**Eloy Oakley Interview**Learn how Chancellor Oakley's military-to-community college student experience continues to inform him, the dismantling of standardized tests that have devastated students, what baseball has to do with Guided Pathways, and advice for future higher ed leaders.

**AS** [00:00:00] For today's podcast, it's an honor to have Eloy Oakley, Chancellor for the California Community College System. Welcome to the Student Success podcast.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:00:09] It's a pleasure to be with you. I have been looking forward to this.

**AS** [00:00:13] We met, I believe it was November 2019. There was a conference in Riverside and I went up to you. I introduced myself and I think you saw my name tag and and you looked at me and you said, "I get your emails.".

**Eloy Oakley** [00:00:28] Right.

**AS** [00:00:29] And that actually surprised me that you actually opened them as well. So I, and since then, I've personally been trying to do a better job with social media. And about a couple of years ago, I finally started to get into Twitter and I've been following you. And when you tweet, I just go, yes, yes! And I get to learn more about your story. I didn't know so many things about you. I just like to unpack today, especially your experience as a returning student. But before we get into that, what I like to ask all guests, if you wouldn't mind sharing a hobby, perhaps a superpower or a special talent, something beyond your work.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:01:12] Sure. Whether fortunately or unfortunately, there's, my work tends to be 24/7. And that is intentional. It's a passion. The work that we're doing with community colleges or the U.S. or throughout the country, it's a passion. But when I am not focused on that passion, I'm focused on the passion of baseball, which is baseball season again. So the Dodgers are back. I grew up in L.A., so I bleed Dodger Blue as well as the Lakers. So those are the two things that I pay attention to. And I'm not paying attention to higher ed, hoping that we can get both teams back into into the championship season again.

**AS** [00:01:52] Did you play ball?

**Eloy Oakley** [00:01:54] I played a lot of sports, that's growing up in south east L.A. That was the one thing that provided an escape. So played basketball, baseball, spent most of my time playing football. That's a whole nother story. But that's actually what got me offers to go on to a four year university, which I ultimately turned down and chose to join the army. But football is probably the sport that I spend most of my time.

**AS** [00:02:23] So you watch baseball and all. I have to admit this. I don't watch a lot of sports because I just can't take the anxiety.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:02:33] Oh, yeah, no, I have a lot of anxiety, particularly when it comes playoff time.

**AS** [00:02:39] The UCLA games. I'm a I'm a Bruin. I did my graduate work there. The recent UCLA game. Just the anxiety that it built. As I mentioned earlier, I got to know more about you through social media. And one of the things I learned is that you, as you stated, you were enlisted in the Army and I was enlisted as well. And a lot of people don't know is that there's a big difference between the enlisted class and the officer class,

**Eloy Oakley** [00:03:09] That's for sure.

**AS** [00:03:10] And when I'm often asked, well, I did go straight out of high school. I spent a wonderful summer with the sand fleas and mosquitoes in Parris Island, South Carolina. They said, well, what's the difference? And I say, well, enlisted people tend to come from the poorest communities of the country and they are really the backbone of the military, they are the working class of the military. They are the ones who actually get things done. When we have veterans coming into the community college system, what all people don't know is that they come from that enlisted ranks, people who don't have a degree like the officers have. And so they're looking for their next career. And so would just love to know. Just dig into your experience when you left the military and when you were looking into college. Can you take us through your experience from that moment of outreach to registration to classes? And who and what helped you be successful?

**Eloy Oakley** [00:04:17] Sure. As you describe being in the military, and I was, most of my time was spent in the 82nd Airborne Division. And the enlisted, we do most, we mostly do most of the heavy lifting. The one thing that struck me clear was that I was helping a lot of our lieutenants. I was the company commander's radio guy, I was humping that radio with them, calling out the playbook as we did our exercises to the lieutenants. But the one thing that clearly separated me from them, even though I was telling the lieutenants what to do, was a piece of paper. That degree that left an impression on me when I left the military after four years that was an important differentiator between where I was and where those officers were. And I always noticed that they ate better than me, they slept better than me, and they got to do a lot of things that I wasn't doing. So that always stuck in the back of my head. So after I got out of the military, I'd already started a family was working. I can't speak to everybody's experience, but for me, those four years in the military were a good thing for me. It took several years before I decided to go back to school, working and again working hard for people that were running a business. And I realized again that what was the difference? I was working for them. And the reason I was working for them is because I lacked that formal education. I decided one day, and I was driving by Golden West College, I was living in Long Beach at the time, just decided to stop, picked up a class schedule and decided to enroll. And that was that was really it. I was fortunate that when I got onto campus, I met some people that really set me on the right path. I always say this, but if it wasn't for a community college, I wouldn't be here today. And there's no doubt about that because we're open to the top one hundred percent of students that come through our doors. They were open for me. I didn't have to worry about whether or not I was going to get accepted, didn't have to worry about whether or not I had been hadn't been to schoo in six or seven years. But they opened the door. I got in front of people who appreciated me for who I was and gave me a roadmap. And that's all I needed. So it's an experience that informs me every day I come to work because, you know, I was lucky. And our system is relies too much on the luck of students like me. So, yeah, no, that's that experience that has shaped me. Very fortunate that I've had that experience. But the struggles that I went through just to get through college and to get transferred to UC Irvine are what really keeps me coming to work.

