**Diego Navarro Interview**

Learn how to inspire and improve outcomes for disproportionately impacted students.

**AS** [00:00:01] Welcome to the Student Success Podcast. I'm Al Solano, founder of the Continuous Learning Institute, or CLI, a higher education online resource focused on providing community college and open access university educators with practical information on how to get results at their campus. As a resource within CLI, the Students Success Podcast is focused on just that--the challenges, opportunities, failures, and successes of practices intended to improve student success and equity. The goal is to leave you with thought provoking ideas, nuts and bolts information, and lessons learned from the field so you can consider how you might apply them to your institutional context.

**AS** [00:00:47] For today's podcast. It's a pleasure to welcome back Diego Navarro. Diego is emeritst professor at Cabrillo College and founder of the Academy for College Excellence, ACE. Diego develop a five day experiential learning institute in 2006 to teach faculty and staff how to have embodied interactions and employ non-cognitive learning activities to create psychological safety with students serving over 2000 faculty from 90 plus colleges. Diego's research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and others. Diego serves on the selection committee of the Aspen Institute's Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Stanford Research Institutes Education NSF funded advisory group on employability skills, and as a consultant with NCII Jobs Initiatives Project. Diego accepted a visiting scholar appointment at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching at Stanford during a sabbatical year. Diego also received the American Association of Community College Trustees National Faculty Award in 2009. Diego began higher education, attending Pasadena City College. He received a bachelor's degree from Antioch College and received a master's degree from Harvard University's Graduate School of Business. It's a pleasure to have you back on the Student Success Podcast, Diego.

**Diego Navarro** [00:02:15] Thank you, Al it's been a while. I hope you enjoyed the first interview that we had, and I hope the people that have been listening to it have been enjoying it too.

**AS** [00:02:24] Well, in fact, it has been the most listened to, the most downloaded episode of all the episodes on the Student Success Podcast. It's been used for PD throughout the country and people just love it. They loved your episode on culture, on creating a culture of dignity. So it's such a treat to have you back now, as you know from last time, I like to start the podcast with, guest telling us a story or something about a hobby. Last time you talked about hitchhiking. So do you have a story for us this time?

**Diego Navarro** [00:03:02] Today, what I'd like to focus on is inspire. How do we inspire our students, which is what are the pieces of the Community College Research Center at Columbia University. Their ACIP model. And so I want to tell you a story about how I was inspired, what happened to me, one of the things that happened that really changed me and helped me really become focused as a student and more healed in a certain way from the culture I was raised in. I was raised, so let me say this first. I was raised in Pomona, California, which is in Southern California. Most educated people think of Pomona College, but that's in Claremont. That's kind of like a privileged island. And I lived on the other side of the tracks in Pomona, went through school there, graduated high school, and I couldn't read and write at college level. So I had, some things happened to me in high school, like my mother dying of bone cancer, very painful disease and things like that. And I was tracked in junior high school into metal shop, wood shop and electric shop. So I have the stuff that was weighing over me, and there was a sense of who I was that wasn't me, but it was projected on me. You know, you need to be in woodshop. You need to be in metal shop because your people work with their hands, you know, that kind of thing. So this experience I had took place, in Michoacan, Mexico. I had transferred from Pasadena City College to another college, and they had a program in Michoacan, Mexico. So, I went down and I was studying, appropriate technology. So I had a camera and I was interviewing people, and I was just taking photographs of the technology that was, appropriate technology, that was used in a village of the Purapecha people. So I lived for two months with the Purapecha people, which are also known as the Tarascan tribe. In the village I lived in is called San Angel Zurumucapio, which was about six kilometers off the main road. Now the main road that went between Patzcuaro and Uruapan, and it was the road right after Tingambato, so there was a little road and you went down. It was pretty bumpy. And what happened to me in that village over that two months just set me up for my life. It was an amazing experience. And what it was, was this because that I became a part of this family in a deep way, where they would joke around with me a lot, you know, so we'd be sitting around the table and mind you, where where I lived was these two, these they had these two buildings that were their homes, which were the bedrooms. Then you were outdoors and you had your stove and and the place where the daughter made the tortillas, which was on a clay stove with, one of those things made out of stone where they ground the corn, and they made the tortillas that puffed up. So we would sit around the table and they would be talking about something and they'd say, oh, yeah, the father would say, oh, Diego, this is an amazing pepper that we really love, you know? So I took a bite of it and my ears start to explode and they start laughing, you know. So you just had this experience, you know, or the son and I, we would go there were, collecting turpentine or sap from pine trees in the mountains. We'd go out there first thing in the morning, we'd scrape the tree and empty that thing into these buckets that were around two burros that we were walking with. So we were working with that, there were just a bunch of different technology things that they were doing, and I was just documenting it. Or, for example, we're taking wood to this other village somewhere, and we see this, tamarind tree, and the son goes and says, hey, could we buy the tamarind that the, produce from the tamarind tree? So we'd go up there and we'd pick jam with ants all over us and sticky fingers. Then we go to the market and, in Patzcuaro and sell it. So I had all these experiences, and just being a part of that family opened my heart and made me feel very connected. And the way that Latino community is like, you know, it's not like here in the States. It's not like what Pomona was like for me and rough and tumble place. It was really a loving, caring place. And in addition to that, it was having to deal with time. I had to switch. I had to switch, like in the mornings I woke up when the sun came up, because I lived in this little hut up on the hill where we did the bee work. You know where they would make honey and all the bees were glommed on to the screen. When I went to bed at night. In the morning, as soon as the sun hit, it would start to fly around, so I'd fall asleep soon as the sun went down and wake up as soon as the sun came up. And for me there were no streetlights, so everything was dark at night, so there was nothing to really do. And for me, coming from Los Angeles, you know, FOMO was the issue. You know, fear of missing out on stuff, you know, that went away. It cleared that out of me having that peace there. Having the contemplative environment there. So that's kind of what happened to me, Al. And, you know, what I think happened, really, was that I experienced a culture of belonging and a culture of healing. I think those are the two things. That then is what I use kind of what I use as my guide. As we started to develop our program. When I went to Watsonville, 80% Latino community and set that program up. So, you know what I'm finding from this experience, and why it's important to me, is that our role of marginalized students and mind you, when I graduate from high school, I couldn't read and write at college level. Went to Pasadena City College learned to be a student. And you know that we have to facilitate our students coming alive and inspire them to pursue their education and complete their goals. And this requires building the capacity to persist through the headwinds they'll face in school and from their complex lives. This was my experience while studying in Michoacan. It helped me develop the capacity to deal with the headwinds in my life. And you know what? It was done through the experiencing of a healing culture. It's not what we normally think is what we need to build for our students, in terms of the environment, the healing culture.

