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Podcast episode transcript

Daniel Berumen:

We have a lot of very skilled, knowledgeable faculty researchers all over the campus, people who have done really important dissertations and written really important books. I think this allows them to take a lot of those skills and use it within a slightly different framework than just in the classroom.

Christina Barsi:

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

Sun Ezzell:

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi:

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak, by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

Sun Ezzell:

We bring to you the voices of Mount SAC from the classroom to completion.

Speaker 4:

I know I want to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

Speaker 5:

She is a sociology major, and she's transferring to Cal Poly Pomona. Psychology major, English major.

Speaker 6:

I'm transforming part-time into full time.

Speaker 7:

I really liked the time that you spent with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

Christina Barsi:

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

Speaker 8:

Think of the natural environment around us as a library.

Christina Barsi:

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mount SAC; but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast.

Sun Ezzell:

I'm Sun Ezzell, learning assistance faculty and Professional Learning Academy coordinator.

Christina Barsi:

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi:

Hi, it's Christina, and this episode is all about data! How data is being used on campus by faculty in their research and decision making processes. Tania Anders speaks with Daniel Berumen of the Research Department, as well as Lisa Rodriguez in the POD Office about how data coaching is a tool in creating a

culture of inquiry. Learn what a data coach is, how to work with one, and how this can influence your processes and outcomes in the classroom. More specifically, learn how data has helped secure our Title V grant.

Christina Barsi:

To learn more about all of this, you can attend the workshop called The Power of Our Data on March 13th from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM; and in addition, there will be a celebration of faculty who recently received their sabbaticals. Here's Tania.

Tania Anders:

Hi, my name is Tania Anders, and I'm a member of our Mount SAC podcasting team. Today, I have the pleasure of talking with Lisa Rodriguez, who recently joined the Professional and Organizational Development team, which many of us simply know as the POD Office, as well as Daniel Berumen, one of our senior research analysts. I wanted to learn more about data coaching and how data is successfully being used by faculty and others on our campus in their research and decision making processes.

Tania Anders:

So let me turn to Daniel first. Can you please introduce yourself?

Daniel Berumen:

Hi, my name is Daniel. I'm the senior research analyst here at Mount SAC. I just got here about six months ago; but prior to that, I have about 11-ish years of experience in institutional research offices at community colleges. So I came from Santa Monica College, where I had spent the last four or five years focusing on equity and guided pathways. Within that framework, I had done a lot of work within data coaching and creating something we like to call a culture of inquiry.

Tania Anders:

Wonderful. Let me ask you, can you tell us what is meant by a culture of inquiry?

Daniel Berumen:

Sure. So a culture of inquiry, I think it's a framework for colleges. It's an old concept. It's 15, 20 years old. We have this idea of a culture of evidence, right? A culture of evidence is that colleges have lots of data. So you have your pie data, you have your SLO data, we have data from the Chancellor's Office. Nowadays, particularly with the advancements in technology, we have a lot of data available. But a culture of evidence really takes that to a second level. It's not just, well there's data and there's evidence. It's that you're creating culture where practitioners are actively engaging and exploring the data, and you're having these sort of deeper conversations about what the data means and what you can do with the data.

Daniel Berumen:

A culture of inquiry is not a place where you see an administrator a faculty member sit in a room and they work through their pie together, and they just sort of copy and paste whatever's available on their datasheets or data dashboards. It's having open conversations, including different constituents on campus. So as I said, it's supposed to be very collaborative.

Daniel Berumen:

The idea is that as you expand these conversations, as you're getting deeper into the data and understanding what are ways to increase student success, you're really expanding the college's collective knowledge base. You're allowing a culture where you're able to add new initiatives, add new projects in a way that is much more effective, I think. Because not only are you really thinking through each of the effects of these initiatives to the college and to students, but it allows you to create buy-in from faculty, because they feel involved. So it's not like I'm an institutional researcher, it's a culture

where we end up doing all the data work and we just sort of hand you these reports. People don't like that.

Tania Anders:

So as a faculty member myself, I'm curious then how I can be successful in using data. So this new term for me has come up of data coaching. What is data coaching and how can faculty get involved?

Daniel Berumen:

Right. So data coaching is what are the tools you could use to create a culture of inquiry? A data coach is essentially, as I mentioned, it's an education leader who guides the college, or more specifically data teams, through the process of collaborative inquiry. Data coaches are trained generally in understanding our specific community college data, our specific student research, and understanding how to work within an equity-centered mind frame.

Daniel Berumen:

They get trained in these ideas, and then they go out and provide support to other faculty. They'll do things like they'll lead meetings or they'll lead trainings, they'll present at department meetings. They'll hold a role where if you're a faculty member who's a little distant or not sure how to connect to the campus culture, you can go to your data coach and get a better understanding of the data we have here and how you can be involved and how you can use that in your classroom.

Tania Anders:

That's fantastic. That's really awesome. I can't wait to have some data coaches on our campus.

