**Dr. Steve Bautista Interview**

Learn how community colleges can prepare & support future teachers.

**AS** [00:00:00] For today's podcast, it's a pleasure to have Dr. Steve Bautista, professor, counselor and the coordinator for the Center for Teacher Education at Santa Anna College California. He also serves as the current president of the Association of California Community College Teacher Education Programs and was previously an executive board member of the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs. Among a host of recognitions, Dr. Bautista was named one of five Orange County teachers of the year and was selected by his community college peers to earn the Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence. It's a pleasure to have you as part of the Student Success podcast.

**Steve Bautista** [00:00:38] Thank you Al. It's a pleasure to be here. I have listened to this podcast for a number of months now that you've been putting them out. Learned a ton. I've known you for quite a while. Happy to be here and to be invited to participate.

**AS** [00:00:52] Thank you. When I start the podcast, I'd like to ask guests something beyond their work. A hobby, a talent or superpower that they would mind sharing. So what would you like to share?

**Steve Bautista** [00:01:06] Yeah, I was thinking about this because I have listened to your other podcasts and trying to figure out what I would share and what I would probably share with you is that one of the things that I do outside of my work. That's really something that's been part of my own personal self-care and just something that's helped me get centered with my work is running. So growing up, I never enjoyed running. I played sports, but the running piece of it was either I had to be chased by somebody or had a ball at my feet. That was the way that I enjoyed running and never just enjoyed running for just running. For about 10 years ago, I decided to get off the couch and get out and start running. I just turned over 40 years old. Forty two at the time. Started running and just kind of fell in love with it. The goal setting, the journey, the emotional, spiritual, physical nature is a part of running surprised myself, and a lot of different ways ended up right running as a 10K and then running a half marathon. And then at the end of the half marathon, realizing, Yeah, this is like, this isn't the fight, as I'm ever going to do thirteen point one miles, that's pretty much it. And then, with the encouragement of friends and continued running, ended up running the L.A. Marathon in 2014. So 26.2 miles accomplishing that feat really was something that it changed me. I changed my abilities, my view, my abilities of myself really got me hooked. So continue to run to this day to stay healthy.

**AS** [00:02:40] A full marathon. Lot of respect, man. Wow. Tell me a little bit about that journey, because it's not just you running. Often there's a support group involved somehow in one way shape or form, whether it be family or friends. So can you talk about that a little bit?

**Steve Bautista** [00:03:01] Yeah, exactly. I mean, when I was running by myself, I could feel the mental aspect of it all. My legs hurt. I'm so tired. My knees hurt. How much farther I can't breathe. All of those things enter your mind. But I actually got from a from a friend of mine, a colleague at Sant Ana College. She hooked me up with a running group and in that running group, that community that I was able to build and connect with. And when you're out there and you're able to just to talk and to be with other people, you're actually able to to run farther together. And then there's a phrase that goes an old adage that says if you want to run fast, run alone. But if you want to run far, run together. And that really helped me because to train for the marathon, I had no experience at all and had to lean on my colleagues and friends, my running friends who had done this work before the lead me in this and that whole process. And we were able to do that in 2014, and then I ran a second marathon and multiple other half marathons after that. But that also, again, that whole learning a lot about yourself and learning about as you're indicating this journey together is really something that not only works for running, but also in other parts of your life as well. So that's what I've learned.

**AS** [00:04:18] Thank you for sharing that. I run maybe three times a week and I hate it. I don't like running. My body keeps telling me, Why are you doing this to me? And I still, after years and years and years, even in the military, I didn't care for running. How you just 10 years ago decided I'm going to try this and then you run a marathon. That's just incredible. Congratulations. And as you mentioned earlier, you know, we've known each other for a long time. I started my career in K-12 and then I was so fortunate to make the transition in the early 2000s to the community college system and one of the areas that I focused on was future teachers. How do we support them? That's where I met you and you're one of the most, if not most knowledgeable person on the role of community colleges and teacher education. And as I think about this marathon that you ran and you and I know that just navigating to become a teacher could be a marathon. And so there's a metaphor in there, right, about future teachers and the fact that we have the community college system, they account for about half or a little over half of all students in higher ed, given the teacher shortages that have been ongoing. But now they're much more pronounced. It's even more important today to think about how do we recruit, you know, capture those students, ignite their interest, their passion for teaching, and then how do we support them? Please unpack your role in helping to prepare future teachers.