**AS** [00:09:02] Healing culture. What a beautiful story, Diego. Thank you for sharing that. As you know, we share similar approaches. When we work with colleges and it really is about culture, the kind of culture that we want, that we need our institutions to continually improve and to better student outcomes, especially for marginalized students. I often say, Diego, I think you're familiar with this, part of my role at least, and I know you do this as well, is when we're doing meaningful equity work that every campus has their equity yellow lighters, meaning that these are people, educators, faculty, for example. Because the fact is, where do students spend most of their time when they're at a community college? In the classroom. So faculty play such a significant role in the students' journey. And so the yellow letters are what I call people who are either indifferent or kind of against the fence. They're not anti-equity, but they are not engaged in a they're not entirely sold. Then we have our green lighters who embrace it. And enact it. They actually move forward with action and are intentional. And then of course, you have your your red lighters who are anti equity and they're just, this is not something that they believe in. And so the question is how do you move these equity yellow lighters to green. And sometimes how can you move the red at least to yellow, or sometimes even move them to green? So can you tell us a little bit about that in your work, how you help accomplish that?

**Diego Navarro** [00:11:01] Yeah, there's an interesting question. Yeah. I find it very similar experience that you find, working in the colleges. And what I found is that the first thing I tend to do is help them understand the strengths of our students, because many of our faculty see the strengths of our students as weaknesses. And so my role is to help them understand what our students strengths are. And if, for example, one of the strengths is persistence. Our students have a strength and persistence and survival that just outperformed their peer groups. But we don't know it because these marginalized students drop out. We have huge high attrition rates with marginalized students and students of color. Well, that's because there's some core issues that our colleges haven't realized are the issues that are holding our students back and why they leave. And it has to do with our culture, which we'll go into in a little bit. So what I do is I start to define what are the strengths. Another strength for example is our students are on the streets a lot. So they're watching each other's backs. They know how to take care of each other. When you're in poverty you have to joke a lot. So they joke a lot with each other. In our cultures, especially the Black and the, Latino culture, we do a lot of joking and teasing of each other and stuff like that. So their natural teamwork, they really understand how to do with esprit de corps. There's this is thing they have. So we need to take those strengths like their team strengths and start doing team based learning with them. They've also overcome a lot of adversity in their life a lot. They've dealt with trying to do things without having much money and much resources. So they're very innovative and they're always solving problems. So how can we start doing problem based learning with them? So you can take that strength that they have and apply it. Of course, they need to learn to read and write at college level like I needed to do. And they need to learn math. Yes, but those are skills. And those skills take time. But utilize the strengths they have to show that they are they're capable college students. So that's the first thing. The second thing so they can get clear, these are the strengths of these students, oh that means we need to really leverage our curriculum and our pedagogy differently. The second thing I do is I go into theory and practice, okay, theory of why students drop out, which I'll go into a little bit, but it's what I call the physiology of equity, the physiology of equity. And it has to do with our students have a window of tolerance. The window of tolerance is a concept by Daniel Siegel. He works at UCLA medical school. He's an expert on the prefrontal lobes. And there's this concept called the window of tolerance. And when you're in the window of tolerance, you learn, you can learn, you can function in life. Things go well. But if something happens that triggers you, you go into either hyper arousal, which is fight, or are you go into hyper arousal which is freeze and appease or fight or flight. And then the other one is freeze and appease. And I'm sure you've heard these terms before. Well, what happens is that when you are triggered and you go into one of those areas, your cortex shuts down. So what do we focus on in college? The cortex. I mean, that's like the most important organ of the body. And for a college faculty member, you want to really fix that and work on it and help them learn through their cortex. But guess what? When they're triggered, they shut down. Well, what's wrong is that the culture of higher education triggers. It triggers not only us as students, us as faculty, us as staff people while we're working there. It triggers our students, and it triggers our students in such a way that they can't learn in the classroom. And then they decide, well, my brain's not working. I don't belong here, which is not correct at all. So I go into theory, and I start to lay out why this thing is happening with our students, and what do we do to alleviate that. So faculty start to go, whoa, I need to change. And I want to learn how to do this. So the third thing I do, and this is something, you know, I've been doing this research for about ten years, and then Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching started to do their research project on it in 2009. I was doing it for about seven years, and then they started doing and I was on their advisory board, and they came up with this thing called productive persistence, which is kind of work that I've been doing. It's non-cognitive, it's affective. It's in a group of students building community and building that belonging. Well, what they realized and what I knew from our work, because we'd been teaching faculty since 2006, is that you have to create an experience for faculty to go through for them to experience experiential education and affective learning, because that's not what they had when they went through college. So they have no role models work. So you need to take them to the third piece. And that's the experience of it. And I think you do it. So you do experiential learning because you're [Al] taking them through projects that they're working on together. And then you work with them as they start to learn what they're doing now. Well, what I do like, for example, one of the things we start with in the first day or so, two days is I teach them to see the styles of other people. They're called working styles. I learned about this when I was at Hewlett-Packard. I worked in HP labs. Okay. High tech companies have their own universities and they have their own universities. And in their universities, they teach you about the working styles of other people because they want people to be productive. They want people to feel safe. They want people to understand what the strengths are of one another. So they teach this stuff, especially as you go up in management. So what I do is I take that work and I turn it on its head. I teach the people in the classroom to see the styles of other people, because I don't think you're going to give assessments to everybody and understand them that way. You need to see it. So I do it through movies. I have outside speakers come in, so then they're going, oh, that's oh, I see that style. There's four styles that they look at. Everybody has all four of them. But you have higher intensities of 1 or 2 or maybe a third one. Okay. And so can you see those 1 or 2 in people. Because once you understand which ones they're high in, you know what their strengths are and you know what their challenges are and you can start working with them. You know, where they fit in a project process. And my graduate work was in self-managed work teams and teams go through four phases. And guess what? Each of those styles fits one of the phases. So you can really contribute very strongly in at least one phase of a project. So if you can see the style of other people, you become a natural leader. So that's why our students learn this and why we've had salary studies that show our students are really effective. But with faculty, the reason why I teach it to them, they start seeing the styles of other people. Then I have them take the rubric they've been using to learn, and I have them play it to themselves. Who are you? So then they take that same rubric and they create a spider diagram. And before they came in, they took an assessment that actually was their style. And I overlay them on each other because what I find is 80% of faculty don't know their styles. Not only do they not see the styles of the pupils to see their strengths, they don't even know themselves. Okay. And so then when that happens, all things change. Because now people, who am I? Am I really this way? Am I that way? And and then you've got the flexibility now for learning deep learning to happen. So that's one of the things that I do to help bring that about.

