Mt. SAC’s Second Annual Power Of Our Data Conference 2022 Episode 160

00:00:00 **Hannah**

When we talk to people who go through this program, they say it changes their lives and the way that they perceive data - not only that, but the way they relate to one another, the way they perceive students, the way they teach.

00:00:14 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:15 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:00:19 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:36 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

00:00:40 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:00:45 **Speaker 2**

She is a sociology major, and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona! Psychology major, English major ...

00:00:51 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time-

00:00:54 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

00:01:00 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:03 **Speaker 1**

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:06 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni, and producer of this podcast.

00:01:17 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:23 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:27 **Sun**

Welcome back to the Magic Mountie Podcast. I'm your host, Sun Ezzell. In today's episode, we take a peak inside Mt. SAC's second annual Power of our Data Conference; Understanding our College through Data. Thanks for joining us to learn more about how Mt. SAC is using research and data to improve student outcomes. Enjoy!

00:01:50 **Stephanie**

Welcome everybody. Thank you for coming to the second annual Power of our Data. The theme is understanding our college through data by access, baseline, and change. So, I will hand the baton over to Patty Quinones, our Director of Research for Institutional Effectiveness, who will tell you a bit about our program today.

00:02:12 **Patty**

Good morning, everyone. As Stephanie mentioned, this year's Power of our Data theme is Know the ABCs: Access, Baseline, and Change. I am Patty, I'm the Director of Research at Institutional Effectiveness, and before providing an overview of our time together today, I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues who really put this event together.

00:02:30 **Patty**

So Tiffany Quo, thank you very much. Lisa Rodriguez, Kathy Studi, Sonia Ortega, Loni Nyugen, Sara Mestas, and Tanya Anders. Thank you for all your hard work. So, here to introduce our speakers is our Vice President of Instruction, Kelly Fowler.

00:02:47 **Kelly**

Good morning, everyone. I'm so happy to be here. I know that we are also happy to be here to learn and to listen and to engage with our incredible speakers today. So, I just want to talk a little bit about their background and their passion, and I'd like to talk about Sherry Bradford first.

00:03:03 **Kelly**

And she is the program leader in counseling faculty for the Santa Monica College Black Collegians Program, Umoja Community. She has been at Santa Monica for nearly 25 years and has worked with the program for her entire time at SMC.

00:03:18 **Kelly**

In 2014, she expanded her role with the college working on equity-based initiatives, including leading discussions and training surrounding the improvement of practices to increase successful outcomes for black and Latinx students. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from UCLA and a master's degree in counseling with an option in higher-ed from CSU, Los Angeles.

00:03:42 **Kelly**

And lastly, she and her husband are proud parents of two teen sons. So, we can only imagine what that's been like in the pandemic, but Sherry, welcome. Thank you. And we're so happy that you're here.

00:03:52 **Kelly**

And I'd also like to introduce Hannah Lawler, is currently the Dean of in Institutional Research at Santa Monica College. In her role, she provides strategic vision, leadership, and oversight for the college's research and effectiveness functions and provides leadership on campus with efforts related to racial equity, guided pathways, and accreditation.

00:04:14 **Kelly**

She co-founded and leads one of the pioneer Data Coaching Programs in our California community college system. In addition, she currently serves as a research consultant at the research and planning group where she's contributed to projects related to launch board, student success metrics, and the Aspen Institute.

00:04:33 **Kelly**

She previously served as a consultant for the USC Center for Urban Education, USC Race and Equity Center, and the Benison & Associates. She provided expertise in delivering work related to assessment of racial equity and promoting equity-minded inquiry on college campuses.

00:04:52 **Kelly**

She was selected as one of the 2021 fellows of the California Education Policy Fellowship Program. And she holds a bachelor's degree from Pepperdine University and a doctorate from USC. So, again, we're honored and are so happy to have these two incredible speakers share their experiences and their knowledge with us today. So, thank you so much, Sherry and Hannah.

00:05:15 **Sherry**

I just want to start off by saying that everything that you see today is Hannah's brainchild and she will not tout her own horn or toot her own horn, but I'm going to toot it, and she needs her flowers today because she's an incredible and amazing colleague, and leader in this work.

00:05:37 **Sherry**

I'm just so grateful that she has brought me on board to help out. So, I just want to say thank you to Hannah publicly, because if you ever have an opportunity to work with her, you will learn so much, and she's just amazing. So, I just want to publicly say thank you to Hannah.

