**Dr. Gina Garcia Interview**Increase student success and equity by implementing and measuring “servingness.”

**AS** [00:00:00] For today's podcast, it's a pleasure to have Dr. Gina Ann Garcia, associate professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, Organizations and Policy at the University of Pittsburgh, where she teaches master's and doctoral students pursuing degrees in higher education and student affairs. Her research centers on issues of equity and justice in higher education, with an emphasis on three core areas: Hispanic Serving Institutions, Latinx college students, and race and racism in higher education. Dr. Garcia is the author of Becoming Hispanic Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities for which she won the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Ed Book of the Year award. She recently edited the book, Hispanic Serving Institutions and Practice: Defining "Servingness." Dr. Garcia was a Title V retention coordinator at California State University, Fullerton. She also held a position funded by a National Science Foundation grant working with community college transfer students who wanted to major in science and math. She graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, with a Ph.D. in higher education and organizational change. Welcome to the Student Success podcast, Gina.

**Gina Garcia** [00:01:14] Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

**AS** [00:01:17] It's so great to have you. Over a year ago, you were so kind to do a Q&A with me that was very popular. I put it in my blog, so I want to thank you for that. And it's so nice to talk with you today. Thank you for for taking the time. Before we get started with questions, something I'd like to do with guests, is to ask them something beyond their work, any kind of passions that they might have or hobbies or superpowers? Is there anything that you would like to share?

**Gina Garcia** [00:01:47] Yes, I think most of the people who follow me on social media know that I am a huge fitness fanatic. That's probably my biggest passion besides my kids. I like spending time with my kids, but fitness keeps me centered. I take a break every day at 12 o'clock and work out. It's been able to keep me grounded and also healthy and emotionally, mentally, physically well. So, yeah, fitness for me is kind of like the core. It keeps me going, refreshes my mind. It's good for me, obviously my body, but really is like the driver of everything else that I do. So yeah, that's definitely my big passion.

**AS** [00:02:39] So, in social media, I actually saw you mid-air and you were doing a Burpee or something. Do you also, I don't know if I misread it, also teach classes?

**Gina Garcia** [00:02:50] I teach classes. Yeah, I'm a fitness instructor. I've been a fitness instructor since 2003. So coming up on 20 years, 18 years as a fitness instructor. So it's always been a part of like my core, even before I was the mom was a fitness instructor. So and that all just kind of ties in to everything else. So, yep. burpees are my favorite. Fight me. Go ahead, everybody. Everybody hates them except me.

**AS** [00:03:18] Thank you for that. I grew up in New York City and my mom, in order to keep me off the streets, was a typical single parent, very low income situation. But she worked really hard to put me at the local karate school. I started and stuck with it and I started teaching to this stage. That teaching that I did at the school really helped inform my teaching for later on the way I treat students, the way I scaffold things for them, the way I really think about my lesson plan, so to speak, before I even teach. And then once I teach, looking at how they're performing and as they're performing, making adjustments for them. Do you find because you've been doing fitness, teaching fitness for a long time, that has informed your teaching at the university?

**Gina Garcia** [00:04:14] It's funny you ask that, because I actually the very first teaching statement that I, teach in statements when you're applying for faculty jobs, the very first teaching statement I ever wrote was actually wrapped around pedagogy of teaching fitness and how it really had informed my pedagogy. Right. Like in many ways. And I've been teaching a lot of like "HIT," the high intensity interval training, which is very short bursts of work, but like intense and super effective. And a couple of colleagues and I have been who are also faculty members who take my classes. We've been talking about writing about that. Right. Like how do you incorporate that sort of, same sort of concept into like course development? I like how can we get the most bang for our buck in like short bursts, get as much as we can in the same way that we do here, training, so hopefully that's to come. That's on our bucket list. Cool kind of side thing to do. But yeah, absolutely. It informs because it's pedagogy. It's just a different kind of content that I'm teaching.

**AS** [00:05:17] I love that. I'm going to be the first one to read that. Cool. One of the things that I really appreciated about your first book is that you outlined six recommendations for educators and then you had to follow up on this, institutions in practice. And given that this is a student success podcast and really the vast majority of the audience are practitioners, I was wondering if you can unpack anything from from an implementation perspective.