**AS** [00:18:23] I just love your approach, Diego, because it moves equity yellow lighters to green. And I know that it moves some red to yellow and or maybe they jump over right, right over to green. The irony, though, I think, is I've seen especially community colleges bring in some PD people. And they actually end up doing the very things to faculty that we shouldn't do with the students. They trigger them. They make them go through fight or flight, and they just shame, they shame people, and it's just not a good approach. You can be all unapologetic as you want, but don't be unapologetically unproductive and don't move people. So I just love your approach because it also speaks to foundational research. And something that I've been talking about writing about for a while is that it's so critical to move people, to move faculty from external attributions, meaning just blaming students to everything else, and shifting that to internal attributions to who am I and how can I continually improve my craft? And you help faculty, you help people move from that external to internal. I do it as well. Just a little different. I do it through projects that faculty work on. So you talked about marginalized students. Many people ask this, and I'm wondering your response. Because they do have a persistence in them, right? They have, I think you called it a PhD. in, what is it, in persistence, Diego? Is that how you call the PhD?

**Diego Navarro** [00:20:16] Persistence in social injustice?

**AS** [00:20:19] Yes. So why do our marginalized students have a hard time completing, college, given that they have this PhD? And what is the role as educators to help marginalized students thrive at our colleges?

**Diego Navarro** [00:20:35] Those are really good questions, Al. And before I jump into it, you had you mentioned these professional development things that happen on campus and people get triggered, and if we talk about the window of tolerance, there's theory behind this, there's science behind this is that when you trigger people, their cortex is shut down. So do you want people to learn or do you want them to just react? Okay. And so if you create an environment where it's threat, threat means the amygdala searching for threat because once it sees that it goes in fight, flight, freeze, appease. So you created a culture, an environment of threat. People are going to be they're just going to be heightened and they're going to be defensive. Okay. So what you have to do is you have to create a culture of healing or a culture of dignity, or what I like to call a culture of love. You have to open people's hearts. That's where the change really happens, because as you open people's hearts and they feel safe, they can learn at an accelerated way in at a deeper, like what they call deeper learning. So we're shooting ourselves in the foot whenever we're creating these threatening environments. It's really out of love and caring. However, we are all educated in higher education. And what's your experience of higher education? Well, I'm going to disagree with you. I'm going to defend my position and use all the logic skills I learned and all of the ways of being able to debate one another. I mean, all those types of skills. That's not where learning happens. Learning happens when the heart is connected and when you really are, you know, feeling that deep sense of healing inside of yourself.