**Steve Bautista** [00:05:57] Yeah. So I mean, in my professional role as a counselor and program coordinator, you know, I get the opportunity to sit with students and meet with them when they begin community college and many future teachers. I think the data shows that over half of the teachers today knew they wanted to become a teacher before they enter college. So it's one of those professions where that students kind of know at the point of entry that this is something that they want to do. And over my past twenty two years or twenty three years of doing this work, when I talk to students about why they want to become a teacher, it's significant in the fact that their experience through K through 12 and their experience with other educators and other teachers really has a profound impact on their own desire to do this work in the future. Whether it is a positive experience that they had with an educator who saw their potential, saw who they were, maybe acknowledged some of the challenges they were experiencing and help them navigate those challenges. That inspires students to want to do this moving forward and want to be that type of role model or same type of support person to other students coming through. The other piece of it is we have students who have had negative experiences through K-12, and that's probably because I work with a lot of students who come from first generation, low-Income backgrounds, immigrants and a lot of the K-12 systems are not set up to support to meet the specific needs of those students. Nor do we have the teacher diversity that represents those students in those communities. And so they felt moving through their K-12 educational experience that there was a disconnect there and they want to return back to their community, back to their schools, to be a role model for others and to change the system in a lot of different ways. The challenges that we face with community colleges and you're right, there's a lot of students who begin community college in higher ed, but the data is really surprising about how many teachers start community college. So the national data shows that about 20 percent of all teachers in the United States begin their journey in community college. About 50 percent of all teachers in the U.S. actually do some portion of their education in a community college. And in California, it's even more profound. So over half fifty five percent of the teachers who are credentialed by the California State University system begin their journey educational journey in a community college. And so we are a significant starting point for teachers. California, again, we have the most diverse student population in the state, making sure that we have really good pathways. Clear pathways and support for students is really critically important. As I journey with students through this process and seeing some of the challenges and kind of the barriers that they face if they're not different than other professions. But the pathway is pretty complicated to become a teacher in most states. Certifications and tests and other kinds of requirements that we need really specialized support for those students and pre-professional support that helps them navigate the pathway and give them the tools to be successful at once. They reach the classroom as a credentialed teacher.

**AS** [00:09:22] So let's unpack some of the supports to help them along their path.

**Steve Bautista** [00:09:27] Sure. Yeah. So, you know, this work is really important to me, and it's something again I've done professionally, but it was also part of my doctoral dissertation that I just completed last year. For me, as someone who'd been a practitioner for many, many years, I really wanted to understand and really dig deeper into some of the practices and some of the experiences of students. And so I I interviewed, my study was interviewing Latinx community college students who began into community college but had since transferred to universities. A teacher preparation pathway. And really asking them about what were the things that really made a difference for them to get from community college into the university. The group that I had interviewed, half of them had been a part of a teacher preparation program while in community college, and the other half had not. And they just happened to be like that in terms of the sample. I didn't mean to do that sample. We just had it how it kind of ended up kind of shaping out. And the experiences were profound in terms of what the students who were part of teacher preparation programs at community college were able to the service they were to provide or get connected with. One of it was building up community of future educators who were at their community college in California. Our state, our teacher credential program, is post baccalaureate so the students do their teacher education program after they have a bachelor's degree, and we don't have undergraduate majors in education as they do in other states. And so we have students who come to the community college and they're in various different programs and majors, but they all have the same goal of becoming a teacher. So building that community was really important to them, as well as really helping to get specialized advisement from community college counselors who were very familiar with it, teacher preparation, the state teacher preparation pathways and requirements, and helping them navigate those throughout their community college journey and then onto transfer. And then also the other thing was getting really robust early fieldwork experiences while they were in community college. So this really gave those students the opportunity to get have fieldwork, experiences, observations or even employment in K through 12 to give them a really hands on experience in the teaching profession and connecting with current teachers in the field. And that was really something that that was enlightening for me and really validating actually given my own experience of observing it and hearing that play out in the data. And the other thing that it's not surprising probably cuts across all future teachers are not as future teachers, but all three college students was the role of professors in their experience. When I ask students who were the people that made the most difference, it was always two groups, one with professors. That was the first group and they were able to identify by name those professors who supported them, who inspired them, who gave them the extra support that they needed, who inspired them with really good teaching. And that was one of the findings that I came up with is that the professors that the students identified, one of the factors that really inspired them was they were really good teachers and inspired them to how this is, how you do that in the classroom, as well as being engaging and connecting and identifying with their own some of their own identities, ethnic cultural identities and helping them validate them as well. As you know, you're you're a really good writer. Have you ever thought of becoming an English teacher? Right? That was something that also really lit students up in terms of their pathway through community college. And then the secondary with counselors counselors who were able to help navigate, as I said earlier. So yeah, I mean, I think that's kind of unpacking what the experience might be like for students and how to build robust programs in community colleges. I think those were some of the things that I learned and got validated through my my own study.