**Gina Garcia** [00:05:53] As I think back on the on the six recommendations for practice in the book. So as a researcher, I am very particular about making recommendations based on the data. Like I, and when I evaluate manuscripts to be published for publication through the journal review process, I always want that book implications for practice to come right from the start. Right. Because often we kind of just go off and start saying whatever we want and I say we because I do it too, like just throwing in the whole kitchen saying like do this, do that. And the reality is, we make, when we when we make recommendations or talk about implications for practice from the research, it should come straight from the research. So as I think back to those those six recommendations, I was very careful to attach them to the narrative right there, six and two from each chapter, the empirical chapters, those recommendations stick. But they weren't in any way exhaustive because they were so aligned with the data and with that particular study, it was contextual right there. There is a lot to think about as far as like research on the limitations of research, or we can only make recommendations based on what we saw, what we're seeing. So I would say for sure those recommendations stay. But as I move sort of my thinking into even the second book, the edited book that's based on the framework of serving this the servingness framework, it has a long name that even I don't know something about multi multidimensional conceptual framework of service. Don't ask me why we decided that was the name, but that's the name. I'm going to blame Dr. Anne-Marie Nunez because she likes big names like that. She would probably like no, we'll put it multidimensional, put in conceptual, which it is. It's all of those things. But for the most part, people just say "Servingness" this Servingness framework, that that's the important piece of the framework that we proposed. And so as I think about that and how I moved into the second book and why the second book came so quickly after the first book was because it very much aligned it with the framework. Right. Like the chapters that were being written. I said, this is structures, this is indicator's. This is this is structures that lead to the indicators. Right. Like I helped the chapter writers to make those connections. And so if I had to write a recommendations, which I guess I should have recommendations for that book, and I aligned it to everything that was going on in that book, I would talk about how basically in every chapter I was able to find a structure, an indicator like every single chapter that came out. And the chapter authors didn't originally write them that way. They were they were telling their stories are like, I am a Title V director. I'm a Title III director. I'm implementing this. And here's what we're doing. And here's what we found right. Like they just kind of gave us the story, gave me the story. And I got to, as the editor helped them unpack that and also attach it to the theory. I'm like, yes, you're doing all this work. And yes, it actually very much aligns with the with the framework of Servingness. So I think that would be my recommendation has really always been intentional, particularly people who are writing grants. And I do this because I write grants, too, is like, what structurally are we trying to change and how is that going to lead to the outcome? And or if you start with the outcome, what structure do you need to change to actually get the outcome? And I review Title V grants. I've reviewed NSF grants. I've reviewed multiple grant proposals for various programs. And oftentimes people start with like the outcome and the outcome is often the outcome that I say we shouldn't focus primarily on, which is the academic graduation. One hundred fifty percent graduation rate, like everybody wants to increase retention, everybody wants to increase persistence. And I am pulling people back and saying, what if you focused on other, I guess, like, mediator outcomes? Right. Like what are those mediator outcomes? I never call them that until this moment. Mediator outcomes that would lead to retention or graduation graduations. We know the long term outcome. It comes four or five, six, seven years later. Ten years later, it comes much later. What are those mediators along the way besides persistence, besides semester to semester persistence? I'll give you an example. I talk about critical consciousness all the time. I'm like size should be producing critically conscious people, like people who graduate and go on and get jobs. Those are all I love all those things. I want people to graduate and get jobs. I want them to go out and be good, good good citizens or good people. Good community members in the world. Right. And in the United States. But what if they were also critically conscious? And that was something we did, right? That we did. And the university. So critical consciousness development could be one of those mediator outcomes. Right. So when you're writing your grant, you could say an indicator of servingness, which is what we call an indicator of serving, this is critical consciousness development, which is a measurable outcome. You can measure it with the survey. Right. There are surveys. There are multiple scales that have been created, multiples I could if I can name off the top of my head, but I can find them in my computer like I know scales that have been created and validated around critical consciousness. So it's measurable, right. That's something that writers and grant implementors want. They want measurable things. It's measurable. And then there are there is research, a good number of research that says that critical consciousness development will actually be an indicator of long term persistence or graduation. I think about the work that came out of the University of Arizona, Nolan, Dr. Nolan Cabrera and friends, also at UCLA grad, by the way, the research they were doing to show the effectiveness of the Mexican-American studies program in Tucson shows exactly that, right. That like, yeah, they were getting this critical consciousness development, this ethnic identity development and also going on to college, enrolling in college and ultimately graduating from college. Right. Like that. Those were long term outcomes connected to this, like shorter outcomes, that it's connected to ethnic studies and the importance of ethnic studies. So I think that would be my recommendation. Right. So folks pull back and realize there's lots of indicators and lots of ways to measure servingness, that graduation isn't the only way and that we have to believe that there are other indicators along the way that will lead to and then there's evidence to show that research that shows that, but also trust that's the case. Right. That if we're doing an academic educational things, that they're going to lead to academic outcomes. And I don't like the use of nonacademic outcomes in that in the servingness this model anymore, because I feel like all of the things we do in college are academic right there. They're even being involved in student organizations. We know that that is a very academic endeavor. Right. Like being engaged in the community becomes an academic endeavor. Right. So they are academic and they do lead to academic outcomes in the long term. That was a long recommendation and I think they were like about five or six embedded in the recommendation. But I'll stop there.