**Diego Navarro** [00:22:10] So your question why do marginalized students not stick? I think there's two core issues, and one of them is that the conditions inside oneself which are needed for learning, this is what we've been talking about. What are the conditions you need for learning? You don't want to trigger people, okay. What are the conditions you need for learning? Well. Not only for learning, but for reading and for writing and for listening and for participating and reflecting, requires calmness and focus. These are contemplative skills. Students are not able to learn when they're in the grips of the sympathetic nervous system response of the amygdala to fight flight, freeze and appease because it shuts down physiologically the cortex. So these conditions inside oneself that they need for learning and reading and stuff are more contemplative. They're slowed down. The adrenaline that people usually have in their lives need to shift, that needs to shift. They need to learn to harness their parasympathetic nervous system, the one that allows them the calm. It's what's the vagus nerve. There's the vagus nerve theory. It's the nerve that goes up to your brain that gives feedback, that slows and counteracts the amygdala and the sympathetic nervous system. Those are the types of skills we need to help our students learn today. And the reason for it is that the culture of the United States, and especially marginalized students that are on the streets because you're having to watch your back, things aren't safe. I mean, in Watsonville, my students will talk about they'd be on the streets. There'd be people mad dogging them. Mad doging is that are staring at you. And if you see somebody staring at you, you need to move away because some confrontation is going to happen. And so there's different things you pick up on. You embody, you can feel in your body what's going on. And so not only that, there's threatening environments. The culture of the United States is training the sympathetic nervous system. We complain about stress, but we worship at the temple of stress. Our news is designed to activate us. I mean, how many of us have listened to things on the presidential election? Or we're just, oh my God. The social media algorithms are designed to heighten our outrage. We've trained ourselves, we've trained our students in the way that they've gone through education and our society. That isn't that contemplative part that we're talking about, where learning takes place and reading takes place, you know, so it's a slowing down. We believe that I can't be productive unless I'm pumped up on adrenaline. I drink more coffee. You know that. That's not the lifestyle of somebody that's going to be good in academia. Once you make the transition. So there's a belief that productivity equals being in this heightened adrenaline rush. But it's the reason most people are burnt out, at our colleges too. Students need to learn how to access the parasympathetic nervous system, that extremely relaxed state, so they can rebuild themselves so they can catch themselves when they're in the adrenaline flow or when they're in the amygdala control and bring themselves out of that. So they get their cortex back functioning again. And there are many practices that help this and we do them. So for example, at the beginning of every class, we do a 2 to 4 minute breathing or focusing exercise with them. There's different types of ones you can do with them. It's not all breath, it's not all meditative. There's different ones you can do. But what we're doing is we're reprograming the prefrontal lobes, which is the research that Daniel Siegel has been doing. And you can do it through these practices. Just think out if in every class you took at your college. Every faculty member started their class for 2 to 4 minutes. Doing something like that. You're going to rewire your students brains. It's scientific fact. Okay, so we need to learn to actually create the environment for our students so that they can be functioning. So that was the first issue. The second issue is that there's a connection between trauma resilience and co regulation that we really need to understand, especially coming out of the Covid pandemic. We really need to understand that piece of it. You know what we've found is that in the classroom, the faculty have to become embodied because the cultures that are our black and brown students come from or our cultures of connection. Their cultures of relation. And most of the white culture isn't that way. We're individualistic. Okay. And especially in academia, we do most stuff individually. So we need to learn to be embodied because our students can sense what's going on around them. Had to learn those skills to survive on the streets. Okay. And also we need coregulation here. Coregulation is when for example a mother and a baby when they're born their first number of months they don't know how to regulate. That's not something that's built into you. It's your parent usually your mother that becomes the one that helps you learn to coregulate by, for example, a child comes in a room crying. So grandmother will put them in their arms and hum to them. You sense the grandmother humming to them. Well, that humming is a vibratory thing, and it actually connects the vagus nerve and stimulates the vagus nerve in the child that's next to them. Okay. So there's these different ways of coregulating. What I'm finding is that faculty have to coregulate with their students. Not that you're going to grab your student and you're going to hum to them because that's not realistic at all. Okay. But what's going to happen is that there's this conundrum. And the conundrum is that higher education is a dysregulated environment. I remember I was visiting Stanford. Somebody that was running the School of Education there. One of the programs there. And he told me, he said, Diego, if I roll this bowling ball down the quad. 90% of the people it hits will be dysregulated. Know they're going to be disconnected. They're not going to be embodied because all we really care about is from the shoulders up. You know, embodiment wasn't an important thing to them. And so what we have going on in higher education is we have the need in the antidote for our students as a faculty state of being that's regulated, a faculty state of being that's embodied. Now, I'm talking about marginalized students in their first semester, first two semesters. I mean, later on the second year, I mean, they're going to go to academia. They're going to face all kinds of people that are not very nice, you know, and we'll do things that are not appropriate, but they have to learn to make it in that environment. But to make it in our environment, we have to have them help them transition. Okay. And so, we have to learn to be in a regulated state ourselves and become antidotes for our students. But, you know, we come into classrooms and many of us are dysregulated because of a department meeting. We just came out of an interaction with the faculty or an administrator, and we come in disregulated into our classrooms. We have to start to become more conscious and create cultures of healing and cultures of connection that allow that to happen. Because one of the key questions is this what is the table we're inviting our students to in our interactions, in our teaching, in the classroom? Because life is annoying. Life is frustrating. We all know that. But we can't avoid being annoyed or frustrated. But we can avoid having the the affect, have that not affect our students learning. So we have a choice where we're vectors of a contagion, this contagion of dysregulation. We're sending out messages without knowing it or intending it. And the choice is to put out there calmness or happiness. The choice is to be regulated or dysregulated, not only for our students, but for our children and others that are around us. So how do we carry that responsibility? And remember, we can change the nervous system state of those around us by our our own becoming conscious versus becoming conscious of what's going on in us. Because what waters grows, what gets watered, grows, and the neuroplasticity of our brains allows for change. So what we use lays and thickens neural pathways. You learn to become regulated and that's what becomes your normal. But being super regulated where you're regulated all the time. That's not you know, that's not critical. You just need a critical mass of regulation in yourself so that you know when you're dysregulated and bring yourself back. And that's what our students really need. So it's like changing the culture of the academy. So that can happen because much of it is dysregulated. It's not embodied. The politics, the power struggles, you know, the tenure process being adjunct. You know, we have a lot of things that create that dysregulation. And what our students need is to be inspired by what they already know and to bring that into the classroom using their strengths.