**AS** [00:07:20] I remember when I left the military, I'm originally from New York City, but I stayed in California.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:07:26] Smart. Yeah,.

[00:07:29] I arrived here. It was February, it was about seventy eight degrees and no humidity in San Diego. Are you kidding me? I got to stay. I've always been a planner and I learned more of that even in the military. And when I was looking for a community college, I wanted to know what what what does it take? What I need to do. A little recon, if you will. They said, well, you have to take these tests. And I said, oh, tests. Like for what? And they said, well, to get into math and English, you have to take these tests. And, I haven't done math in forever. Not a lot of students have this, but I had a little bit of money and I got myself a tutor to help refresh some things. And to be quite honest, I didn't learn a whole lot. They taught me a lot of tricks to test taking and I did take the placement tests. I'm fortunate I got into a transfer level English and math, but it was a few faculty members that actually put me under their wing. They said, hey, we like how you're doing. I'll never forget this. I was getting some food in the cafeteria as I was walking up a faculty and I was walking with me and he said, "Hey, Al, you're doing really well in the classes. Do you think you might apply to any of the UCs, UC Berkeley or UCLA?" And I'm like, he was crazy because that wasn't my experience growing up. That was for other people. I call them the Biff and Buffies, just to have that image in my mind of them wearing a cardigan. It's just that wasn't, that wasn't me. But he, this is the first time, actually it's sad, I didn't get this in K-12 where someone believed in me in the community college. Did you have any experiences like that with faculty or others that you wouldn't mind sharing?

**Eloy Oakley** [00:09:23] You know, I tell the story a lot, but when I was in high school, I'd get into my share of trouble. My high school counselor, that junior year I had my meeting with her. She just took me aside and said, 'Eloy, you really don't need to worry about the UCs, let's focus on maybe other opportunities, maybe some career training or other community colleges, because, I mean, it's just going to be too much to think about the UC for you." And so that that stuck with me. And as you said, you know, growing up and in working class communities, that's always something for somebody else. You know, I grew up in the shadow of UCLA and USC and all I knew about them was their football schedule. I never thought about going to either one of those schools that, you know, that well, maybe I can play football or get into a school, but at six one one, one hundred eighty seven pounds in high school wasn't big enough to go to any of those schools. So that was my experience as well. And when I went to community college, I wasn't even thinking about the UC. I was fortunate that I came across a counselor. Susan Winters was her name. Unfortunately, she passed away, but she took some time with me and said, "You know, I think that there's a path for you to UC Irvine. They have a guaranteed admissions program right now. It's called ZOT. And if if you're open to a couple of majors, we can get you in and, you know, you fill out this contract, you take these courses and you get a minimum GPA, and if you do that, you're in." That's all I needed to know. Once I knew that, I knew I could do it. Because, as you said, you know, those of us who come from the military, the one thing we're good at is when you hand us the plan, we'll execute the plan. So I executed that plan and I got into UC Irvine. But what makes this story even funnier is my time at Golden West was great. But like everybody, we run into into professors from time to time. You know, there was a time where I wanted to be a chemist. So I was taking all of the chemistry, all the math, got into organic chemistry. And I knew the professor because I hung out a lot in the in the chemistry lab. His name was Stan Winters, an unfortunately passed as well. And and by the way, I really like Stan, but when it came time to enroll in organic chemistry, he pulled me aside. One day when he saw me in the lab, he said, "Hey, look, I see you enrolled in my class for fall." I said, "Yep, I sure did, Stan. I want to be in the best organic chemistry class." And he said, "Well, I need you to think about about pulling out. I need you to think about taking Professor so-and-so's class." And I said, "Why?" He said, "You know, my class is hard. You know, you're a little older, you've got a family. You're not going to have time to study. I don't want to set you up for failure. And so I think you need to take the night class with professor." You know, that really set me back. It you know, I thought about it the whole night. Then I woke up kind of pissed off. So on the next day, I said, "No, Dr. Winters, I'm going to take your class, but I appreciate you thinking about me." And of course, I passed that class. But the funny story is Stan Winters wife, who was the counselor, Susan Winters. It's an interesting juxtaposition of one side of that marriage helped me get to UC Irvine. The other side of that marriage tried to keep me from doing what I felt I needed to do. So, but if it wasn't for that counselor, I would never have thought about going to UC Irvine. And, of course, I wouldn't be here. The last part of the story, I'll tell you is, like you, I had to take a placement exam. I didn't know any better, so I just didn't prepare for it. I didn't know that the test was going to be given. I showed up, I took the test. And as you can imagine, I didn't do that great. It had been seven years since I'd taken math and I got into two levels below transfer level algebra. So that's the other piece that stuck with me is, you know, once I had some hindsight, I thought, why, you know, that cost me almost a year and a half in the community college. And I was an older adult. I was working, raising a family. There was so many times where I thought, I can't keep doing this. You know, I'm just going to go find a job and keep working. That experience really tainted my thinking. And to this day, you know, I I'm a firm believer that those placement exams do much more harm than good. And I'm glad that we finally got to the point California, where we're putting those exams in the rearview mirror.