**AS** [00:12:56] The impact. That's beautiful. As you know, the US Department of Ed and NSF, they often require a logic model as part of the grant. And in fact, I'm a big fan of logic models to help people have a graphical representation of the work so that we can all have this, all have this shared understanding of this picture that we're seeing. And I really love what you say, although we can't often get away with that because the long term outcome of the logic model, because it's a federal grant, we have to have something around retention, graduation and all that stuff. Well, what I love is that in between something needs to happen. What I often find is we need a culture shift, culture change. Attitudes and behaviors need to change in order to effect to have that right. And so what do you do to do that? So I want to show the audience that doesn't know what the critical consciousness of development is. Can you unpack that a little bit more? What is that exactly? And how do we help students ensure from both the classroom and outside the classroom perspective, how can we help them with his development?

**Gina Garcia** [00:14:10] For one, I think we need to push back on the federal government that an outcome like critical consciousness development is a viable academic outcome. Right. Like graduation can't be the only one. So we can talk about that a little bit. But critical consciousness development, like I said, a lot of scholars have been talking about this. It really comes from this idea of liberation, right? This liberatory education, Paulo Freire and sort of perspective, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, that like people who have minority identities or who are oppressed. And Freire, of course, those working with low income income was it was a big driver here in the United States about race a lot. But income is a big one, obviously, within Hispanics or an institution as well. People of color, low income students as high, a high percentage of students are both low income and or students. The critical consciousness is grounded in various dimensions, one is an understanding of socio historic ways in which people have become oppressed. Right. So being aware of your social historical positioning in the world is part of critical consciousness. That's an important piece for us to think that when students arrive in college, they're critically conscious is a false assumption. And because we would have that would assume that the they're their primary and secondary education actually gave them that. And if they did, awesome. But it doesn't. We know a lot of a lot of primary and secondary schools are not teaching critical consciousness development. We're seeing this debate unfold right in front of us about critical race theory and teaching students about their own history with oppression because of and I saw you in your post right about this, that the video that you that you posted about how people are scared. Right. Is scared that if you're too conscious, if people are too conscious, then there's going to be a revolution. Right. That that that we're all going to overturn the government or something because now we're like all conscious. That's this wild fear, right, that black and brown people are going to become critically conscious and start to go wild or something. It's like actually we're not going to go wild at all. We're going to push for greater change. We're going to push for better policy, better outcomes. Right. We want better outcomes. We don't want a revolution. We don't want I mean, maybe we do, but not one where we overthrow everything. Right. And start from the ground up, although debatably that could be a good way to go about this. Let's just start over, because there's a lot to undo. But that's an important piece of critical consciousness, is just understanding historically how you came to be where you are in the world, whatever your minorities' identity is. Why is why are we so afraid of gay people, of of trans people, of trans students? Right. Why are they experiencing