**AS** [00:31:04] Thank you. Diego. So you mentioned inspire, and you also referenced, a model developed by Columbia University's Teachers College, the Community College Research Center. ACIP stands for Ask, Connect, Inspire and Plan, developed by Dr. Davis Jenkins and the crew. And we've had, some input into that. By the way, I'd like to give, kudos to Dr Davis Jenkins, because it's hard for me to think of a researcher that's had such a positive impact at institutions that have the highest, disproportionately impacted students and most number of students of color. His research is, his approach to just telling people what it is, what's happening at our colleges, why we need to improve, and providing some suggestions has really made a significant positive impact throughout the country. Developmental ed reform is a good example. It's always been a cornerstone of Guided Pathways, and he's been a big proponent of that. So I appreciate his work. He doesn't come into a college at $95,000 for three workshops and six hours of technical assistance, only to move yellow equity leaders to red or keep them at yellow. That's so unproductive. I mean, if the goal is to, keep the green and get on excited, that's one thing, but we already have them. We need to move the yellow to green. So anyway, the ACIP model, specifically the Inspire part, Diego. So, tell us more about inspire. How long does it take to transform them through your approach? What are examples of specific tools and activities? If you can, please unpack that.

**Diego Navarro** [00:33:05] So, Al, as you know, both of us worked with with Davis and his team on developing the onboarding ACIP model, years ago. And Davis and I met back in 2008, actually, we met back in 2003. I was interviewing people around the country, and he was actually at the University of Illinois at that time in Chicago. But when he moved to Columbia University, we needed an evaluation of our program for the Irvine Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation. And so Davis brought his team in, and and he was the principal investigator studying my program. It was back in 2008. This is where they found that our program had a 132% difference in the control group, and that was, it blew them away like back then, 8%, everybody salivated over. So Davis said. And he came out, watch me teach, watch what we did with the students and stuff. And so he says, you know, I'm one person that really understands this inspire, I understand this inspire. And so I want to talk about inspire from the ACIP model perspective, how do we onboard students and how do we inspire them. Because there are three ways I'm noticing how inspire is being implemented. One is the domain of faculty, where it's around their academic subject and the content that they teach and the delivery of it. You know, where they focus on the subject and they get the students stimulated intellectually. We do syllabus design redesign so that you make sure it's syllabus doesn't trigger people and that it represents the students ethnicity and culture that's being, that are in your classroom. You do slide reviews and you're looking at the slides to make sure they're representative. And your examples that you use throughout the class, because you want consistency between the students served and the text and the environment that you show in terms of the content of your work and around the text, you know, much of the text that's used a lot is primarily of white European. Many times men, their work, where there's a lot of people of color that have done excellent research and found the same things, but that's not brought in in certain environment. So how do you do that? So you can meet the needs and, of the students so that they can see themselves as learners because there are people like them that are in that environment. So that's one way that that inspires in the classroom. And I can give you an example of a history teacher at my college, who's highly ranked and history has taught lecture, you know, and sorry, lecturing. And I sat in his class because we each sat in each other's classes just to see how we all do things. And he would be lecturing and he would walk out the door while he's lecturing and the students be watching him. They pick his head and keep on talking. And he had ways of keeping the students engaged in the lecture stuff that he did, you know. And so engagement a lot is around this intellectual stimulation. How do you get them really interested in the topic I really care about? And I fell in love with and I did my PhD or my master's degree. And so that's one of the foci. Another one is more external to the classroom, and it's a domain of student support services. So they do clubs, they do wraparound services. You know the case management that's done. An EOP is a great example of that. They do really good work with very good outcomes. So you have this external way of inspiring students building community and other things like that sometimes. And the orientation will do that in the orientations of problematic thing because, you know, if you go to a, a prestigious college and my daughter went to an undergraduate, one like that, after transferring from Cabrillo College, where she went for two years, which is really great. But you transfer this college and you know how long their onboarding was? Two weeks. Two weeks. Because they knew that the change students that are coming in as freshmen or my daughter's case as a junior, that their life was going to change dramatically. And that school was very, very much a big change in their life. So they invested that into their students. They knew that's what it was going to take, and they built community, and they were able to create that level of belonging that students had with one another. Well, you know, our colleges, they may do a one hour or a two hour orientation, but many of them, I think, probably still does. It is an online orientation. You know, so the thing that these colleges know is that you've got to do something to really deeply build the capacity of your students. And so that's one way to do it, is through student support services outside the classroom. The third way to do it that I'll be talking about is it's in the classroom and it's the domain of faculty. It's whenever a classroom you get a group of students together. It's the domain of that teacher that's involved in that environment, okay. And it's the environment we create in the classroom for learning what I call a container and what we center on to create inspiration, to create that inspire. We center on embodiment. We center on belonging. We're centering on building psychological safety in the classroom. And we're also centering on deepening community. Deepening community building. Because you do those four things. You will create an environment of transformation. And our focus is on the relational. And so how our students experience, college is related to the is related to what they experience in themselves. So your college feels inviting when they feel invited into it. And usually our students come from cultures that are connected cultures. They connect together. And so what we need to do is figure out how to do that. And that's what a lot of my work is about, is teaching faculty and staff how to do that. So relating to the students experience to the course content through the on site inside out model, which