt that there were not enough faculty and staff of color on campus. Moreover, the Black students in the focus groups felt that events related to Black history month did not receive nearly as much attention and recognition on-campus as other cultural events. Also, as noted previously in this report, the participants shared instances in which they felt as though faculty held negative perceptions of them. Recall, the students felt as

though faculty did not engage with them authentically, did not provide adequate support, and did not have high expectations of them. The students attributed these experiences to their identities as men of color.

Students also explained that the campus had a lack of "school spirit" and peer-engagement opportunities. For example, three participants stated:

> S1: [There's] not enough recognition of Black history month on campus...there is more focus given to other cultures.

> S2: Everyone is kinda on their own… There is nothing really here that brings students here together.

> S3: No one knows what sporting events are going on here...No one on the campus knows… There are no signs…They should have events throughout the year.

Finally with regard to campus climate, a Southeast Asian participant did not feel a sense of belonging at the campus because there were few students of Cambodian descent and, from his perspective, most folks at the campus were unaware of Cambodian culture: "I feel like we are neglected a lot as well because not that many people know what Cambodians are [or] what part of the world we come from."

Support On and Off Campus

The following two themes illustrate the different strategies and resources students used to overcome the challenges they experienced as men of color at Mesa: (a) On-campus resources and strategies, which are the campus-based resources, people, programs, and strategies students utilized to persist at Mesa despite the challenges they experience. (b) Off-campus resources and strategies, which refer to the academic, emotional, and financial support students received from friends and family, as well as the work and social activities that helped them overcome the challenges they experienced.

On-Campus Resources and Strategies

Student Services. Certain on-campus student services and staff helped students with financial and social challenges they experienced, including feeling disconnected from friends and family as a result of living away from home. For example, students explained that sports teams, the gym, the Honors Club, the Associated Student Government (ASG), and the music department's piano room helped them to cope by providing them with opportunities to engage on campus and meet other students. Although the piano room in the music department was a resource that students used to engage on campus, they also explained that the location of the piano room was secluded.

Regarding financial difficulties, students used the Financial Aid Office to gain access to the BOG fee waiver and G.I. bill waver in order to obtain support for the economic challenges they experienced. Students explained that it was difficult to see their academic counselors because of the long wait time they had to spend before they could be seen, however, they found that the front desk clerks were useful in trying to help them shorten their wait time. In addition, students also shared that they would not always get the information they needed from their academic counselors. However, they noted that they tried to be proactive about seeking information on their own and asking questions when meeting with their counselors.

Academic Support. Students discussed academic support services and strategies that they implemented in order to overcome the challenges they experienced. Challenges that directly interfered with their academic performance were difficulties with online classes, faculty not providing enough support, and not feeling welcomed to ask questions in class. Online study guides helped students with the difficulties they experienced with their online classes. In order to overcome the challenge of not receiving the support they needed from their instructors, students talked to other faculty members in the same department, formed study groups, and sought support from peers—sometimes other men of color who were more actively engaged in class. Students who did not feel welcomed to ask questions during class explained that they waited until the end of class to ask their questions.

Students listed three academic support services that helped them with the challenge of balancing work and school: the Tutoring Center, Disability Support Programs and Services, and the Academic Skills Center. In addition, some students explained that being on "academic probation helped with balancing work and school." Students also explained that there were "not enough spaces to study on campus." However, they found that the Learning Resource Center, Academic Skills Center, and the Veterans Center provided spaces where they could study away from "distractions from outside." Although students shared that the library was a distracting place for studying, they also explained that the library staff was helpful in finding available study rooms.

Black Studies Courses and Faculty. A critical mass of the focus group participants had taken courses in the Black Studies Department. Students shared that courses and faculty in the Black Studies Department helped them to face challenges related to racism, being disconnected from friends and family, and balancing their workload. For example, one student discussed his thoughts about courses in the Black Studies Department, "I felt like I had a place where someone understood me, where I felt good about who I was everyday." Overall, students shared that they felt like they were in a welcoming and "friendly environment," because professors created a context of "support and respect." Students further explained that they could find staff and faculty members they could trust as students of color. In particular, these experiences helped students face challenges related to racial prejudice. Faculty behaviors that illustrated they cared for students were that they were open to meetings and questions, asked students about other classes and their day, and were open about their civic engagement in the Black community. These behaviors noted by the students illustrate that faculty members in the Black Studies Department took the time to get to know their students and share their own experiences as Black faculty and community members. Overall, students explained that, unlike some of the other courses they had taken at Mesa, in their Black Studies courses they found "caring professors" and "supportive peers."