00:05:55 **Hannah**

Well, the feeling is mutual Sherry. So, we're here today to talk about our Data Coaching Program and we actually call it the Equity Avengers Program. And we're going to share kind of our history of our journey from kind of launching the Data Coaching Program to where we are today, where we're intentionally kind of facilitating this program in a way that helps the campus advance our racial equity goals.

00:06:20 **Hannah**

And honestly, Sherry, started with us and I think 3.0, we have five different cohorts right now. And I honestly, couldn't do this without Sherry. It's really important - the Data Coaching Program is really focused currently on faculty providing professional learning for faculty and having Sherry who's a faculty member and a counselor really help navigate and help make this program really important, and kind of centered in like what the work is, because as an administrator, I have no idea what it's like on the ground.

00:06:53 **Hannah**

So, grateful to be here, and thank you for inviting us.

00:06:56 **Hannah**

So, a little history. So, we launched our program in 2017 and the Data Coaching Program at the time, was really focused on like what you think of when you think of traditional data coaching, which is data literacy and looking at data tools and teaching folks on how to use those tools for practical things like program review, Perkins Grant application, other kinds of grants application and evaluation.

00:07:20 **Hannah**

And I think what happened as we were in those early cohort years was our campus, we're really sophisticated. Most faculty know how to use technology to compile their own data and they have a really good understanding of how to analyze it. But I think what happened was once we had the data, folks didn't know how to facilitate a conversation about the data, and actually turn the data into action.

00:07:49 **Hannah**

And so, our more recent versions of our cohort is focused really - actually it's really starting with our third kind of year of the cohort. We extended the focus to focus explicitly on racial equity and sense-making of racial equity data. And so, it was no longer just compiling data and analyzing it, but preparing for conversations when you bring it back to your department.

00:08:15 **Hannah**

What do you do in the scenarios when people are deflecting because it's uncomfortable talking about racial equity or what do you do when someone says, "I think income is more important as a predictor than race?" So, we did a lot of more, I think like personal equity journey, and like communicating kind of equity data.

00:08:35 **Hannah**

And this year, particularly, we've actually focused on the department chairs. So, we have a cohort and each year is just a year-long program and it's a cohort race program, our cohort are eight department chairs. And we actually focused on helping them analyze their departmental core success data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and doing some more kind of inquiry on why they think those gaps exist.

00:09:01 **Hannah**

And hopefully, eventually, that can inform their departmental planning and processes as well as their practices. So, because we have this explicit focus on racial equity, we call ourselves the Equity Avengers. And this is something inspired by this kind of like Twitter chat by two college presidents.

00:09:23 **Hannah**

They have something called Equity Avengers. And so, we call ourselves the Equity Avengers and really, we are all banding together collectively to kind of like address these systemic like issues and institutional racism that happens on our campus. And so, yeah, so that's why sometimes you'll hear our program referred to as the Equity Avengers.

00:09:45 **Hannah**

We want to share with you our last year's program and kind of like our plan for this year's program. I think the biggest obstacle to change around data isn't technical. I think most people at some point can get enough skills to really understand how to use data or analyze data, but it's cultural.

00:10:05 **Hannah**

You need to feel a safe enough space, like where you're at, and the people in the room when you're talking about data, because people can get really defensive. And so, for our fourth cohort last year, we focused really on three components.

00:10:21 **Hannah**

So, we focus a lot of our programming on kind of what we see the mirrors were, which is helping people look at themselves in the context of their own racial equity journey. We did a lot of team building and community building, and deepening like our empathy for one another.

00:10:39 **Hannah**

This year's cohort is very like racially ethnically diverse, and as well as we focused on the data part of it, which is the inquiry. So, we spent a lot of time not just looking at data, the core success data and jumping the solutions, but really unpacking and trying to better understand what else do we need to know in order to make better-informed solutions.

00:11:00 **Hannah**

So, we wanted to give you kind of a sneak peek into like each of those components of our program. And so, this is an example of like a mirrors work that we did. And so, the purpose of this, just to frame it, is I think everyone like applies for the program and they have some level of commitment to racial equity, and it's very clear to folks that that's the purpose of the program.

00:11:27 **Hannah**

But we really wanted people to reflect upon like why are you personally pursuing the work you're doing in the context of your larger work, but also, like within the state of coaching Equity Avengers Program. So, I'm going to share it out.

00:11:41 **Speaker 12**

How do I know what I'm supposed to do? The question really to ask is how do I know why I'm here? Because when why you know why, your what becomes more clear and more impactful. For instance, people know that I do comedy, but that's what I do. My why is to inspire people to walk in purpose. So, I can do comedy, I can write books, I can be in a movie because all of it is motivated by my why.