we where you bring their knowledge, their experience and their strengths from the inside out. So how do you design learning like discovery based learning. So they're discovering and bringing out what they've learned. And we've developed strategies for students to learn about each other while getting to know them themselves within the context of the academic subject. So we have a number of techniques and tools for doing that. We help them share a piece of themselves and their experience of life as it relates to the subject. So you learn how to take your subject, and you meld it into bringing the students life into the subject. And for example, in NSF, we we've been funded by NSF, I think for probably 12 years before I left Cabrillo. What happened? So I had my first NSF program there, which went on for about eight years. But in the middle of it, myself and some of our science faculty started to look around, and we saw that at the Watsonville School high schools, if you're a second language learner and you were struggling, they took you out of your science courses and you went into more remedial English in order to pass English and graduate. But they graduated without any science. And we felt that was a social justice issue. We lived near Silicon Valley. Science was an important skill set. So we developed the program proposed at the NSF. It was based on the ACE model of how we been working and had really good results. And so then they funded us to do this. And what we did was we accelerated students in physics, chemistry and biology in one semester to college level. And we did it in a in teaching those three subjects. But it was integrated in looking at the heart from a chemical perspective, from a physics and energy perspective, and from a biological perspective. And we had a lab, and the lab was focused on social justice issues that they could do labs around that would learn and and embed the learnings from their chemistry, their biology and their physics. So what you can do is that you can take in the environment and make it an inside out model. So the students are learning and taking things that are important to them and bringing it into the classroom. And so students from marginalized communities, you know, they come from this culture of connection, as I said, communities that value and sense of belonging. We're in this together, and they're connecting to the whole selves. That's how we bring them into our programs. They connect with themselves and with other students. They can sense you a lot of the term that's used. I feel you and I can feel where you're at because if you're embodied, that's what you feel. You can feel and sense what's going on in others. And many of us have that skill. I mean, if you're in a room with somebody that's very angry. Do you notice it? Yeah. You can sense that energy. That's what I'm talking about. But you can become more subtly sensitized to it. So when I think of inspire and I'll just say two more things, is what I think of inspire. I think about how to create that experience for students, where their hearts open, where they let their hair down. You know, we build a community in the classroom where students have a deep sense of belonging. They experience themselves softening, where they feel the safety to just let their hair down and gently speak from their hearts. You know, that's deepening each other's experience. And I find that they actually start to soften. So, for example, in one of my cohorts, I had a young man who was the enforcer in a gang, and he just came out of prison, and the enforcer creates the discipline. And he just came out of prison. He was in class with a very gentle soul, really interesting young man. And, we were doing this one activity on the first day. What do you need for learning? What didn't you not get? Okay. And so they're looking at what did you need for learning that you didn't get from your family, that you didn't get from school? And what did you need for learning that you didn't get from other students? Because what do you what do you need for learning? What actually helped you learn? And so then we started brainstorming on the board. And of course, there's students that are very privileged in that, some that are less privileged in terms of their parents attention on learning and taking care of them, providing them with a desk in a room and quiet and stuff. And other students had different environments like this individual. And so we're in the middle of that thing, and people are what we did was they have them write ten things you need for learning. You didn't get ten things that you that you needed for learning, that you got. And then we brainstormed them on the board. As I'm writing on the board, I turn around. For some reason, I see him, yes, tears coming down his eyes. This is the enforcer has tears coming down his eyes after class. You know, I said, how are you doing? He said, fine, but what's going on during that exercise? He said, I started to realize I didn't have really what I needed to be effective in education and in my life. I didn't have that. And it just touched his heart. So I think that what we need to do in the creation of an environment for our students to inspire, is to create a culture of love. This is built on belonging, a pedagogy of belonging, which is built on psychological safety. And the other thing we did is we we contextualize the curriculum for our students, and we do it through social justice type themes and the way that we do it, because social justice creates energy in students. You find something that doesn't work in their lives for their family, their, their community, and it just they get heightened from it, which is a good thing. You want energy. So what we do is we brainstorm, what are the things that bother you and your life, your your own personal life, your friends, your family, because that's where you start to get the social justice issues. We brainstorm them on the board and I tell pick one that you really care about. Now go out and get a newspaper article or not a newspaper. Go on the web and find an article. Bring it to class, next class. This exercise takes about ten minutes to do over three classes. And so what we do is that the second class, they come in, they share with each other their article a little bit of it. We have brainstorm again. They brainstorm. And then what I do is I start to cluster the ideas. Then we say, what are your top three? And prioritize them. Now we get that list. And there's two ways we use the list. One way is that faculty now have a list of the prioritized topics that students care about. Now they can take their curriculum and their subjects, and now contextualize them to those topics because they now know what's important to their students. And that's what we did in the NSF project are both NSF projects, but the one in particular on science that allowed us to really get at the science issues. The other thing that we did we do with that clustering is that we put them in teams, teams around issues that similar students have, and we put them in teams of five or 4 to 8 students. And we work on a social justice project over 13 weeks, and we create those teams, and we use a discovery based practice to create the experiences of them, and they build community just like you do, Al, and your project based team with faculty. Well, we do that in the classroom of students.