**AS** [00:13:25] You name four factors and you unpacked a little bit the role of faculty. Can you provide examples of how it could be, a local example? You've done such great work. You've helped hundreds, if not thousands of students become future teachers, the building community. Can you provide an example of that? Just an example of how the special advisement counseling looks like. Also just a little bit about when they do their fieldwork, they're observing. But anything else about that experience for students? If you can unpack those three, that'd be great. Thank you.

**Steve Bautista** [00:13:59] This idea of building community. As I said earlier, our state and California does teacher preparation at the post baccalaureate level. And so at the undergraduate level, students are in majors and they're not in majors specifically with other future teachers. So to give an example, like accounting students, right? If you're going to become an accountant, you take classes that are called accounting, and most of the students who are in those classes are going to be accountants, are the business majors. What we've is we've spent, what the we're asking students at the undergraduate level to focus in on subject matter preparation, right, becoming competent in math and reading and English and social sciences, all those areas. And so the students are spread out, particularly at their freshman and sophomore levels in those classes. And so having students identify themselves as future teachers and then bringing together in community, for example, through a future teacher clubs or even special programs where we. bring them together and have once a month meetings, do their pre-professional develop to talk about becoming a teacher. Talk about good pedagogical skills. Talk about things that are important to becoming a professional educator on the journey, the testing processes, the requirements, introducing them to universities, bringing them on field trips and even having university experiences where these students collectively can work together with university faculty members and kind of build community, but also understand what's in front of them when they're ready to transfer. So that idea of building community with other future teachers help give them a support system so that when they were going to the general education classes, that American government class, that's part of their pathway they can serve alongside with other future teachers. And even we've also created learning communities, for example, in general education that was specifically designed for future teachers. So for many, many years, I taught a learning community at public speaking and a future teacher's career class to really help develop the public speaking skills and the community of future educators in the classroom as well. That's one way that we we build community and that the students felt supported and then when they transferred to university, had peers that they'd been connected with by their in community college. The second piece is the advisement. I mean, sadly, it's really, really complicated to become a teacher in California and probably most states, right? The certification process, the testing process, all those kinds of things. It just becomes a lot of bureaucracy and it just keeps get layered, layered further and further. And so having a counselor who can guide them through that process and encourage them to navigate the some of those challenges and barriers is really important. And then just in general, I think with most community college students, they're really they they're not only doing school, they're juggling life and their lives sometimes is really complicated. And what counselors can help do is help them navigate not only the academic part of it, but also some of the the life journey things right and helping them when things get really stressful and really challenging. A counselor can help the student kind of overcome that barrier or even see a way around a barrier that the student maybe didn't know that they that they even had right? They're not able to pass a class, and the counselor is able to show them about how they can repeat a course, use academic renewal. And those kinds of things provide a lot of motivation in the agency and hope for those students to be able to reach their goal. So I think that's the second piece you wanted that you wanted me to talk about. And in the third piece in terms of field work is there's not only a teacher shortage, but there's also a shortage of staff in schools now. And I think as I'm seeing now, the pandemic is making it way worse. I had a friend share with me that because of the some of the vaccine issues that the schools are going to be losing a lot of staff members. And so not only educators but also peer educators, folks that work in after-school programs, those kinds of things. And so helping students get employment in schools is really a really significant piece to their journey community college because then they can work. They have really steady employment, and those jobs are sometimes one o'clock till six o'clock and it fits well with their school schedule. They're plugged into the school culture, and they can really begin to see what it's like to become a teacher and work in a school environment while they're in community college and also provide for their themselves to with a with a salary and an income. So those are part of the things that we done and then also build really robust partnerships, robust partnerships with our K-12 schools to kind of create internships and field work opportunities. And all of those things so students can really see what it's like and when students have that experience. I think that's like the big light bulb moment, like, yeah, I can see myself doing this or even that, oh, maybe, maybe I need to think about a different occupation where the opportunity, which is fine. Yeah. So I think those are the three things I think you wanted me to share and to share a little bit more on in terms of detail.