oppression and discrimination in our colleges and universities? Well, there's a long history of that. There's a long history. And so understanding that history in order to come to understand your own identity is part of the critical consciousness. So that's one another aspect is is actually wanting to do something about it. Right. So that's an important piece of political consciousness. Development actually is saying, well, now that I'm aware of this historical ways in which me and or people I care about in the world, in society have been oppressed, that I actually want to make a change. Right. That I want to do something about it, that I think there's better and that I'm going to go out and do something right, whatever that something is. There's lots of some things that people can do to go out and try to to push for change and enact change. And we're seeing that happen right now. I love it. I love seeing youth out involved in marches and protest and demanding and starting petitions to make changes like that. It's a beautiful thing, right? That's part of this critical consciousness development. That is what I mean by like what if that was the kind of education that agencies were providing that we were providing an education that allowed people to understand who they are as people of color and or low-income people and or queer people, as non Christian people, as people on various binaries of gender, that they can understand that and also thrive in that. Right, that this idea of liberation means that you could thrive. Right. That you could have access, equal access to resources and and power, despite the fact that the society has oppressed you in various ways. And so that's like this dream, right? I talk about I'm a freedom dreamer, that that could be those spaces of liberation. But I think they could. But I think if we really tried and believe that that was still going to produce what I call those normative outcomes. Right. Doing that and there's evidence of that, there's there's a lot of evidence in particularly in college and development literature that shows that, yeah, people have been spending time grappling with their racial ethnic identity and being engaged in certain organizations that allow them to do that actually leads to greater retention and outcomes. Right. So, again, those mediators, that those mediators we know will lead to greater academic outcomes as opposed to even if we use a very long term normative term of integration of this idea of integration that students need to be integrated. Well, maybe they don't want to be integrated into spaces where they don't feel like they can be themselves. Like I'm saying, even a sense of belonging. I'm like, I don't want us to think about sense of belonging anymore until it's a sense of belonging to a space that is validating and that is liberating versus I don't want to feel a sense of belonging to a space that only allows me to be who I am in certain dimensions that I have to check certain things at the door and other things can come along with me until the space allows students to bring everything that they came to the door with, who wants to be a part of that? Right. Why would we want to measure a sense of belonging when we're only accepting certain aspects of people? And those are those dominant perspectives, really. I mean, language think about language and language is a big one. People that are multilingual or supersmart. Like if you use multiple languages. Yeah. Cognitively, the evidence shows that research shows that you're there's definitely an advanced cognitive level of thinking connected to multilingualism. Yet colleges and universities are like no English only. Check your language at the door. Right. Leave that behind versus saying bring it in and use it right with their speak, with their produce, with it. Like we ask students to leave at the door, despite the fact that it's from a terrible perspective. It's a form of community cultural war. And we should should value that stop their critical consciousness back to the original conversation.