**AS** [00:46:00] Thank you. Again, I always appreciate your insights because you're your a teacher's teacher. You're a practitioner at heart. Theory can only get you so far. It gives you your why. Maybe sometimes the what, but it doesn't give you the how. And you have decades of experience with the how. And speaking of the how, I want to make sure that our listeners know that you created a wonderful resource and I'll have that in the show notes. In partnership with the RP Group, one of the most, one of my most favorite groups, organizations. If people don't know, The RP Group, they are a nonprofit arm of the California Community Colleges. They do the a lot of the research and planning. A wonderful organization have done a lot of work with their quality people and quality work. When they do research, they actually do rigorous research, like they go out and actually talk to people. They do interviews and focus groups. And you might be thinking, well, what do you mean? Of course, that's the way it's supposed to be done. Well, you know, recently I've seen some really interesting so-called research where people count words on compliance documents and then make huge assumptions about practitioners based on that word counting, for example, racial equity terminology. And we're supposed to really understand the discourse that's happening at a campus by counting words. And then these documents are then use actually for bullying and for keeping yellow lighters yellow. All the things that I've been seeing lately is such, such a shame. But the RP Group is quality and I want to make sure to highlight, and I'll have a link in the website, on the show notes, it's called Using Student Support Redefined Success Factors to Ensure Student <earning. And it's about the Guided Pathways, pillar number four, which is much about the inspire that you've been talking about. And you created it along with, Kathy Malloy, who was a long time faculty at Santa Barbara City College. And I encourage everyone to please check out this wonderful resource because, a lot of what you discussed is in there for people to unpack and try to implement. As we begin to wrap up here, Diego, one of the things I wanted to ask you about is what do you see as the resistance mindset, among faculty, given your work?

**Diego Navarro** [00:48:34] Well, researchers have shown that academic., before I go into this, the RP Group is a great organization, wonderful people, very skilled. And they did a six year longitudinal study of our program that was released in 2018. And they did research like you're talking about. Not only did they interview 400 students, and find out what they learned and some of the students hadn't been in the program for 15 years. And they still remembered, because when you do these affective experiential type activities, it sticks inside of students. It's deep learning. Not only they did that, but they also did a salary study, quantitative salary study, as well as an academic outcomes study of 1800, you know, 2800 students is. So they did really good research there, and I'm very thankful for them. And I'm also thankful, thankful for Kathy Malloy, the time, the fun time we had together putting together that our group brief.

**Diego Navarro** [00:49:30] So what do I see is the resistance? Well, you know, researchers have shown that academic salary and psychological outcomes of marginalized students can be replicated through faculty professional development training. The kind of training you and I talk about, where it's not you're not turning people off and having them go into fight, flight kind of response, but you're actually opening their hearts and they're learning and they're sharing with each other and they're starting to change. Okay. So which is not necessarily higher education like stop fighting stuff, you know. And I think that's not what we need for learning, especially in the community college. Our students are different. They're different than students that go into Stanford. You know they're different okay. And so we need to build our culture to meet their needs. But what they're finding is that the outcomes, both academic salary and psychological of marginalized students, can be replicated through faculty development, and it's done through affective and experiential onboarding. These are the studies that we've done. However, even in the significant evidence, there's resistance to change. And you and I both have seen that. Davis invited me to to do a keynote with him, for the Tennessee Board of Regents. And at the end of the keynote is question and answers. And so somebody sends in this question, let me read it to you. And this is really representative of of what I see of the yellow lighters. And so maybe a red light or two. "Do students eventually progress out of the need to be coaxed to belonging in every new environment?" Let me read that again. "Do students eventually progress out of the need to be coaxed to belonging in every new environment. How do we build independence and self-management? So they're successful in the real world that they will hopefully join when they graduate, which is not warm and fuzzy?" Yes, you can already you can sense and this is kind of a mindset with tough love. You know we got to fight for things. You know it's like a it's a different type of mindset. And so you know what we've learned in the 20 years of research with marginalized students. And we're talking about 132% difference when 8% people salivated over. We're talking about huge differences, and we've been able to scale it and get the same results. And in math, we were able to do it like 300% difference. It's because of the environment you're creating. It's that third leg of inspire that I talked about. What we've learned in this 20 years of research with marginalized students is that if you create the right learning environment within the first few weeks of the first semester, they make the change to independence and self-management. We found that college educators need to understand that our goal is to help marginalized students by taking their strengths of persistence and problem solving, and overcoming adversity and protecting each other. I have your back and their hard earned PhDs in social injustice, and help them apply these strengths to their educational goals. You know, this liberatory approach creates independence, not dependency. Like that faculty member was concerned about, and we have psychological research done as well, where we've looked at psychological constructs and factors. And how fast can you change those? And we were looking at eight factors that correlate with academic success, like academic self-efficacy or college identity mindfulness. And we found that we could shift seven of the eight factors in that one week onboarding experience. And not only did they find that, they found that four months later, all but two of those eight factors either stayed the same or got better. And now we have six year longitudinal studies that show it had a huge effect on these students. That lasted much longer. Actually, their salaries are higher, you know, at significantly higher. For example, we did a study of nursing students and you know what they found? They found a $40,000 median salary difference between the control group and the nursing students out of the Hartnell program, 499 students, where they switched the whole program over. There was no selection bias in this one. So the beautiful thing is that by designing an effective onboarding experience, and that's what we did in the Hartnell nursing program, students begin to love college, and you build both gravity and glue, which counteracts the centrifugal force of our students lives that pull them away from completing. Got to build that gravity and that glue to have them stick. And you know what? Faculty love to teach in this way because they see the changes before their own eyes. This gravity and glue can be centered within the pathways you've created. You can do onboarding into your pathways. Because what we do fundamentally is we help students develop a multifaceted sense of self. They develop self-awareness, self-identity, self, discovering their self, determining, self-efficacy, self-disciplined, self organizing, and self-regulating. They have self leadership, and ultimately they believe in themselves and they make it through. And we've got longitudinal data that shows that and shows them in their careers as well.