Campus Allies. Participants identified staff and faculty members who have served as allies to them as male students of color. Thekima Mayasa, Michael Temple, Judy Sandayo, Leroy Johnson, and Starla Lewis were those who were mentioned often. Participants identified these individuals as caring and supportive

staff and faculty members who have helped them face personal challenges and racial prejudice on campus. For example, students shared that Michael Temple and Tekima Mayasa have advocated for students who felt they were singled out in class because they were the only male of color student in the classroom. One student explained that Takima Mayasa helped him overcome the loss of a family member. He noted that Professor Mayasa kindly had a one-on-one, heart-to-heart, conversation about the topic with him. Another student shared that Professor Mayasa helped him when he did not have enough financial resources by giving him books he needed for class.

Off -Campus Resources and Strategies

Academic Support. Participants shared that they found it difficult to study on campus because of limited study spaces, and as a result, they used cafes, public libraries, bookstores and their cars as alternative study locations. Additionally, students reported using the website ratemyprofessor.com as a resource to select courses with professors that were rated as more competent and supportive, as well as talking to peers to gain advice about professors.

Advisors, Role Models and Motivators. Participants talked about friends and family members who served as advisors who helped them understand the community college environment. They also talked about how their friends and family members encouraged them to persist in college, and the internal factors that drove their desire to succeed in their higher education careers. For example, one student talked about how his boss's wife helped him make his course "schedule every semester." Another student shared how his mom helped him focus in his classes. Similarly, another participant explained that his roommates helped him with his schoolwork. Another factor that influenced their desire to succeed in higher education was examples of other successful men of color.   In particular, students noted how they sought examples of successful Black men in the media and general public. Students also asserted that seeing their men of color peers who did not attend college was a motivator to succeed, because they did not want to be like them. Participants also identified internal ethical and moral desires that drove their decisions to succeed in higher education, such as, being the first in their family to go to college, "setting an example for younger peers," and wanting to be a "more outstanding" and "better person."

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Emotional and Economic Support. Participants explained that they obtained emotional and economic support from friends and family members. In addition, working off campus helped them with their economic challenges. Physical, social, and spiritual activities, such as sports, exercising, poetry, music, and church helped students deal with emotional hardships like losing a family member and being disconnected from friends and family due to living away from home.

Students' Advice to Campus Leaders

In line with the purpose of the project, focus group participants were asked to provide insights and advice to campus leaders regarding how they can best support men like themselves who attend Mesa. The students' advice fell into the following areas:

- Address Racial Prejudice through Cultural Competency Training and Hiring Diverse Faculty and Staff
- Build Relationships with Students
- Employ Teaching and Learning Practices that Foster Student Engagement
- Improve Academic Support Services and Encourage Students to Utilize Them
- Create a Sense of Welcomeness to Engage and Belonging
- Improve Student Support Services
- Centralize Support for Students Experiencing Homelessness and Extreme Poverty

Address Racial Prejudice through Cultural Competency Training and Hiring Diverse Faculty and Staff

The participants believed that a mandatory cultural competency training for faculty and staff at Mesa was needed in order to educate them on the challenges men of color often face in pursuing a college education. A student explained, "everyone on campus needs to be aware of the challenges of men of color. Professors who do not attend [existing trainings] are the ones who are doing the most damage culturally." Students further explained that faculty and staff who are not culturally competent should be sanctioned, and proposed the implementation of a "three strikes" policy in which faculty who are sanctioned three times would face a

more significant penalty. A participant further advised that, "counselors [Should] check[in] with students about prejudice, the courses they are taking and professors who create a negative environment."

Students also proposed the implementation of student-led support groups in which successful men of color could serve as role models and help other men of color deal with salient challenges and racial prejudice. Participants expressed the need for men of color peer-leaders that could empathize with each other's challenges. A participant described, "maybe like a support group where you have students who are going through the same things, not just a counselor who might not understand what you are going through." Students also expressed the need to be exposed to men of color who hold college degrees and have been successful. Overall, students shared the need for campus leaders to implement opportunities where men of color could create an environment of inclusion amongst each other, and with representation of other men of color who have graduated and have been successful in their careers.