**AS** [00:19:05] You mentioned the pandemic. That's had has had such a significant impact on society. How do you do all this in then in a virtual environment? What's really interesting is that as we begin to hopefully see light at the end of the tunnel. What this pandemic and more and more students returning back to campuses, at least initial data that I'm seeing, it isn't one way. Most students prefer online now or oh no, no, no students really miss in-person. The majority of them want to go back. What I'm seeing different data. Actually, I'm seeing students saying, listen, there's a level convenience now that I've never had. And so there are some courses that I love taking online. It's very convenient. And so long as the pedagogy is sound, you know, if it's engaging, if I'm learning, I'm cool with online, but you know what? There are other courses that I want to go there in person. So it's not this has to be this bucket or that bucket. Students, you know, when you have to really listen to them. And I think what they're saying is, you know, I just like now this these options, as you know, many institutions of higher ed and even community colleges, maybe some of them only offered 10 percent of courses online and now they have to. They had to learn how to do most of them online, and there were some that were already doing, you know, 50 60 percent of courses online as an option, and they were able to weather this storm a bit better for future teachers because we don't know what's in store with us. Are we going to have another variant? The fact that so many people don't want a mask or don't want to do the right things for for the collective, how do you do these services, Steve, in a virtual environment?

**Steve Bautista** [00:21:07] Yeah, that's a really good question. And I think, you know, I think the pandemic and the switch to virtual and again, just looking from my own experience as an educator doing this work for the past couple of decades. A lot of places where we could have been could have been doing things a lot better, forced us into those modes quicker and more at scale. For example, being good online teachers, I mean, I think that we we saw that coming for a long time. This need to expand online environments and support and opportunities for students because of their busy lives and their need to balance their work and their family and school. And so I think it allowed what forced community colleges and a lot of inches of higher education to make that shift pretty quickly. But you're right, in terms of trying to figure out what's the best formula moving forward, it's it's we're all still in the testing mode, right? Well, we'll try new things. We'll try things remotely or try things in person. We'll try things in different ways and we've done them before to see what really is going to be the most effective way. Yeah, and even we're trying to plan our spring schedules. What does that look like in terms of how much percentage of remote fully online? How much is remote live, which we're calling, which is more of like the Zoom, you know, live classes where students are watching the course in real time, but via Zoom. So just trying to figure out how to navigate all of that. The challenge that we experience with teacher education is that we I think a lot of the philosophical approach to education itself is it's not, you know, education is not a transaction. It's transformational, right? And that transformational work happens when people are collectively in the same space together and in relationship with each other and in community with each other, and that the learning that takes place and the work, the true work of teaching happens when there is a deeper connection there and the connection is much harder. And it takes much the higher skill level. I think of teachers to do that remotely. I know specifically for our campus. Most of our education courses have returned to in-person because of the need to be collectively in the same space, obviously with COVID safety protocols. But and I think our students are responding to that, that they want to be in community with each other and in class together. That's difficult. The other piece that's difficult is as our future teachers have a need and a requirement to be in K through 12 schools for the observation hours that are part of that teacher preparation pathway. We're having to navigate with this. We're trying to work collectively with our K-12 districts, whether or not they're ever going to allow volunteers or allow observations, given some of the strict natures of the of the protocols and those kinds of things. So that is exacerbating some of the barriers and the challenges and potential, the teacher shortages if we can't get our future teachers in with current teachers to get the observation that they need. So that's difficult. But what I keep telling my students is like, you need to have really good technology skills if you're going to become a teacher because this is the way forward, right? We knew that before with cell phones and mobile phones and computers in their pockets. Now it's it's even more exacerbated. And then the relational piece of it, too, is that they really need to develop strong relational skills related to connecting with students. And then there's the third piece is the other pandemic, the social pandemics and the the anti, the social pandemics that we're experiencing related to anti-Black racism and anti-Asian racism and all that social ills that we have been experiencing lately as well is that we really need teachers who are equipped with the tools to be able to provide inclusive spaces in their classrooms, who are willing to work with a diverse population of students and to help address some of these really the social ills that are we're also experiencing over the past several decades.