**AS** [00:14:33] What a wonderful story. Thank you for sharing that. I was going to ask you, if the Winters, if they were related. So it's so funny that it was a husband and wife team. Guys always got to listen to the wife for sure.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:14:46] That's for sure.

[00:14:47] Thank you for sharing that. When I was in high school, I was working, I don't know, 40 hours a week. And I remember when it came time to the SAT actually was called the PSAT, a first trial run. And then you take it. And I looked at those tests. I don't know what these questions are asking, what is this? And plus, you're asking me to answer these in about a minute and a half each. I just I don't get it. My whole K12 experience did not prepare me for these tests. That's a very interesting experience, because when I went in the military and then I went to college, back to the faculty, a history faculty, is no longer with us, Ron Yoshino at Riverside. He encouraged me. He knew I was from New York. He said, "Al, you should also check out the New York schools. Like Cornell." I said, "Oh, man. Ron, you're talking UC Berkeley now, you're talking about Cornell?" "You should do it. You should." So the interesting thing is that along the way, in my college experience, he said, "Al, why don't you become part of this club? I said, "All right, Ron." "Why don't you take a leadership role?" I said, "All right." He said, "Hey, you do some volunteer hours. Why don't you go to student services and fill out that form where they can capture all your volunteer hours and what he was doing, he was building my transfer application.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:16:09] Right, exactly.

**AS** [00:16:11] And he wrote this amazing recommendation. And I get into Cornell. But here's the thing about Cornell. As one of the eight Ivy League, it tends to be more progressive in how it opens its doors more widely compared to the other ones. And as a transfer student, they gave you an option of whether you want to submit SAT scores or not. And I thought that was fantastic because if those scores were really predictive of how I was going to perform, it just didn't pan out that way. I had, I think, at least 3.83 GPA at the community college. And then I graduated from Cornell with a 3.73. The test would have said otherwise.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:16:54] Right.