**AS** [00:21:04] That was great. Thank you. I think what you described is that what I want to get into a little bit more of the how, because, as you know, in California, at least, the Cal States and now the community colleges are required to have ethnic studies programs. And that's one avenue. But I saw a post from you that I shared a lot and it was that's insufficient even if you have these. So can you tell us a little bit about the post where you said why that's insufficient and how we can do a better job, the how we're getting into the how or by the way, before you do that, I saw that you were a presenter that the US Department of Education HSI. So you are better positioned than anyone to tell them to change their emphasis and logic models are. Right. So I'm leaving that up to you. So tell us about where you discuss that. Yeah, I think these programs are great, but can you elaborate?

**Gina Garcia** [00:22:01] It was an honor to be invited by the US Department of Education, by the way. And I thought I was actually speaking to folks internal. And it was actually they invited all the grant directors. There was over two hundred people that registered. I was like, why are there so many people? They said they send it out to all the Title V directors. And I saw some of my friends, people I know and work with in the session, which to me is actually I'm often speaking to the people who are are part of the movement. I call those the institutional agents. Right. The people are actually doing, they're serving this work are the great implementers. As somebody who's been a great implementer, I believe the implementers, implementers have such an important role in sort of pushing back. Right. And it's a lot like the more of them, the more I can get into. They're going to be writing those grants. That's a critical. Dr. Garcia said critical consciousness development is a good, viable outcome for this grant. Right. Here's what we're going to do to enhance that. It will ultimately lead to graduation. So that was cool, right, that I am getting to influence folks in that way as far as ethnic studies and my post. Yes. So first, I would say California, of course, as a California girl, as somebody has been, as I'm a California girl now living in Pittsburg, but I miss it. I believe California often is the leader in higher ed. Right, pushing the bar. And I love that each of the three systems, major systems in California have to have moved towards ethnic studies as a requirement. Love it here for I'm watching it. And I love that it has happened in a very short span. Right. Although it should have happened six years ago. But it's cool. It happened in the last year, one right after another. I kind of cool to actually see that happen. So I am a fan of ethnic studies. I'm a product of ethnic studies, I think because I am a product of I think in the way I do because I am a product of ethnic studies. So I will never say get rid of ethnic studies. It is such an important source of this critical consciousness, development, community engagement and really just some of the great outcomes that could align themselves with, I think, come from ethnic studies, where my post takes the turn. And this is often how I write. I say, this is really good. I love it. Ethnic studies, great, I love it. But what I feel is important is to make sure that we don't say only ethnic studies does it right. That's where the post turned. Right. I took the like but over there in chemistry. Yeah. Chemistry professor, you got to do it too. Right over there. Instructor of engineering. You got to do it to right. Engineering, chemistry, biology, psychology, education. All of us that are not in ethnic studies can do it too and should do it too. And that's where I think the big transformation will come in size is when all those folks going to work. And I love when I get to speak with all those, like the STEM folks in particular, I'm like, yay, stem folks because the STEM folks are the ones I'm trying to convince. And I dropped that in my Department of Ed webinar. I'm like, Hey, engineers, y'all could be some of the greatest like inventors of social justice. Right? Engineers can really push and make viable, actionable change that could affect justice. Right. And I often talk about like the flint. Right. The water in Flint. Right. Because a lot of we most of us know that case. Right. The Michigan water crisis, that crisis could be addressed at one university from every disciplinary perspective, if we think about it. Right. Education, how is education being affected by this water crisis? Right. Biologists, how are biologists thinking about and coming up with solutions to the water crisis, how we're engineers coming up with solutions and alternatives, viable options for the water crisis, health. Right. Bring in your public health, folks. What our public health educators thinking about the long term effects of the the Flint water crisis. Right. So you could bring in every single discipline to one justice. The issue that is community based, it's a community, it's a regional issue. Most of us have regional issues that need to be addressed. So exercise as as good servers of the region and good servers of their communities that they are part of should be thinking, what's our regional environmental crisis that we could address from an educational from a public health, from an engineering, from a science, from a psychological, from a mental health perspective right now to all of those perspectives come together. That's the grant we're going to write, right. We're going to write that grant from this very transdisciplinary perspective. And all of us can be part of a movement for justice, right? You can call it social justice. You can call it environmental justice. You can call it whatever kind of justice you want. The reality is, we know environmental issues often affect communities of color and low income communities in much greater ways than they do any other communities. Right. So that's how I am really thinking about it. That's why I say ethnic studies. Awesome. Love it. I'm here for it, but do not rely on ethnic studies to do all of the heavy lifting around an organizational identity like its organizational. Everybody needs to be engaged in it.

**AS** [00:27:15] What I find sobering is that, unfortunately, I think still, and this is where the challenges that our universities that produce the things that go on to teach. At a community college or university is that they still don't teach that it leaves it up to the professional development coordinator at the local institution, HSI director, if they have one. I think there's a lot to do there at the universities. I think some do better job than others. But if someone earning a Ph.D. in chemistry is not learning to be equity minded and they want to go to teach at a university or at a community college, they already don't have the tools, they know their content, their research, that's great, we need content experts, but they don't have that critical conscience lens that they can provide to students. So I think that's the challenge. So do you have any recommendations places that offer quality PD beyond the kind of brown bag lunch kind of thing where people go for one hour? Or is this really on the shoulders of the coordinators, the directors of HSI to do something intentional throughout the year? A set of touch points to continue this kind of training? What have you seen that's effective? What do you recommend as we continue to talk about the how?