**AS** [00:25:26] Yes, I want to focus a little bit on these social ills because you see nationally education and teachers are under attack in. K-12 and higher ed teaching history for some is considered anathema. Why? Why do we want to teach about slavery? Why? Why do we want to teach about the Civil War? Why do we want to teach about the Civil Rights movement? It's gotten to a point fortunately doesn't happen really much at all in California, but you heard recently in Texas they want to "both sides "this. So if you're teaching about the Holocaust, oh, please give a opposing view like there's an opposing view to teaching the Holocaust. Are you finding any future teachers who are seeing what's happening in the national debate? How is that impacting them? Are they concerned or are they are just ignoring it for the most part and focus on their studies?

**Steve Bautista** [00:26:27] Interesting. Last year, in the midst of the pandemic that we were experiencing, we actually saw that sent out of college a spike in the participation rate and the interest of students in becoming teachers. And when I began talking with students about their interest in becoming a teacher, that's kind of one of the first questions. I kind of asked them, What's the dream? What's the what is important to you? They actually articulated specifically what you said as they see what's going on in their communities and the United States, and they want to be part of the change. Right. And they want. And it's interesting that the students, because of their own personal K-12 experiences and because their own experiences as first generation college students, as new immigrants and to and from communities that have been oppressed and marginalized and identities have been oppressed and marginalized, they really want to be. They see teachers and education as a way to make a difference. Right. Just as we saw nurses and doctors and other public service, they saw they see themselves as those change agents. I think in California for a long time is the critical consciousness that these future teachers have at the beginning of their education that we can use to help as motivation to move them and move them through the pathway to become these change agents. And so they have felt it. They experience that they feel it in their own communities. They feel it in their experience in life, but and they want to be a part of the change. And so we started having discussions about these really important things, helping unpack some of what they experienced, what some of the systemic injustices and things that are in place now and how we need to begin to dismantle them and how from as educators they can see their role in doing this. It provides a lot of hope for me. And if we can just get more students through the pipeline from community college into universities and becoming teachers, then this could be really a wave of this next generation to be able to help transform our educational system. Future educators that represent, look like and come from the communities that they want to serve. It is critically important piece to solving some of these social ills. I'm hoping, continuing to be hopeful that we can find the next generation of teachers and empower them to be the change agents. They want to be in schools and in their communities.

**AS** [00:29:17] Wow, that's beautiful. So in the midst of all the chaos, all of the I mean, it's racism that we're seeing in the country. And the fact that motivated students to now want to go to. I didn't know that Steve, that that made my day, actually. I was highly critical of I don't even want to mention his name. He's this big political commentator, and he recently wrote a book is going out and trying to sell his book, but he's really just really bashes higher ed and he bashes this current generation. That this is an entitled generation, if I don't get it this moment, then and he makes his broad generalizations about students and about just higher ed in general. He's a much older gentleman. You know, his generation was responsible for the climate crisis that we're in, that widening gap between the rich and the poor. That gap. His generation was full of just misogynists and racists and homophobes. And he just he kind of pits generation vs. generation, which I think is really stupid. He's just such a lazy thinker. Anyway, my point is community college students, especially student of color, and open access universities, that don't have the luxury to be entitled there. This is the most tolerant generation we've ever had in terms of your sexual orientation, your background. And so I just love that to hear this story that here you are. They know it's going to be tough. You teach them about the realities of being a teacher and then they're like, I'm in. So thank you for sharing that. Now on something else that you've been involved in your campus from the very beginning. As as you know, a lot of colleges throughout the country have been focused on trying to plan and implement the Guided Pathways framework. And you have been a part of the campus Guided Pathways core team as part of guided pathways. This dirty word, meta-major, and I'll call it more of an academic and career community. But most colleges created these academic and career communities, and what I love about your campus is that you have one dedicated to education. I believe it is called a future educators career and academic pathway. You've done a lot of work there. You've also piloted the college's first success team around this academic and career community. Can you unpack that a little bit more? Tell us about that.