00:12:08 **Hannah**

We just want to share with you an example of like some of the mirrors work that we did. We really used this video to kind of be a launching path for our exploration of clarifying our why for our racial equity work. And because how we show up for the work is impacted whether we are clear on our why.

00:12:30 **Sherry**

So, this is just kind of giving you an example of some of the things that we started to unpack amongst the Equity Avengers, because it's about tying in and understanding kind of your racialized experience to then connect it to how are we going to change the outcomes, particularly for our black and Latinx students.

00:12:53 **Sherry**

So, you'll see that we started off with asking the question about understanding their own racial experience, and when did they first kind of understand who they are in the world, and then also, then leading into what their experience was like as an undergrad for many folks of color in particular college is that time where you are burgeoning as a young adult.

00:13:17 **Sherry**

And you're also becoming even more acutely aware of your racial experience, particularly if you're attending a predominantly white institution, that is when research shows that you begin to really understand your place in this world and how that affects you, as you navigate as a young adult in the world.

00:13:39 **Sherry**

And then tying it in what ways do you want the experiences of our black and Latinx students at Santa Monica College to either be similar or very different from the experiences that you had in college. Going kind of through these processes not only helps folks to unpack things that maybe they hadn't thought about before, but it also ties the group together even more so because conversations got very deep, very personal, and that just helps to expand the work.

00:14:11 **Hannah**

So, we spent a lot of time on the non-data part so that we can be prepared to have more deeper thinking and conversations around the actual data part once we got to the data part. And so, the last part of like our program is really doing the inquiry and having the introspection and kind of like the community building was an important piece of that.

00:14:38 **Hannah**

And so, when the department chairs looked at their department's core success rates data, they found like across every department that there were two groups that we were producing gaps for. And they were our Latinx and our African American black population. And so, with that, we had a lot of series of exercises to kind of like encourage their kind of sense-making and questioning of why they thought, like what were their hunches around why those gaps exist?

00:15:09 **Hannah**

And we focused on making sure that those questions that we asked were equity-minded. So, that means that they were focused on things that we can't control and that we were held accountable and not necessarily fixing students and that they were race-conscience.

00:15:22 **Hannah**

And so, the kind of two emerging things that came up over and over in our discussions were around grading policies. I think faculty wanted to know, the chairs wanted to know, like do students really understand our current grading policies? Are they designed in a way that ensures a successful completion of courses for black and Latinx students.

00:15:43 **Hannah**

And then also, about how students perceive the way we communicate with them in the classroom. And so, that's what we did, was we actually did a focus group around these two topics.

00:15:56 **Sherry**

So, the department chairs had an opportunity to actually kind of look and think about this experience and the things that we wanted them to take a look at through modules that were placed in Canvas, where they could also reply to some discussion questions to kind of deepening their understanding of this work.

00:16:15 **Sherry**

And then there was group work where we talked about previously those questions that we asked them to kind of understand their own racialized experiences and then to work together and having those kinds of discussions.

00:16:30 **Sherry**

And then the third part of it was really kind of looking at their own individual department, racial equity data, and analyzing that from their program review. So, that was from spring 2021 and the experience that they had at that point.

00:16:46 **Hannah**

And so, last semester, the work really involved then following on their hunches, the areas of inquiry. And so, we actually split off into two groups and we conducted two focus groups per group with students. And so, we actually interviewed students and asked them all the things that we wanted to around those topics and tried to get a better understanding of students lived experiences and their perceptions, and the kind of like emotions around those two topics.

00:17:15 **Hannah**

And then we actually went back and designed some interventions based on what students said. And then we did a second focus group where we presented our ideas of our interventions or changes that we wanted to make based on like those two areas and we received their feedback. And so, now we're at the point where we're actually revising kind of what we want to do based on the data. So, both the qualitative data and then the quantitative data that we've collected.

00:17:43 **Hannah**

So, that's where we're at right now. And so, we're starting to plan for our next cohort and it's going to be focused on what we're going to call a community of practice. So, Equity Avengers Community of Practice, and it's going to be far less technical than before, and it's going to be an extension of our current cohort. So, this is what we call our 5.0.

00:18:01 **Hannah**

And so, a community of practice really is a group, a support network of people and practitioners who have in common like a specific idea that they want to address around their practice. And so, we are currently in the application process of inviting folks, faculty to apply for this community of practice where we're going to create this very intentional space and bring folks together to help them grapple with these two topics around how do they better grade and assess that better reflects students learning as well as how do we better communicate with students in a way that makes them feel validated and welcomed, and that they matter.

