

## **FA Draft Response to Foothill Equity Plan**

As members and leaders of a labor union, we are acutely aware both that racism has been historically used in this country as a wedge to divide working people from each other and that there have been those in the labor movement itself who fomented this. But at the same time we also claim the proud part of labor's legacy that has included inter-racial organizing efforts and countless anti-racist organizing projects, which extends into our lives as professional educators. It is from this perspective that we enthusiastically support the overall direction of the Foothill College "Equity Strategic Plan." We recognize that it is primarily focused on equity for students, and agree with centralizing race in our equity efforts. When we make our institution welcoming to and supportive of the most disadvantaged and oppressed, we all do better.

Our response is based on a first read by members of FA's newly formed Equity Task Force.

throughout the FHDA district. Through community-engaged curriculum embedded in our classes, paid and unpaid internships, guided pathways initiatives leading to careers in advocacy and government, we already see models of successful student empowerment. We hope that such initiatives can receive stronger institutional support. Expecting students and faculty to engage in these projects as “extra curricular” volunteer activities does not adequately re-center Foothill’s educational mission to meet this challenge.

We are truly excited by a vision of equity that takes seriously the notion that we must meet students where they truly are and then empower them to invest their time and energy adequately to benefit from the opportunities offered by higher education. The "Plan" makes note of the desperate food, housing and transportation crises facing so many of our students (e.g. p. 34). What might even more explicitly be called out is the compromising choices poverty forces upon our students. Pay for gas to get to work? Or spend that money to get to class? Pay for rent, or pay for food? And, perhaps most significantly, take on an extra job or extra hours or invest time into study and learning?

Improving access to financial aid and other campus-based services will certainly help. But, frankly, the gap between need and resources is simply too great under the current resource model. The District’s recent success with the Measure G bond has opened the very real possibility that Foothill in particular and the District generally could make meaningful steps to provide affordable housing to hundreds of students, many of whom are currently homeless. But again, these are decisions that should be made with the full inclusion of students through a transparent and empowered democratic process and not simply handed to students as a fait accompli.

What is the role of Administrators in this process? Will administrators be full partners in this project? What deliverables will be asked of Administrators other than providing exhortations to “do better”? Many of us have been laboring at this project for decades with minimal resources or acknowledgement only now to be told by administrators who themselves have no actual record of accomplishing such feats that the elimination of all equity gaps should be accomplished in time frames that no one has ever actually experienced (see the state Chancellor's "Vision for Success"]. While we acknowledge the gesture, we also want to see full buy-in and accompanying metrics of accountability from our administrative partners.

We also want to see far more transparency in decision-making processes and full democratic inclusion in setting goals and allocating resources to meet these goals. Broad and informed inclusion in decision making means that those most affected by institutional decisions have an opportunity to share their real experience of what works and what does not. That is, we get better data, particularly when we preserve our institutional memory and expertise. Institutional change takes time. We need long-term institutional commitment to this project rather than the “flavor of the month” approach to so many other resource-draining educational “reforms” we have seen throughout the years. Because we have never done what we are attempting here, we are going to make mistakes as we feel our way forward. But to build on our successes, we need a broader base of decision-makers (in more than an advisory capacity) and a long-term commitment of resources.

## Responses to specific issues/goals in the Equity Plan

### Tenure Process/Evaluations

FA appreciates the Equity Plan's recognition that both faculty evaluation and the tenure process should be supportive rather than punitively driven activities, particularly in Issue 6, Goal 3's insistence that "Administration collaborates with Academic Senate and the Faculty Association to support practitioner efforts..." (41). It might be useful in this regard to make a distinction between policy and practice, in recognition that while the tenure review process itself can always be modified and updated through negotiations with the District, it's in the *implementation* of its various requirements that equity concerns most frequently arise, particularly for faculty of color. The *Agreement* between FA and the District explicitly states that "*all* Tenure Review Committee members" complete training which will, "emphasize the constructive nature of the tenure review process...define cultural competence and increase awareness of the behaviors and attitudes that support faculty diversity" and "enable members to identify bias and maintain objectivity" (6A.4.5). It is thus imperative that the District provide the resources needed to deliver this essential training, which should include the Dean, and which should probably be ongoing.

We also feel that there needs to be greater clarity in Goal 3's language about "removing structural barriers embedded in tenure and evaluation processes." What would be an example of such a barrier, and to what would it be a barrier? In addition, we offer the following revision to the language of sub-priority "B":

"Faculty evaluations are seen as an opportunity to continuously build on the quality of our teaching, **and are viewed as an opportunity to recognize outstanding performance, improve satisfactory performance, and provide useful feedback to encourage the growth and improvement of faculty both contractually and in actual practice.** ~~replacing the current aim of perfectionism, assimilation, and weeding out, for one that values growth and improvement.~~ (42).

And just as the process of attaining tenure is important to insuring that faculty perform their duties in a professional, caring manner and actively pursue effective pedagogy, particularly for their at-risk students, by the same token, administrators must be held accountable through regular evaluation, by faculty as well as their administrative superiors.

< Edits:

Under **Part-time Faculty**... Paragraph 6- there is an extra "would" in the sentence. Should read: "We would also recommend the following..."

### Part-time Faculty

Equity for students of color also necessitates achieving equity for part-time faculty, who, despite teach

theory). And the quality of education suffers when educators are struggling to meet the same basic needs of adequate food and housing as their students on top of the demands of maintaining a professional life at multiple campuses.

College and District policies and practices that differentiate part-time faculty tend to further undermine their ability to d

**The processes by which part-time faculty attain and retain reemployment preference insure these faculty receive the institutional support, resources and mentoring they need to succeed and insure their students' success.**

"Current faculty workloads create barriers to learning and effectively implementing culturally responsive pedagogy" (40-41). **Similarly, institutional standards regarding such instructional criteria as class sizes work to undermine equity-focused pedagogy.**

"The Chancellor's Vision for Success goals are no doubt ambitious. Setting metrics locally gave the Foothill an opportunity to think about how individual colleges can enact change that will ultimately make impacts statewide. Similarly, setting individual and department goals can help us collectively achieve equity as a college" (56). **Projections must nonetheless be evidentiary based, positioned with an eye towards realistic goals which can be attained in a reasonable time-frame.**