**Steve Bautista** [00:32:09] Yeah. So Santa Ana College is one of the colleges in California that had the opportunity in an earlier start, with some of the national groups to begin guided pathways. So I'm trying to think of we're in year four or five of our efforts so far, but as we've done this. The college has acknowledged that educators future educators is an important pathway. They actually, as part of the seven that we created the current academic pathway, we created one called Future Educators, and that includes our child development program, our education program. And then we have a library technology program that leads to library assistance and then future librarians as well. So we group those programs degrees and certificates into that pathway. And it's actually the smallest pathway at our college. And so given it was the smallest pathway, they decided to pilot the success teams around that group to see what kind of infrastructure we could build and what kind of supports and goals we could create and kind of let us give it a test run. And so we were able to do that at our college. We have two student success coaches, a council liaison, a financial aid liaison, a career center representative and then administrative support with data and administrative lead. I'm missing somebody else. But so that's the group move forward with kind of creating some goals for our academic career and academic pathway and success team, you know, and try to implement them and then share that with the rest of the campus as we build out the rest of the success teams. And so it was, I think, really successful in the fact that we were able to use that year to really try to focus in on how we might be able to communicate what our pathway was about to help students get connected with resources, get connected with financial aid so that they could get the support that they needed financially to afford college. And then just trying to get plugged in with all the other services that were available to them. So we are now in year two of our six success coaches as a year three of our success teams. Sorry, it's all kind of blurred together when you're in the pandemic, it all feels like it's all a bunch of Monday's all strung together. But yeah, so we I think it's year three and yeah, the teams are all kind of developing and moving along. I know you supported us with our college's efforts to get us launched with our cross-functional teams and getting this all planned. So it's been good, but I still feel that it's not enough for our state. Think our state, California specifically. This idea of everything is done at the post baccalaureate level. And kind of it's all left up to a little bit of chance for students to make it their teachers to make it. There are structural barriers that exist for California in meeting our goals, preparing the diverse teachers. But I think at least our future educators CAP gives the arms to wrap around our students and to support the wrap around them when they when they come and begin college and they say they want to become a teacher, we can be there for them and we provide a lot of professional support. A regional conference that we put on every year and a lot of other things that really help them stay engaged and connected with other future teachers.

**AS** [00:35:36] I like what you're doing is something I've encouraged all campuses, actually, that build out success teams per academic and career community. There's been a lot of criticism about guided pathways, for example, "Well, we shouldn't be doing this really, it's a race neutral framework." And my argument has been, I'm glad it is. And here's why. If it started as a racial equity framework, it wouldn't have gotten off the ground, especially nationally. You think in the South that would have started implementing guided pathways if there was a racial equity framework? So what I appreciate about the framework is that it gives us this student journey framework with some suggested strategies and then by the disaggregating the data, looking at the data like you have you mentioned someone that's helping you support what data. Then you can apply what we hear a million times, that equity lens, right? And that equity lens is highly nuanced because how you apply it at Santa Ana might be different from, let's say, a college in the Central Valley, depending on their student makeup. And so you're showing how you take an agnostic, race neutral framework and how to help these students who are disproportionately impacted, who want to go back to those communities to become future teachers. The other cornerstone of guided pathways is actually developmental ed reform. A lot of people in California see them as separate. AB 705 Is that legislation that says we got to really revamp developmental ed. No more testing students into the dev ed wilderness. Most of them will never see a transfer level course, and this was particularly hurting our students of color. Can you speak to how developmental ed reform? How AB705 has had an impact on future teachers? Are you seeing more of them? Because now a lot of them are not in that English and math developmental ed sequence. All those steps to finally get into a transfer level English and math.

**Steve Bautista** [00:37:46] Yeah, I can talk to it specifically about future teachers, but also my role as a counselor. I also see and have been seeing the general population of students who begin community college. I began in this field with when we were doing a lot of the assessment, testing and placing students into really, really low levels of math and English and just doing so much harm to them unintentionally. But now seeing how we've been able to move away from that, it feels like a lot more students as they enter college are not being faced with this big wall. Like, OK, I'm glad that you went to four years of high school and it looks like you did this level of math at your senior year. But according to our test, you need to go back and do pre-algebra. You know that discussion, although I had it and simply hang my head, that was a conversation I had to have with so many students. That's, you know, we're not doing that anymore. And students are able to go right into college level math and college level English, and we've built our support systems. And it just it's such a different way to think about and as a counselor and I really have to think differently about what we were doing again, it even trust it for a while, I was like, Really, we're just going to let students in based on their high school GPA into English and math because I had been totally indoctrinated into the system that we had previously like, Oh my gosh, give me the test score. If they're not the test score, there's no way they're going to be successful. I had kind of come to believe that myself as a professional. But yeah, it's been really eye-opening and I think it's been for our college and the opportunity to think about how we support students in new ways in college level English and college level math for prefer. A number of years, we had a freshman experience program. I also helped coordinate it and we provided academic and co-curricular support through counseling collectively together and that their students in their first year and that was something that was we saw were equally important for our students as they entered college was that they got the academic support, but they also got the we're here for you counseling support that they needed career support, figuring out their academic plan and why they're here and having to navigate some of the challenges. And so I think that's also for start college and most colleges to have those conversations about how you're going to provide those co-curricular supports and in addition to the academic support and and you push faculty and the math and English areas, I think a little bit more thoughtfully about how we might provide just in time remediation and support for our students as they're entering. And so I think, as a counselor, as the students are onboarding, yeah, it's a different conversation and I think its students are much more excited. I would say about entering college, you don't have to have those conversations like, yeah, it's like, you know, take the test score right is going to hold you back. And then the struggle of seeing things languish, languish in math and English and just see them, you know, they'll repeat, they'll repeat. And you know, it's I remember one student finally transferred to UCLA and I remember he had taken every course in our math sequence. Twice. That student is now a teacher, a high school art teacher, and does amazing work as an educator. Yet what we did while he was in community college, I just go, Oh my gosh, what were we thinking of doing? But when you know better, you do better. So hopefully we are doing better by students now with eighty five point eighty seven point five and all