**Gina Garcia** [00:28:44] Yeah, for sure, I think that's the biggest challenge, right? Is that, like exactly what you said, the person is getting a chemistry equity and racial equity in particular are not anywhere in that curriculum. Right. They're just not. And we all know that. And they know that as they show up to these parties, like I need some help. It's interesting because when I was a student, I wrote my philosophy of higher ed for a class. It was for our history of higher ed class. We were to write philosophy and in that philosophy I talked about there was a quote. There were questions about who should who should teach them. What should you teach? I'm pretty sure the philosophy eventually became the decolonizing model. It evolved a little bit, but that was my core philosophy has sort of been always grounded in equity and justice and racial justice in particular. But I talked about in that paper about the need to have some sort of certification for faculty. And that was before I really got into this long term work with that. I do for faculty all the time. Right. I'm invited to give sessions and I love it and I enjoy it, but I don't know that it actually works like there's no evidence that this is actually working, whereas like people who teach in primary and secondary schools are people who are teaching our kids right. And in educational systems have to have that training where they have to have a certification state. Right. State by state certification that says they can teach, certified to teach. And faculty don't have that. You get your certified to teach if you can get through the process. Right. And so I think that's huge. Right. Like we've got to address that in higher ed is we need to know that that we don't have any sort of training for faculty as far as are there good models? I don't think so. I haven't seen any good models. I've seen I spent a lot of time in Zoom trainings in the last year. I don't know that there's good evidence that it actually works. And I've been talking to folks at the side I'm working with now. I know you asked if I had recommendations and one of the Title V directors I'm working with, we wrote about the fact that training budgets are often too small and this is something they're grappling with on their site, that the training budget is the title five grant actually elevated, doubled their training budget. Right. Like it elevated their training budget a lot because he didn't have a lot of money for even within their center for Teaching and Learning. They just were their eyes are often resource deprived institution, so enhance their training budget. But then we also talk about the inability of those folks who run those those training and development programs to even understand how to teach race and equity. Right. That some of those folks who are running those teaching and learning programs don't have that background either. Right. So they or even networks of who to bring in for to enhance their training and development. So I think there's so many holes, right? There's so many so many holes. And we spent so much time on diversity in higher ed. And that wasn't the best approach. I don't think we weren't pushing for equity. We haven't been pushing for social justice. We've been pushing for diversity, which is compositionally already present at right. There's already that compositional no diversity, physical diversity. But we haven't gotten into the social justice within curriculum sort of sort of approach yet. So I think there's a lot of a lot of gaps, right. In budgets and also knowledge at each institution. So naturally, we see a bunch of external consultants popping up. It's like a business right now to be a consultant of racial justice and institutions that I work with that bring me in to do it. They're working with multiples, right? Like you're not the only one if they're bringing you in. They've already brought in four others and they're bringing in for after you. Right. So it's this comprehensive approach like, OK, Dr. Garcia does this right. Dr. Solano does this, and so does everybody does something different. So we'll bring in each piece and hope that it kind of sticks without having any sort of big comprehensive approach to making it stick. I like we just throwing it all at the wall and hoping, like, hopefully somebody learns how to teach in an anti-racist way with one of these trainings we're offering. But we don't know. And I think that's a big surprise. I think we've got to start to evaluate better whether or not it's working. And I don't know that working would actually look like what? How do you assess that it's working? So I think that's a big, big challenge for guys right now.

**AS** [00:33:27] I like the idea, if we can somehow push for certification while you're earning your your master's or PhD. I think that will, because otherwise we just have this leaky bucket situation. I want to get to this. I really like how you explain about fear. I think you were alluding to the video that I shared that University of Chicago researchers did, they asked the four hundred plus insurrectionists why they did what they did and who they are. And it wasn't because they were low income or they had economic anxiety. They were pretty honest about it, it was fear of basically people of color. That was what led them to to do what they did. I just want to have a conversation with you about this fear, because it's that fear that, historically speaking, has led to that historical oppression that you talked about for students to be aware of it, to push for better policy, to push for better outcomes, lots to undo. As you said, there are people that are going to always be red leaders, right. In terms of the equity work, the racial equity work there's but there's plenty of yellow lighters, those that are kind of teetering to kind of get it, but they're not all the way there. How do we help create more allies, especially when it's going to take a long time for the faculty and staff for that demographic to match that of the students? That's our reality. So we have got to work with what we have at the moment. So how do we create more allies when there are still different levels of fear? And I don't want to say that all faculty are insurrectionist. I'm not trying to equate them. All I'm saying is that fear exists at very different levels. And so I've seen many faculty actually really, they obstruct. They just don't want to participate in any of these kinds of trainings. Anything that deals with equity, I don't want to talk about race. We've got to help all students. How do we help create allies? Turn those yellow letters into green letters, Gina?