The participants also advised that campus leaders address issues of racial prejudice and cultural competence by creating racially diverse classrooms and hiring diverse faculty and staff. In doing so, students suggested that campus leaders hire younger faculty and staff, faculty and staff of color, and faculty and staff who came from similar backgrounds as them who can relate to their experiences. For example, one student explained that campus leaders should hire "counselors who can relate to everybody…." Another student further commented, "hire counselors that come from the Southeast [San Diego] area. Mr. Temple is from there and he cares about all of us…he knows how it feels like to have no one who cares about you." Another student illustrated the need for younger professors with more progressive and culturally competent forms of thinking. This student shared his thoughts:

> [Hire] younger professors because older professors have older thoughts and they are teaching a class and they don't mind saying something that is borderline inappropriate, because they grew-up in a time where it was appropriate to say it back then.

Overall, students stressed that in order to solve the problems of racial prejudice and cultural competence at Mesa, the campus needs to hire caring faculty members of color. The positive experiences that participants shared about faculty members of color at Mesa who have served as allies to them and other students reflect their idea that hiring more faculty of color will create a more welcoming environment for students like themselves. The following participant's thoughts reflect students' desire for more faculty of color at Mesa: "I don't know how many Black professors we have, but if maybe we could have more faculty of color… not only Black but Asian, Latino… We need more faculty of color..."

Build Relationships with Students

Students reported challenges in the classroom and with faculty members that were related to a lack of support from faculty members, not feeling welcomed to ask questions in class, and not having their individual learning needs met. In order to address these challenges, students advised faculty members to take the time to get to know students, make students feel more welcomed to visit during office hours, and apply more engaging teaching strategies in the classroom. These strategies are further illustrated with the following observations from the researchers and supporting quotes from the participants.

Students suggested that in order for faculty members to show that they care about their students and provide them with more support, they should take the time to get to know students. Students recommended strategies that professors can implement to get to know their students, such as questionnaires and icebreakers. For example:

> S1: Get to know your students, it would not be so hard that first day of class, professors give a little questionnaire to your students and ask them, what is going on in your life right now? What's up with you?

> S2: And make sure they actually care about it, because I know some professors who do ice-breakers, but they only do it for you to learn people's names, if they actually took the

times to say, I am here because I actually care about you, I
sincerely care about you.

Students recommended that another way faculty members could
support men of color is to invite students to meet with them.
Students explained that they did not feel welcomed by faculty
members to meet with them during office hours. For example,
one student explained, "Your office hours might be on your
syllabus but that might not necessarily mean that you will want us
to come see you."   Moreover, students described how faculty
members could learn from other faculty members who are "allies"
to men of color. For example, students explained that ally faculty
members are welcoming about inviting them to meet during
office hours. One student reported that, "Professor Mayasa and
Mr. Temple are good with [office hours] because their doors are
always open, if they don't have a class and they are at their
office and you can go talk to them."

With regard to meeting with faculty members during office hours,
students reported that it was difficult to meet with adjunct
professors because they did not have office space for students to
meet with them. As a result, students recommended that Mesa
provide office space and hours for adjunct professors. For example,
the following two students shared their experiences with adjunct
faculty and their recommendations for office space and hours:

> S1: Adjunct teachers teach and they are gone, they
> don't have a mailbox, they don't have office hours…

> S2: Maybe if there is a part-time professor that does not
> have an office and does not have office hours maybe they
> can give them an office and office hours.

*Employ Teaching and Learning Practices that Foster Student
Engagement*

Students also recommended that faculty members improve their
pedagogy in the classroom by applying different teaching methods
and collaborate with other faculty in order to improve their practice
and address students' individual learning needs. One student
explained how faculty members could apply different teaching
methods, "Different teaching methods, not just referring to the old
text book, but maybe some more hands on activities, group work,

activities that are more brain stimulating, instead of just sitting at the desk watching them lecture…" Students also recommended that faculty members collaborate amongst each other to improve their teaching methods. One student commented: "Teachers need to have more cohesion among themselves and work together." Moreover, in regards to online classes, students also recommended that campus leaders should hold faculty accountable for the material that faculty teach online. In particular, this recommendation was given as a result of challenges they have experienced with online classes. Two students shared their advice:

> S1: Online instructors should have accountability to ensure that their lecture and study guide match.

> S2: They need to look at the stuff before they give it to the students…they should give a lecture and study guide that match.

Improve Academic Support Services and Encourage Students to Utilize Them

The participants believed it was important that faculty and campus leaders encourage students like themselves to take full advantage of the academic support services that are available at Mesa. They offered two recommendations for doing so. They advised that campus leaders improve the tutoring services on campus, and that they encourage students to seek academic support. The participants recommended that the tutoring services focus on the different learning styles of students. In addition, they said that they would like the Tutoring Services Center to hire tutors from SDSU. Students also explained that faculty members should encourage students to seek academic support by giving students extra credit for seeking support and making it mandatory for students to attend tutoring on campus.