**AS** [00:16:55] And so I'm glad we're talking about this. And again, this comes from following you on Twitter when I saw your tweets about SAT and ACT, and yes, man, absolutely, I'm there with you. But community colleges for years, even though they don't have the SAT, they've had their own version of it, which were these placement tests. And and as a student, I don't know if you remember Eloy, I remember vividly one of my peers in particular, she's a single mom, two kids. And she said, "I can't. I have to drop out.." And I said, "Why? You're doing great!" She tested very low. So, she's basically completing the high school English and Math curriculum and she she dropped out. I always remember her and there countless students that this happened to. So that said, I'd love for you to, especially because there are people who listen to this podcast outside of California, if you can unpack what a AB705 is and what it has accomplished.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:17:57] Sure. First of all, I mean, the standardized testing has a long history in the United States. And some of it is, a lot of it, is not very good. I mean, it has a lot of eugenic roots, a lot of racist roots in how it started and how it was used by different colleges and universities. So, you know, the whole basis here, particularly in the community colleges, is been how did it, how do companies like the College Board or ACT take what they developed for the four universities and sell it to the community college? And they did a great job. They sold to community colleges that you can test your students in math and English, and this will give you a better idea of where they should start. And of course, we as educators trusted it, and t we dove into it. And nearly every community college in the nation was using either accuplacer or compass, two primary placement exams that were created by College Board. And so this was big business, very big business. If you consider that, you know, they're somewhere around fourteen hundred community colleges in the nation, all using this test thousands of times a semester. That's a lot of money. So when I was at Long Beach City College, I had the pleasure of being president of Long Beach City College. I had an amazing team of researchers led by Dr. John Hetts, who's now with me at the Chancellor's Office. At the time, there was research being done at the Community College Research Center at Columbia University that was uncovering the fact that these tests had very little predictive value. So we started questioning the test of Long Beach and Dr. John Hetts was showing me data that clearly showed the impact to our student body in Long Beach. We were then and are Long Beach now is a majority minority serving institutions, but it is an institution that had seen a lot of demographic change and it was primarily a white community then over the last decade or two become very much a minority city and community. And Long Beach City College was the same. So John showed me clearly how the placement exams were having a disproportionate impact on our students of color, black students, Latino students. And we have a big Asian, had a big Asian Pacific Islander community in Long Beach, a big Cambodian community. So these tests were devastating these communities by placing them in remedial courses to three levels below college level math and English. So these students would never get out. I mean, yes, there would be those handful of success stories, you know, the students that came in three levels below and transferred to Harvard. That's one in several thousand several hundred thousand episodes, predominantly what was happening was these students would not finish, they would drop out, they would burn up their financial aid. They would get so frustrated that they would stop. They had to go to work. They had to care for their children, their families. So based on that research, we developed multiple measures, placement system, Long Beach, back around 2012, that were several other colleges doing something similar. Cuyamaca College was doing something similar. And so we just kept pushing and we found that within one or two semesters the number of students of color being placed in transfer level courses was growing by three, four or five hundred percent. Sometimes an amazing difference. And then these students were succeeding at the same rates. So you started to see this community of practice growing. More and more colleges were looking at the RP Group got involved, several research organizations got involved. So when I had the privilege of becoming Chancellor of the system, I teamed up with my colleagues at the Campaign for College Opportunity. We all felt that this was in order for us to achieve the vision for success goals, in order for us to really have equity in the system. We needed to dismantle standardized testing and we needed to think about a different way of doing this. And so, fortunately, a lot of forces came together. We had author of the bill, Jacqui Irwin, who believed in this as well, and a governor who believed in this as well. So we were able, through AB 705 to dismantle standardized testing in California for our community colleges and create a new system of placing students based on. Actual predictive values, like high school transcripts, like things that really can predict how they're going to do, and that's really changed the way we think about remedial education, because by doing that, we've essentially seen many of the remedial education courses that were developed to trap students go away. And we've seen tremendous increases, particularly for students of color completing transfer level math and English. We think that this has been a huge step toward equity in our system. I've had the pleasure of talking with our friends at CUNY, with friends throughout the nation. We're part of the strong start to finish coalition in the nation. And AB 705 is really the cornerstone of what they're trying to do to spread the word across the country. So we really seen a huge increase. And then, of course, along the way, there's also the SAT and ACT. And because I have the pleasure of also being a UC Board of Regents, this question has come up there as well. And we've just seen the same kind of attitude that it's time to question what standardized testing has done to our institutions and questioned the solutions that we've been sold for so many decades and come to believe. And this is the problem, we've come to believe that these are real standards of talent and ability when in fact they have nothing to do with telling us whether a student is talented or able. All it tells us is whether or not they've had either the family resources to get ready for that test or they were fortunate enough to be enrolled in a school that really helps prepare students for that test or they were lucky. I'm just really glad to see us begin to turn the corner on standardized testing. And I probably won't be happy until I see the dismantling of the College Board, because I just don't believe that they have seen or really have internalized how much damage they have done to students of color.