Tania Anders:

Mount SAC was recently awarded a Title V grant, which is a federal grant for developing Hispanic-serving institutions. This particular grant we received focuses on creating an equity-minded campus culture to improve student outcomes.

Tania Anders:

So Lisa, as the person who's coordinating this Title V effort on our campus, I'm curious about your background. I'd love for you to introduce yourself to us and how data was used in securing this particular grant for our campus.

Lisa Rodriguez:

Thank you Tania. Well, I have about a nine year background with federal Title V grants, having been a technology coordinator on one at a university and also a graduate Title V success grant for students. So I managed the last Title V here at Mount SAC, which was building pathways to persistence and completion. That ended in 2018, and Mt. SAC went out for another competition and scored extremely highly and was awarded this grant. It couldn't have been done without data.

Lisa Rodriguez:

Within our structure for this grant, my background is in project management mostly, and I'm the assistant director of POD, but I'm also the person working with research. We will have a senior research analyst to track the data on the grant, but also set up the institutionalization of the projects that need to come to scale for a better institution that serves its faculty and students and constituents. So this grant has an amazing opportunity to do that, because its research is written, it's expected of us, but it's written into the actual goals and objectives of the grant.

Lisa Rodriguez:

So we have seven goals and nine objectives. The goal that matches the data coaching that has to do with that is the idea of building, as Daniel said, the capacity of faculty to access, understand, and use data in meaningful ways to measure the impact of their teaching on students.

Lisa Rodriguez:

We also need to report on faculty who have gone through the Equity Certificate Program through POD and how they're accessing the data coaches to then implement or experiment with the methodologies of bringing equity into their teaching practice. So there's a beautiful circular kind of movement going on here that the grant will help us ensure that we meet student and equity goals through this grant.

Daniel Berumen:

Yeah, and to build on that, I think that data coaching is really key to equity and guided pathways generally, because inquiry requires you to think about problems more deeply. The idea is instead of seeking sort of simple solutions, which I think generally come from a deficit minded framework, members of inquiry teams or data coaches, they tend to have an increased understanding of the specific needs and the experience of our racially minoritized students. When you sort of understand our students that way, you feel a little bit more agency and able to address their needs. You're also able to sort of facilitate challenging and sensitive dialogues about equity gaps and about addressing equity directly. It's a really useful tool to promote equity throughout the campus, so it makes complete sense that it's part of this grant.

Tania Anders:

I'm getting really excited about the opportunities that we now have for faculty with this grant, and others on our campus for that matter. But since I'm a faculty member, so how would I go about now if I wanted to get involved? Where can I get data?

Tania Anders:

In my case, I'm always really curious about my student population and how, of course, I can create a better experience for them in the classroom. So what would be some steps that I would need to do or take to access and receive data from, say, the research office or other sources that may be out there? Or what are the plans also for professional development, I guess, through this grant?

Lisa Rodriguez:

Well, I'll start with that, because we have a year one rollout plan where we are working with Academic Senate, with the VP of Instruction, and with the Title V Steering Committee to come up with the outcomes for the data coaches and the process by which they'll be selected. We will by the mid-springtime have all of that project rollout laid out.

Lisa Rodriguez:

But ultimately, the goal is to have six data coaches who will work closely with Research and Institutional Effectiveness and the POD Office and the Faculty Steering Team to have an intensive three-day training where they will become not only aware of the technical aspects of the work, but the philosophical ethos of the culture of inquiry. They will receive an LHE, and they will be working closely with faculty who self-identify as wanting to create student impact in their classroom using their own data.

Lisa Rodriguez:

So we're hoping, and Daniel will talk a little bit more about this, that those data coaches will become sort of like technology power users in terms of a dashboard, an equity dashboard created where they can have access to specific data that will help them map out a plan to improve equity in their classrooms.

Lisa Rodriguez:

Daniel, do you want to talk a little bit more about what that kind of looks like from the framework of becoming a data coach in terms of how much work it involves and what the opportunities are?

Daniel Berumen:

In my experience, we had data coaching at my last institution. One of the key pieces of, I guess, what they learn is how to access a lot of data and a lot of dashboards. So we would give data coaches access

to equity dashboards as was mentioned. I think our goal here is something similar, right? We do have a Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness, and we do take requests, and you can find our website on the Mount SAC website. We do provide some services to faculty, but a lot of our time is spent on sort of these larger institutional goals. So having data coaches who can access the same data we do will be really useful, because then it becomes easier for other people to connect to that data.

Daniel Berumen:

So our goal as an office is, as we're working with Title V on this, is to build dashboards that give you an idea of not just of what are our equity metrics at the college level, what are our students in our funding formula metrics, but what are the racial outcomes in your specific classrooms, your specific CRN? What do they look like at different subject levels? Training the faculty to access that data, use that data, share that data. That's going to be our goal, and that's going to be what we hope to provide is that piece.

Tania Anders:

Does that mean those trained data coaches, if I'm a different faculty member, I could contact a data coach then and say, "I'm really curious about getting more data on my classes. How many students do I have that are non-native speakers? Or how many students do I have that are returning students or veterans?" Then I could contact that data coach that, for example, is say for my division, and then they could look into that for me. Is that kind of the idea of this?