**Gina Garcia** [00:35:38] Yeah, I think that's one one of many million dollar questions we have right now. Right. The training is one of the million dollar question that we could just answer it, but also the. Yeah, the the allies. Right. Or the coconspirators or whatever we're going to call them. There's lots of good names for folks who do good work, despite the fact that they have dominant identities. I think that there is that's part of this process, right. That like we know it's a process. I talk often about change from like a social movement perspective within organizations. Right. Like that's a grassroots leadership. Right. Adrianna Kezar has written about this in higher ed about grassroots leaders being those folks on the ground, not the high level administrators, but like folks on the ground who have the most connection to students moving and making change and pushing for change and writing small grants to develop social programs that will enhance critical consciousness, our students sense of belonging or whatever it may be that we want to do better for students. Right, creating coalitions with students. And I think that we have to rely on that. Right. That that's going to that's the reality. I often say not everybody shows up to the protest. Right. Or to the movement, to the social movement. A lot of people do not get involved in social movements. We know that historically social movements work. Right. They do advance change. We've seen change in higher ed come about because of social movements writ large, big social movements that are constantly pushing on higher ed to be better, to do better. We were watching the most recent big push and big change with this consciousness. Right. Like this conscious, this collective consciousness of like, oh, yeah, racism. It's not going anywhere. How are we going to deal with that right now? Now, people are trying to figure out how, but they're finally coming on board and saying, yeah, it's real, it's absolutely real, we believe it, but we just don't know how to address it. And so I do rely on that. Right. Knowing that it's going to take time and not everybody's going to show up, not everyone's going to show up to the moment. Not everyone's going to show up to the workshop. And I was going to show up to the party, whatever it may be right there. Not not everyone's going to show up. There's going to be a lot of people who are dissenters and don't believe in it. Sometimes it's the communities you talk about changing the composition of each the size of the administrators and the faculty staff. I don't think that's the only solution, because sometimes the people who are the biggest dissenters are actually the people who are identified with the community. And some of that comes from like a meritocracy, this attachment to whiteness and or meritocracy that like, well, if I did it, you can do it, too, right? Like, I was an immigrant. I came here, I learned another language. I bla bla bla. My parents, I like they did it. So you can do it to this false attachment to meritocracy. And I think that that's an important piece of it. Right. Is that we know that sometimes the biggest dissenters are going to be the people who are within the community and that that's hard because people they get confused are like, well but so and so who's Latino identify? I said X, Y, Z, and doesn't believe in this sort of change or that oppression is going to keep us down or whatever it may be. So I think it's more than that. Right. The composition of our faculty and our administrators, our staff on each side have to change, but also the thinking. Right, our thinking around critical consciousness and how we all engage with changes to the curriculum, changes to the services we offer, all that sort of stuff. So, yes, we need more, yes, we need more allies and co-conspirators. But also we have to know that there's going to be a process. Right, that one by one. Yet every time you have a line open, take advantage of it. That's what I would say. That's what I would say to people who are on college campuses who have the ability to hire new folks, take advantage of that opportunity, do everything in your power to recruit and secure the employment of folks who are minorities. Right. Either people of color or other minorities identities and or strongly committed to equality and justice. Right. That has to be a core part of their values and everything they do, regardless of of where they're doing it at. Right in the university. That has to be a part of it. I think that's my biggest disappointment when I see college presidents all often side college presidents. And I'm like, why did they hire that person? They have the opportunity. I know I have friends. I'm like, they'd be great college president over there at that small side. They'd be so good. Have that large system, a big system just right. So good, so much experience. And we just kind of defer back to the normative right normative way of recruiting campus leaders as opposed to a recruiting campus leaders who are committed to equity and justice. Right. That would really flip things upside down if we if we focus on that dimension rather than the big, bigger normative sort of ways in which we recruit people. So, yeah, I think there's a lot of work to do. I don't have a solid answer because I think it is part of the process that we have to be sort of patient and trust.

**AS** [00:40:59] So I think, you know, I have a tendency to criticize our own. And that I was going to be my next question to you, because I was just going to say that about that false attachment to meritocracy, because I've seen it. And the other thing that I've seen a lot, actually, is it's quite sad. As you know, community colleges are going through tremendous transformational change, especially in California. They're all using a student learning framework and trying to apply an equity lens to that. But the most ardent social justice equity people I find are the ones who are the least wanting to do the work. They talk a big game. They go into meetings and correct people's language. They, it's like a checkmark or you use the wrong word. This is the word you have to use, which fine. Language is important, but then they don't engage in the work. And that's another part that I find disappointing is the language police and then not wanting to do anything after that. As we wrap up here, what optimism do you see out there? What keeps you excited about, despite the challenges, one of the things that you're seeing in higher ed that make you feel like, yes, it's a process, this is going to take a lot of time, but here are indicators that I see we're moving in the right direction.