**AS** [00:41:40] The changes, and I'm really grateful for all the guided pathways researchers and advocates that they looked at the data and said this is not good. And now, as you know, this has been just this last three weeks, there's been all sorts of research that shows, yes, letting them self report into a transfer level English or math course. And we're seeing equity gaps close. We're seeing more students enroll. And so I want to actually, I want to go back to that as we wrap up to that fourth factor that you mentioned at the beginning of the podcast about the role of faculty. Because when something is seen or is mandated, right, well, you're going to have now all these students, you have some group of faculty English and math that welcome it, like, OK, I got to up my pedagogical game. I got to figure out how to help these students succeed. It's those faculty that become the role models for future teachers because future teachers, these teachers that you mentioned that want to go back to their communities. They have to teach the students that they have, not the students that they wish they had. And unfortunately, that's what's happened in higher ed for so many years is this mentality. I went to grad school. I'm an expert in math. I'm an expert in English. And you know what, if they come to me and they're not fully prepared? Well, that's not my problem. That mentality has been present for decades, whereas it's really should be. Well, I can't control what's happened in their lives. I can't control that they had a really bad experience in K-12. I can't control that some of these students had to work 40 hours a week while they were still in high school and so they didn't have an opportunity to focus on their studies or to have summer enrichment. None of that. So I got them. And what can I do, and now we're seeing in the data that I keep pointing this out because there's still a cadre of faculty who harken back, who just kind of like, Oh, I wish we had the days when they can go back because they're still not fully prepared. And I'm like, What are your success rates? And actually the success rates for many community colleges, what we're finding is actually the same. So they say, well, we had a 50 percent success rate, let's say, pre-calculus. Pre-development ed reform and then AB705 and now, look, we it's 50 percent, or maybe it's 45 percent, I say, yeah, but how many more students do you have? You know, that's the key. You have a lot more students who are actually taking pre-cal who are actually taking calculus than ever before. And so I just wanted to hone in on that last factor, Steve, because we cannot forget that when we teach our students, many of these students are I'm just I'm floored. I didn't know that 55 percent of teachers in California were community college students that we have to model pedagogy. We have to model the passion and the caring in the classroom. And so, yeah, just that last one I wanted to mention. And as we begin to wrap up, I just I love student stories. You kind of touched on one, can you provide another student story of some student, you know that you knew that went through? And what are they doing now? And we'd love to hear a student story.