**AS** [00:25:17] As you probably aware, I coach many campuses, and my, the coaching that I do, I learned a lot from my experience in K-12, which is to get really down deep into colleges settings and take them through a process. And I'm there with them side by side. I'm not telling them what to do, which is the Peter Drucker quote about how culture eats strategy for lunch. I say for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And when I try to do is ensure that culture doesn't eat up very important priorities, such as AB 705 or guided pathways. So, in my work, one of the beauties of AB 705 that I have seen is this light bulb, these are a-ha moments that faculty members have had enough of how it's challenged to elevate their pedagogy. That, yes, some of these students are going to be a little bit, what they would deem underprepared, but by improving our instruction, by giving them that support, by believing in them, we're seeing that not only are we having more students of color coming into transfer our transfer level, English and math, but they're succeeding. And there's still some work to be done in terms of equity gaps. And that's OK, we'll work, we're working on it. And by the way, I make the argument that closing equity gaps is not enough, because if you have completion rates, let's say, of the highest are 30 percent and everybody reaches 30 percent, that's very unacceptable. That to me, I think is a really good. We often hear educators hate mandates. They don't like to be told what do. But this is a particular one that I feel is again, I go back to my experience as a student, without AB 705, this just wouldn't have happened and would have been pockets of there like at Long Beach, Cuyamaca. But it just wouldn't have been system wide because people wanted to protect really the status quo. I want to go to baseball for a moment. Use it as a metaphor. Guided pathways central to that was actually AB 705, getting rid of all the dev ed wilderness. But there's a lot more to it. And as you, as let's say, you're the manager and you're looking out in the field and you're seeing all the colleges. These are these are the players in California. California is one of only two states that provided substantive funding for guided pathways. Washington is the other one, as in California, to go into the fifth year funding, as you look at the players out there, as you see the game going, what do you think is going well? And what are you as a manager or coach, what are some of your concerns as we go into this fifth year?

**Eloy Oakley** [00:28:18] You know, the way I think about guided pathways is this you know, when I became Chancellor, there were several colleges that were already sort of starting to use the guided pathways. That pathway model as we know it today. The guided pathway model has been around for a long time. Whether it was, you know, if you were an achieving the dream institution, you were following sort of a similar model, or if you're following the Gates completion by design methodology, we're following a similar model. But they all sort of have this one fundamental point, which is intentionality, intentionality in the way we design our processes for students, in the way that we schedule, and then in the way that we intentionally design around the student and their needs, not the institutional needs. So guided pathways seemed like the best likely choice to implement in such a disparate system like the California Community Colleges, know we were all over the map. Many people still still think we're all over the map. But I thought it was really important that we adopt a common language about the way that we're approaching the problem in a way that we're approaching the data way, that we're approaching the key, the key progress indicators. Fortunately, there was a book that everybody could have that my good friend Davis Jenkins and his colleagues put together. So it was a roadmap that we could use and use it as an umbrella to then begin to do a lot of the reforms that needed to take place to implement things like AB 705. It started with a handful of forward leaning institutions. We're able to get them some funding and get them going. So they sort of led the charge. And then we came in with the state funding that opened the door to it, to all the colleges. So I think we've come a long way. I think as the manager, I see the team coming together very well. You know, we're now talking in the same language. We know the the playbook. Not every player is completely, you know, adept at implementing the playbook, but we're all working off the same playbook. We've been able to link all the policy that we've created around the Pathways framework so that people can see how it all fits together. You know, before the pathways, we always had these different reforms or different funding mechanisms that would come into play and nobody could really understand how they fit together. For me, that was important because if we're going to move the system along, we all have to understand how all these things fit together. And we need to have a basis for why we're doing what we're doing. And so those four pillars and the Guided Pathways framework really help anchor everything that we're doing. So from that perspective, you know, it's like, and I don't mean to sound like we didn't have a great system to begin with, we did have amazing educators, amazing leaders, but as a team, we weren't working well together. I think we have a great system now in place that allows us to move forward, that allows us to introduce new things that are linked to it so that people can see why it's there. But we still have a lot of work to do in terms of implementing all four pillars at every college in the system. And then finally, one point that you made. This is more about changing culture than it is about changing practice, because it is the culture that needs to change the way we think about the problem, that needs to change the way our language, the language that we use needs to change the way we think about students. Do we think about them from a deficit point of view or do we think about them from an asset point of view? All those things matter because there's so many intangible things that happen on a college campus that impact student behavior so much that it is that culture that really sets the tone. How do we treat a student from the day he or she walks on the campus? Sometimes that has more to do with whether or not they succeed than the actual instruction in the classroom not to take anything away from the faculty in the classroom. But, you know, it's really about how the student feels. Do they see themselves in the faculty and staff on campus? Do they feel valued, know all those things matter? So I think guided pathways in that way has been a big success in that we are beginning to really change the way we think about the problem. And then from there, you know, I'm confident that the answers will come. Our colleges are, no other system of higher education is more dedicated to the students and community colleges are. So I think once we have the right framework, the right incentives, the right culture in place, those answers will come. Because I can honestly say that 99.9% of the faculty and staff on our campuses come to work for the right reason, and that's to serve students. That's all they do.