**Gina Garcia** [00:42:23] Yeah, that's that's a good question. I am super optimistic. Like I said, I'm a freedom dreamer. I definitely am. Like, glass is always half full kind of person. Right. Like, I am eternally optimistic that I'm like, there is change. Right. So yes, there's challenges. But that's part of being a change maker, an institutional agent. Right. Is understanding and seeing those challenges and working to do something about it. Right. That's like I'm going to do something about it. I see this challenge and I want to I want to change it. And so if I think about my current partnerships that I have various research practice partnerships, that I'm engaged with different partners, I have what I would say that they give me hope that I'm like, yes, things are changing. One time I've been working with for about 18 months and it's been powerful to watch change happen like in time, in real time, see things happening and see resources being put towards things like like a Latino cultural center right that wasn't there before. It actually became a Latino student said, hey, we need a cultural center. But the campus said we're going to have a cultural center, a cross-cultural intercultural. I know there's a lot of debates about what we want to call them, cultural center for Liberation type of approach, that it's for everybody. It's not just for one particular group, which I'm all for that right us. We're going to move into these intersectional spaces that they can serve multiple minorities groups. So to see stuff like that happening gives me hope, right. That I'm like, yes, people are making change. Change is happening. Sometimes we move from. And then we move back a little bit, and that's OK. All right, that the backwards is learning moments, that we take time to learn from those moments and then we keep moving forward when we keep grappling and moving towards what we believe is right. So, yeah, they give me hope. I think one hope that I have and that I would say I see working in one side that I'm working with is student voice. So I think and pulling it back to you, I know your core focus is student success. I am always saying, why don't we ask students like, why don't you ask students? I'll come ask me why. I asked the students how how to serve them that they can offer. And I did just that, what with one side. We're doing participatory action research projects. I'm about to launch it with another site and students are saying this is what we want. We want more of this. We want more of that. We see that this isn't happening at one at the site that we're doing this part projects the students basically said, yeah, we don't know anything about it. Like there's no way to say on the website. There's no branding around that campus. Listen to those students. And launched a site. Right. Like within a semester, change on a campus based on the fact that students said, hey, we see this, hey, we want this. Right. It didn't come from the Title V director, didn't come from the board of trustees. It came from the students. Isn't that why isn't there anywhere on our why is there nowhere on our site that says HSI, they added it. Right. So that's important. And engaging those student voices, I think is a really good way to go about this. Right. Like a good approach is like, well, let's talk to students, let's engage them because they will tell us they'll be very honest. They won't have the big technical, fancy theoretical words that maybe I use. But it makes more sense. I guess they'll give you the exact examples of ways to better serve them. So that gives me hope, too, that I am seeing change happen if we're willing. Right. That campus, this example that the campus is willing. Right. There's a lot of campus I would have said I don't care that we don't have a design, a website, and it would have had to go through five layers of bureaucracy to get on the website. That wasn't the case. Right. The campus said, yeah, we're listening. Yeah. How do we make this happen? Right. And they had people that made it happen. Right. They moved within the structures. They knew how to work within that bureaucratic structure of higher ed and made it happen. So, yeah, I've got hope and optimism. And those are just a few examples of many that I get to interact with folks on a pretty regular basis.

**AS** [00:46:26] And sometimes that's all you can do is make a difference, one college at a time, right? College serve, some campuses, thousands and thousands of students. I wanted to talk about students for a moment because traditionally I've seen, in the last twenty years, and I've seen plans be written about, well, we got to show students how to have grit. We've got to show them how to have a growth mindset. And they come to us unprepared. And I think in our work it really is coaching work. We're trainers in a way. If we go back to what you're doing when you're as a fitness trainer, is that we're trying to help the personnel, the educators of these institution for them to have growthmindset, for them to have grit, to actually work, to dismantle barriers instead of putting it all on the student. Oh, well, you need to make sure that you have a growth mindset and then you have grit. No, we often would say, well, our students come to us unprepared and it's having that shift to what can we do to be more prepared, especially for our our DI populations. But that takes some training. That takes some coaching over time to get people to have that self realization. And sometimes that's the best approach. Like, I know if you were doing your training and you see someone, finally they get the results because they're doing the work. They're doing a particular workout that you did for them. And that's how they got the buy-in to continue because they are doing the work that they're taking, what you're saying and doing it and applying it, and that over time helps to change behaviors and attitudes. So I want to thank you for all the work that you do for four campuses. Not only value all your research and all, you teach, you're fitness instructor, you have beautiful kids, I see you post. Thank you for all that you do. Thank you for your time. Really appreciate it. Any any last parting words?

**Gina Garcia** [00:48:31] No. Well, yes, I guess. Keep fighting the good fight. Like I said, I'm a believer. I'm an optimist. I think that the work that we're all doing matters right. Like everybody is working hard. I am definitely asset minded and not deficit minded that I'm like, yeah, it's all work. And we got to believe that it's all working. Keep going. For those of you that are listening, keep going, keep trying the different approaches, keep reading different articles, keep listening to different podcasts, tuning into different webinars, because even just taking one thing from each educational moment gives us ideas, right. To keep moving and keep going and gives us that motivation. We need to keep going. So, yeah, our part with that,

**AS** [00:49:15] Muchas gracias.

**Gina Garcia** [00:49:16] Thank you.