00:18:41 **Hannah**

And so, that's kind of like what our next iteration of our Data Coaching Program will be.

00:18:48 **Sherry**

Thank goodness that our Equity Avengers 4.0 has agreed to continue with us. And we are wanting to bring in 16 new Avengers, which are 16 new faculty to help with this work. So, the Equity Avengers 4.0 will be able to kind of work with our new faculty who are now in the process of applying to be part of this new cohort to then take this work even further.

00:19:14 **Sherry**

Our plan is for the 2022/2023 year to have monthly discussions, this will be remote, a couple of hours a month so that we can provide them with some readings and things for them to think about as they start to build what it is that they would like to actually put into practice for the spring semester.

00:19:35 **Sherry**

And so, then that's where the experiment comes in. We want them to try out the things that they would like to try and what their hunches are to see if they work towards making change regarding grading and faculty-to-student communication. So, that's our plan for this coming year.

00:19:54 **Hannah**

We did want to share with you kind of some of the pain points and barriers and challenges we've been facing in implementing a program like this one. And the first is we we don't have an institutionalized budget. And so, we are always every year, having to seek out money or beg for money somewhere on campus.

00:20:15 **Hannah**

And we've probably been funded in four different funding sources over the years. And so, I think our plan and our goal is, especially since this program seems to really resonate with faculty on our campus, that it should be a regular thing. And so, we are working towards that, but it's really hard in these budget times.

00:20:36 **Hannah**

Second, it's really labor-intensive. It's not just doing a presentation, Sherry and I. There's a lot of planning that goes into it and we don't have like a curriculum planned out ahead. We kind of like have a goal in mind, but we adjust and pivot as things unfold in the year to be as responsive as we can.

00:20:58 **Hannah**

And so, that requires us to be kind of on our toes. And it's a lot of labor and this is done on top of all of our like our regular work. And so, it's a passion project. I mean, I will say for me, I hope it's for Sherry too. And we get a lot of value out of it. And so, that's why we do it.

00:21:18 **Hannah**

But really, we don't have like dedicated staff around this. There's no like structural support. It's really like driven by like our love for our colleagues and students.

00:21:28 **Hannah**

And so, that is really difficult. Especially like for me, speaking as like a Dean and administrator, I have so many day-to-day things, administrative things that pull me away from this kind of work, and so that's really hard to balance.

00:21:42 **Hannah**

And the last kind of challenge that I feel very optimistic about because like being a program like ours is trying to change is our organizational culture. Right now, the way we kind of perceive how equity is supposed to be addressed is really focused on tools and like structures and processes, and those things are very important. And I just don't feel like our college is invested enough in people.

00:22:09 **Hannah**

And so, we always get this "Well, why don't you have like 150 people do this program?" And I think for us, we're always having to justify no, the value and the power of this program is building trust in community and it's relational. And so, you can't have 150 people and expect the same results.

00:22:30 **Hannah**

And I think anecdotally, when we talk to people who go through this program, they say it changes their lives, and the way that they perceive data, not only that, but the way they relate to one another, the way they perceive students, the way they teach. And so, I think it is hopefully, like a really formative experience for folks.

00:22:50 **Hannah**

And that's hard to do with a really big ... everyone's always like ... the board's always like "Scale up, get 200 people." And that's really hard. So, we're just doing this 10 to 20 people a year at a time, but we're already on cohort five. So, I mean, we've probably already reached like a hundred people over the last five years.

00:23:09 **Sherry**

Hannah, can I add to something that you were saying too - when Hannah talked about the anecdotal like life-changing kind of comments, there's one person in particular that I think about who for many years, he was really kind of grappling and kind of struggling with the relational part of equity work and even kind of struggling with the whole concept of racial equity.

00:23:34 **Sherry**

Literally, it wasn't until he went through this experience with us, that he now says, I totally get it. I get it now. I get why we had to invest the amount of personal work in this. And now, I feel like he's like our biggest person to go out and talk about his experience in this.

00:24:00 **Sherry**

So, people may think why don't we just talk about the data? The data doesn't just tell the story in it of itself, it's not a standalone piece of information when you're dealing with racial equity work. You have to unpack how you show up into the space, how that affects our students of color, and then be able to then try and think about how you want to plan moving forward to try and close equity gaps.

00:24:28 **Hannah**

So, to that end, I'm going to end with my favorite quote, my Equity Avengers, they know for me to say this; "Data don't drive, people do." And so, that's kind like at the heart of our program, our Data Coaching Program. So, thank you.

00:24:44 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.