

## Las Positas – Building Systemic Racism Revisited

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I was saddened to read the Nov. 11, Mailbox criticism of Jesse Watson's recent article, "Las Positas College Paving the Way to Equity for Students." Why would one choose to belittle and politicize programs, the intent of which is to support, encourage and enhance educational opportunity for historically under-represented African Americans and other groups of color? The comment that no similar programs have been established for "blue-eyed blonde citizens" or "people of Portuguese ancestry" feels both disrespectful and unaware of the realities of our nation's history.

For all too long the "melting pot" idea has encouraged a 'one-size-fits-all' mentality, favoring the dominant culture. Honoring our diversity, on the other hand, encourages recognizing and respecting the ways in which we are all different. It has nothing to do with the "Balkanization" of our population.

The Umoja Learning Community Program (a Swahili word for "unity"), currently provides support for African American and other students of color in 70 of the 116 community colleges in California. It is unequivocally not 'systemic racist indoctrination.' It is a lifeline for tens of thousands of mainly young Americans striving for educational excellence.

Kudos to Las Positas College for being sensitive to, and in support of, the educational aspirations of all.

completion, and affordability. The college is also a top transfer institution and has the 8th highest transfer rates among California Community Colleges. Despite our high institutional standards, the college recognizes that there continues to be disproportionately distributed outcomes in student completion among our students. Institutional data informs our institutional goals, and one of these institutional goals is student equity, because of these persistent disproportionate student outcomes.

The college continuously disaggregates data by gender, age, and race to allow the campus community to analyze, discuss, and identify specific strategies to address the gaps in student outcomes for the students who would benefit the most. Las Positas College is committed to achieving equitable outcomes for all of our students.

The college values educational equality, and the college is committed to educational equity. Equality is about sameness; it focuses on making sure that each student receives the same resources and support to be successful. Equality assumes that all students are entering our college from a common, level playing field. Equity is about fairness and justice; it ensures that

### Making the Case for Equity

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Positas College

Las Positas College provides access to educational opportunities that allow our students to transfer to four-year universities, attain degrees, and increase students' employability and life-long success through career-technical training. Last year, the college was ranked the #1 best community college in California by BestColleges.com. These rankings are grounded in statistical data including academic quality, student