**AS** [00:33:32] As we wrap up, I wanted to hone in on students. I'm aware that at many campuses in the UC, that they are what they call these NASPA fellows. These are, in education, we put everything into acronyms. I don't even remember what it is. But the people who want to go into higher ed, especially in student affairs and there are students at some of the UCs, I know that they're part of, have workgroups as part of I think it's under associated student government, and they're working to make a more seamless transition, for example, for community college students to enter. They're providing a policy recommendations to leadership. These are our future leaders. These are students recognize early on a path, which is they want to go into higher ed. They want to make a difference. What do you say to these aspiring leaders, this generation, which, by the way, I must say they they are, they're often characterized with broad strokes of this, is the lazy generation. And this is, I think there's always been those people and they tend to be, from my experience, in the higher, very higher incomes levels, whereas the more poor and middle class don't have the luxury to be lazy and entitled. And so these people who marched their feet on the ground for Black Lives Matter, they're activists. They want a better world. So what do you say to these aspiring students who want to be higher education leaders? Any any advice you have for them?

**Eloy Oakley** [00:35:19] Well, first of all, let me say that our students are some of the most resilient individuals in society. They're amazing group. I couldn't be more prouder of this generation of students. They have shown us adults what real commitment and sacrifice is all about. And they have shown us that we have gotten a little too comfortable. Those of us in leadership, in our lifestyle that, you know, a lot of a lot of us are willing to to risk it. But they risked everything over the last year and all these protests and all the work that they've done, the voting, the turnout, they're an amazing group. So I am very hopeful that they will consider leadership in higher education because, one, we need their experience, their resiliency in our system, their understanding of what students need. We need to diversify our faculty and our staff and our leadership in the community colleges, not because just for the sake of diversity, but for the sake of getting people in the classroom on our campuses that really understand the life experiences of our students and so that our students see their their lived experiences and the people that they run into on our college campuses. All students succeed with a diverse faculty and staff, not just students of color, all students. So I would encourage them to see higher ed as a place to exhibit leadership. They understand that life is difficult. This last year has been hugely difficult for them, and we need that kind of resiliency in our system because changing higher ed, leading in higher ed is difficult, it's extremely difficult, particularly for those that want to see change, that want to see things improve. Our systems seem to be built to resist change. We need change makers. We need individuals who really understand and are committed to change. And this group of students would be perfect in our system. So I'm hopeful that we can do everything we can, not only to encourage them to actually incentivize them to continue their education and to see particularly community colleges as a place for them to go and grow and lead.

**AS** [00:37:46] Thank you for those words of wisdom. Do you have any last words that you would like to impart?

**Eloy Oakley** [00:37:55] Sure, well, first of Al, I want to thank you all for one having me, but two for the work that you're doing. And you know, the reason that you stood out to me when I met you is because we need people who are willing to insert themselves, are willing to take on leadership. You know, you don't need a fancy title. You don't need to be president of a college campus to be a change maker, to be a leader. I want to just say thanks for the work that you're doing. You're engaging. You're trying to see change happen and you're talking about our students to the listeners. I just say, if you care about higher education, if you care about education, then get involved. Whatever you're doing today doesn't matter whether you're the groundskeeper or the college president or everyone in between or you're just somebody who lives near a college campus. You're somebody who's a parent who's got kids in higher education. Get involved, go to your local board meeting of the Community College Board of Trustees. Let them know what you think the right to the college president, write to the legislature, support public higher education and push for us to continue to open the doors to more students. Because, you know, if anything, what we've learned from the last year, from the last four years is that education matters and the world is changing faster than we can control it. It's going to continue to change and those who are going to benefit from the changes are going to be resilient. And the change are those who have had access to good quality, higher education. So we need to keep higher education alive and more accessible, democratize it. And that can't happen unless we have people from the outside pushing on us, coming to board meetings, making their thoughts known and showing leadership in their own way. So that's my final thought, is we need everybody we need everybody involved in order to see the change that we want to see and so that the future of our children and grandchildren will be even better than the opportunities we had. Because I think that's what we all want for our kids, is that they have a better opportunity than the ones we were afforded.

**AS** [00:40:21] Beautiful. Thank you for participating in the Student Success podcast.

**Eloy Oakley** [00:40:26] It's been great. It's been fun. Again, thank you for your work.