**Steve Bautista** [00:45:12] The other piece of my study, something I've been thinking about for a long time now, is the role of hope and what that plays in the experience of students. Because as I've sat with for so many years and watch them journey from community college and into their professional careers and seeing them navigate such challenging experiences all the way through, as part of my dissertation, I really wanted to study some of the nonacademic factors, and the factor that I picked was hope. And what I learned is is that hope is something that's present in the whole experience of these students. And the way it plays out with faculty members are that faculty members can use their position as institutional agents to really provide hope to students. Jeff Duncan-Andrade talks about this. This thing called critical help, right? And he defines critical hope as both an action and as a verb. That's not something that exists, but it's also something that you do. And he unpacks critical hope into three different areas, and part of the experience of hope is having their having teachers demonstrate hope, not just by their words, but by their actions. And when I ask students in my dissertation, what inspired what work did professors do to inspire hope? It was the relational things I had one students share with me that she was homeless at one point in time in her community college career and a professor, not a counselor professor had actually gotten her to and just talking with her, had learned about her homeless situation. And this professor shared with her and said to her, If your family needs a place to live, come to my house. You can live with me, right? And that stuck with that student for her whole journey. And that's something that really locked her into the role of teachers and being able to really care for their students. Other examples that we're sharing my study were teachers who provided financial resources that they couldn't afford to book. So the professor gave the student the money for the book and said, go buy the book, right? And it's those types of actions and those kinds of willingness to step in to the student's journey in a significant way and to help them overcome some of the systemic barriers that we know exist and be the person that it needs at that point in time is really, really important. And you don't do that unless you know your students. You don't know you can't do that unless you actually make the effort to get to know your students on a personal level to see what they're going through. That's the thing that really, I think I would want to communicate and do communicate with the educators that work in community college and even who become my future teachers that you get to know your students, you know who they are and what their experiences are, so that you can help them with the learning process by helping see what other needs that they might have and helping it with those needs. So, you know, I think we don't do that enough. You know, we train our faculty on content expertize and we measure them in content expertize and we evaluate them and in their teaching strategies. But it's this humanistic aspect of teaching that I think is the most important and the relational aspect of it, because that makes a difference when you, you know, if you think back in your own journey of the effective educator you had, it's those teachers who have connected with you in some way, personally or in another way that maybe even challenged you to raise the higher expectations that you knew beyond yourself. That really pushed you to do something very different, something something you can expect yourself to do. And so, yeah, I think that's part of it. And I guess I maybe end with with a story here about one of the participants that really struck me was this was a young man who entered the K-12 system who was first language is not English. He struggled and he was did not have access to a bilingual teacher. And so he was bullied and teased for his inability to speak English. It really traumatized him going through K through 12. And he did not have a favorable experience going through and always could never find that thing to express himself. So the teacher that he connected with was an art teacher because in art class, he was not judged for his speech. He was not judge for his language skills. He was judged for what he could produce. Right. And he found that and he described it as a safe space for him to learn and get connected with. So his journey led him to come to community college, to major in art, to get a degree from a university and then become an art teacher himself. And then when I asked him, like as part of my questioning, what is the help you want to inspire in your students when you're a teacher? He shared that he really wanted to provide that same space for students who were like him in K through 12. That didn't have a voice. I didn't have a way to express themselves, but he wanted to create a space where he could that students could, could be who they wanted to be and be their full selves in the K-12 system and in the classroom, and with a teacher who understood their experience. That's powerful. And that's what we need. We need to create educators and produce educators who have that deep commitment, that critical consciousness, the awareness of things to really change the system, to really change the systems. It's it's powerful. And I think that's the way we we move forward and we change the system.

**AS** [00:51:07] That's beautiful. Thank you for sharing that. I can relate actually a little bit. I grew up in a New York City public school system and we had immigrated when I was little. I didn't speak English, and it was a very interesting experience for me. When English is not your first language and in my journey, actually, it's sad. I really can't point to any K-12 teacher. I can't go, wow, this person just blew my mind and was so incredible to me. I actually have to point to after the military and then going back to school. Actually, it was a few community college faculty. That's my first experience ever with a teacher who, just it's hard to explain. It's just the passion and kind of putting you under their wing and just letting you know that you matter and that you can do it. And so I had a few faculty like that. And so this kid who grew up in New York City was like C student, returns to college and I end up at Cornell. I tell this story a lot because, you know, Cornell is an Ivy, but I wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the faculty. So I'm very passionate about community colleges. I'm trying my best to work on especially the guided pathways ensure learning piece that when I'm trying to help colleges be more intentional about that pillar, I ask them, Remember when you had the teacher that kind of blew you away? And yeah, and I've asked this question like hundreds of times and the in the vast majority of times those teachers were in the minority. Can we just have more of them? You don't have to be an extrovert. I mean, if you're quiet, kind of. That's fine. You find your way to do that. So we just need more of those teachers. We call them faculty and higher ed but thier teachers. You are a teacher. This was amazing, Steve. Thank you so much. Such good info. I think the marathon is such a great metaphor because as you're running a marathon and then you have people on the sidelines giving you water, you have people cheering you on. And then you also have preparing for the marathon, a group of core people that they're supporting or helping you. Those are part of those four factors that you mentioned for future teachers. If you're going through this it's like a marathon, you got this this idea of building community, the specialized advisement, the early fieldwork experience, the role of faculty and counselors. These are the the support group to help you through that marathon. So I want to thank you so much for participating in the Student Success podcast. Happy, happy running! Steve.

**Steve Bautista** [00:53:51] Thanks so much.