**AS** [00:54:25] Yes. You know, after college life in general, whether you work in the corporate sector, that could be shitty. Heck, the nonprofit sector can be shitty and we know the government sector is shitty, can be shitty. So it doesn't mean we have to make the college experience shitty. Let's make it a good experience. Let's give them the foundation. Let's give them that. That love, that kindness, not only to students, but to our faculty. We've had too much of a student deficit mindset, and this is a lot of my work is to shift that. But at the same time, I don't have a faculty deficit mindset because I know that they were taught very antiquated practices in graduate school, and depending on the community that that they were brought up in. Right. So our institutions are places of learning, not just for students, but for us. What are the conditions that we're going to create for that learning, for that love and that kindness, so that we can gradually move more and more and more yellow lights to green and give the green lighters even more resources, even more tools to do a great job. And over time, move those red lighters right. The last thing I wanted to ask you here, as we wrap up, is what are you up to these days, Diego? You got anything you'd like to share? And then we'll, be on our way.

**Diego Navarro** [00:55:46] Well, thank you for this opportunity to mention what I'm up to these days. You know, because we've been developing these tools since 2002, and we've been doing faculty training since 2006. And what we've been doing the last number of years is we've been facilitating dialogs at colleges. So I've been working with a number of colleges. I've been working with Cal State Universities as well to facilitate dialogs, inquiry dialogs with faculty, staff and administrators about how do you instill a culture of dignity. And we do it online. It's an online workshop and it's a three workshop series that we do. And once we do that, because that's sort of a prerequisite for the second one. But what we're looking in that one is deconstructing the threat culture of higher education, because we what we have to do is, as we come from higher ed and join community college community, we have to change the way that we we work. We can't work the way of higher education because it's not working for our students. And as you were saying, we need it for each other. We need to create that culture of caring with ourselves. That then bleeds over to the students as well. So that first workshop focuses on that. And then the second workshop is for faculty only and or anybody that teaches groups of students. So sometimes student support services will have orientation people say they come into. And what I do is I teach them six concepts, giving them a number of activities that are in a Google Drive that they can have access to, that let those concepts out. I think about 25-30 activities they can incorporate in their classroom. It's written up. We've been funded by a lot of foundations, so we have written instructions for every one of those. It says how much time it takes, within what period of time, where would you do it, which ones are first, which ones are second. But what we're doing is we're helping faculty learn to create gravity and glue in their classrooms so their marginalized students stick. Because that third way of doing inspire is not typically done. And so you need to learn how it's done. And then from there, what we do is we model it for them by having go in the five day Experiential Learning Institute, make use of that experience, and then those that come out of that now facilitate those dialogs after college. And so now we're scaling it at several colleges, where they're facilitating both the Culture of Dignity workshop series, Instilling a Culture of Dignity and the Gravity and Glue Workshop series for their faculty. And we're working with the largest, adult ed continuing education program in the country, you know, San Diego College of Continuing Education and working with a college in upstate New York. And we're working colleges in different states, several colleges here and in California. And we're doing a train the trainer model, I believe, in scaling up things. And so what we're doing is we're changing the culture of colleges by facilitating dialogs between faculty and staff and administrators that go deep, their hearts open, they connect with one another because we do a set up for each of the areas of the workshop and sharing some deep theories and what needs to take place, and what's stopping our marginalized students for being from being successful. And then we have people share with each other in these small groups what they do, what they need to change, what needs to change in the college. And as you have that kind of dialog with each other, the glue happens. And what I'm happy what we're finding is that faculty and staff, they're connecting afterwards. Like now they have communities that are interested. So we have community of practice that we do now to bring forward what they're learning and how do they instill it in the college.

**AS** [00:59:27] And I'm happy to learn that many of these colleges found you as a result of the first podcast. So what I hope is that after the second one, that more reach out to you because you are unapologetically productive. You are unapologetically practical. You help colleges get results. I do it in my own way. It takes a little longer, what I do. But love what you do. I never see it as competition. I always lift my colleagues who can do really good work. And I'm just so happy you worked at so many of these colleges that I've actually worked at, too. So, it always warms my heart when colleges reach out to you because you are so effective at what you do. So thanks again, Diego, for participating in the Student Success Podcast.

**Diego Navarro** [01:00:23] Well, thank you, Al. I very much appreciate it. And it was fun seeing you over at Cal State LA after we did the PD there, and that you were able to see what you introduced me to. And you've introduced me to a number of colleges and thank you, I, I honor that and I honor your work. You're doing really good work around kindness and helping colleges learn that because that's really critical.

**AS** [01:00:46] Thank you for listening to the Student Success Podcast. Each episode has shownotes, which include helpful links and necessary follow up information to help you get results. Please consider subscribing to the Continuous Learning Institute website. There are no advertisements. It simply updates about articles, tools, resources, podcasts, etc. all tailored for you to practitioner. Thank you.