Create a Sense of Welcomeness to Engage and Belonging

The participants advised that campus leaders "advertise" existing programs and services that create a sense of welcomeness to engage and belonging on campus for men of color. In particular, students explained that campus leaders needed to advertise opportunities where students could get involved on campus. For

example, one student stated that campus leaders should "raise awareness of student government and other student options and spaces…" Students also recommended that campus leaders raise awareness of academic support services on campus. In addition, creating structured opportunities to meet and connect with other students was also shared by the participants as a strategy that campus leaders could employ to help Mesa become a more engaging and welcoming place for men of color.

Students also recommended that campus leaders should create new programs and services that will encourage men of color students to engage on campus, such as a space focused on men of color students and student housing. One student explained that campus leaders should create, "something on campus that shows that they care about men of color." Other students explained that if they had the opportunity to live on campus it would be easier for them to get involved on campus. Overall, students explained that they wanted activities that would allow them to be involved on campus, and at the same time they also wanted to feel comfortable on campus. One student described his thoughts about feeling comfortable on-campus: "If the student is on campus and they are doing nothing wrong then let them be on campus. If I can't be comfortable on campus then I'm going to bounce!"

Improve Student Support Services

The participants felt there is a need to improve critical student services at Mesa, particularly counseling, financial aid, parking, and the campus library.   For example, students explained how campus leaders could implement more personalized counseling services by assigning specific counselors to students who had specific experiences, such as assigned counselors for student athletes or students who are out-of-state. Given some of the previously-discussed concerns that were shared by students, counseling sessions should also focus on helping students deal with environmental challenges and making career decisions.

In regards to financial aid, students advised that campus leaders implement lower book prices, payment plans, and eliminate student loan debt. In addition, students stated that campus leaders could create a class set of books so they could save on the cost of purchasing books. One student explained, "I know this is kinda like a high school thing, but if maybe there were class sets, that would

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help out a lot." Other recommendations by the students included improving the parking services and the library on campus. Participants explained that campus leaders could improve parking services by making students aware of the parking challenges and options in the beginning of the semester via email and BlackBoard. Also, providing students information and support to use public transportation would also be helpful. Students also recommended that campus leaders improve the library on campus by "Creat[ing] an actual library environment for students to study."

Centralize Support for Students Experiencing Homelessness and Extreme Poverty

Given the project's findings regarding the challenges faced by students who experience homelessness, extreme poverty, and whose status is undocumented, having an office or program where students can be provided support in a centralized manner may be useful. Participants felt as though having an office or center where targeted support is offered could help to alleviate the stigma and disclosure concerns that serve as barriers to seeking the support they need. A participant who experienced homelessness believed that a center or program that offered targeted support could coordinate efforts to help homeless students find job placement opportunities and feel more welcomed at the campus:

> If there was an office obviously that would make them feel more welcome instead of hey you have to go to [Associated Students Government] and ask them for food because you're homeless, it is kind of just on that person dealing with enough, they need to feel welcome there.

CONCLUSION

The findings reported herein were derived from the qualitative component of a larger campus-based effort to improve student equity and success for men of color. These findings are not presented to be representative of a larger population of students at Mesa. Yet, the data were collected and analyzed in a way that will enable them to be transferable to the experiences of students whose profiles are reflective of those who participated in the inquiry. Decisions that are made based on these findings should be informed and leveraged by other institutional data

sources and inquiry efforts—including insights that are gathered from other key campus constituents and stakeholders.

ABOUT M2C3

The Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3) is a national research and practice center that partners with community colleges to support their capacity in advancing outcomes for men of color. It is situated in San Diego State University's College of Education and is affiliated with the University's independent doctoral program in Community College Leadership.

M2C3 has partnered with more than 100 community colleges across the nation to better understand challenges and design institutional interventions focused on these men. M2C3 has developed rigorously validated tools for assessing institutional efforts and outcomes relevant to men of color. These instruments include the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM), the Community College Student Success Inventory (CCSSI), the Community College Insights Protocol (CCIP), the Male Program Assessment for College Excellence (M-PACE), and the Community College Instructional Development Inventory (CC-IDI). M2C3 houses the National Consortium on College Men of Color (NCCMC), which host trainings, information sharing sessions, and provides resources to colleges with initiatives and programs supporting college men of color.

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