Daniel Berumen:

Yeah, completely. I think that's how it really works in practice. In my experience, I've seen data coaches, I think I mentioned this earlier, they will present equity data at department meetings, and they will have little subgroups within their divisions where they get together and they share each other's equity data and have these really deep conversations about what it means and what people have done to sort of mitigate these equity gaps. So yes, definitely, hopefully it will be a big piece of the work we're doing.

Lisa Rodriguez:

Well, the neat thing about the five-year effort is that when we are at the end of the fifth year and sort of at scale and ready to present the institutionalization of this, we will have developed 30 data coaches. Because we have five years on the grant, each year a new cohort of six data coaches are brought on board and developed. So the idea is that they don't repeat each year. So we should have a cadre of 30 well-developed data coaches by the fifth year.

Tania Anders:

That's really going to be so powerful. I know that at my previous institution, I used data to convince my dean at the time that they basically allowed me to split my classes between ... I was teaching geology there, that I was allowed to create a course that's just exclusively for geology majors and then one for the non-science majors, because I was able to show with data that there was over a 10% performance gap between the two groups. I really see this as something so wonderful that will make it hopefully really a success for our students also, which ultimately of course where we're interested in is having them all succeed in our classes.

Tania Anders:

So aside from faculty in the classroom, how are some other faculty using data in their work? I'm thinking maybe librarians or counselors, how are they using it?

Daniel Berumen:

I have met with data coaches who weren't just in classroom faculty, they were counselors, they were program specialists, they were librarians. These were people who they felt going through the process of data coaching, going through the process of getting involved in a culture of inquiry, really empowered them and empowered their work. They talked about feeling that they could understand the larger issues facing the college, and they could implement really useful tactics and useful ideas specifically in their

counseling work, counseling programs really. I think they're generally really good about using data, but even for them having a data coach that they can connect with on a consistent basis, on a one-on-one, someone who understands where they're coming from, I think it's really useful. We talk a lot about specific classroom faculty, but this is a really useful tool for everyone. I think ultimately, the institution benefits when we expand this concept out to as many people as possible and open up data coaches as much as we can.

Tania Anders:

So that also means that it's going to be a very powerful tool for departments really as they're preparing their PIs, for example.

Daniel Berumen:

Yes, as they're preparing their pie. We've sort of talked a little bit or mentioned guided pathways, but at the state level, they really have encouraged colleges to use the data coaching model in the guided pathways framework. Right? We're re-imagining, we're redesigning the way we deliver our services and reimagining the way we essentially run the college in theory. Having data coaches in there in these discussions, having data coaches lead evaluations of different parts of the guided pathways initiative ends up being really powerful. Because again, because it's a faculty-driven concept, they feel a sense not just of empowerment, but a sense of ownership of this process. It doesn't feel like this is something that the Chancellor's Office is pushing onto faculty. They're able to take a sense of ownership. They're able to take a sense of, I learned these things that are useful in this process. Whether it's mapping, whether it's rearranging the delivery of your class, that stuff that they can feel like they're in control of, and they are able to influence it. And to do that using data-driven decision making, I think, you end up with better outcomes that way. Faculty understand that.

Daniel Berumen:

We have a lot of very skilled, knowledgeable faculty researchers all over the campus, people who have done really important dissertations and written really important books. I think this allows them to take a lot of those skills and use it within a slightly different framework than just in the classroom. I think that's a very useful piece. If you are skilled at that kind of work, this is an opportunity to use that on a consistent basis and to really sharpen those skills.

Tania Anders:

That's really fantastic. I'm really excited about this coming our way. Lisa, thank you for leading the efforts in getting this Title V grant rolling out here. We're so lucky to have you here on our campus, Daniel. So I want to thank you both for your time. Do you have any closing remarks you'd like to make?

Daniel Berumen:

I just want to say that I appreciate you having me on. Like I mentioned, I've only been here for a few months and getting to meet new people here on campus has been a meaningful experience. I appreciate getting this opportunity to meet the both of you and having these conversations with you. So I'm just grateful to be here.

Lisa Rodriguez:

I'll echo that Daniel and add that I love talking about Title Vs, and I love talking about institutional transformation when it's an egalitarian approach where we're a team making it happen for the students.

Lisa Rodriguez:

So I'm very easy to reach. My email is Lrodriguez208@mtsac.edu, and my extension on campus is 4177. If you'd like to learn more about the Title V grant and the other projects under it, which also are related to data and outcomes, please feel free to email or give me a call.

Tania Anders:

Oh, you're so kind. I know you're easy to find, because you're in building six in the POD Office. And Daniel is over in building four in the Research Office. So thank you again both so much for your time. We'll be excited to see this rolling out.

Christina Barsi:

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast. Remember to subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to get your podcasts so you can listen in the car, in your office, or however you like to listen. Once you subscribe, we'd love to hear what you think by leaving us a review. And don't forget to share your favorite episodes.