

An Evening with Dr. Cornel West - Lecture Event

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

Executive Summary & Survey Results

Event Summary:

An Evening with Dr. Cornel West was a program designed by the campus Professional Learning Team (PLT) in conjunction with the Professional and Organization Development (POD) Office and supported by the Offices of the Vice President of Student Services and the Vice President of Instruction.

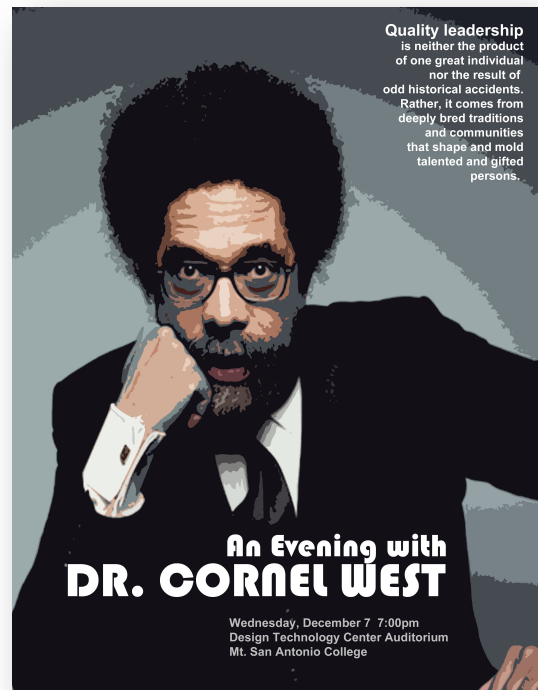
The lecture portion of the event included a VIP reception in the Forensics room attended by Dr. West and over 100 students, staff, faculty, and board members during which time Dr. West engaged directly with participants on a variety of topics.

The lecture in the Design Technology Center was attended by 380 staff, students, faculty, board members, and community members and lasted approximately 75 minutes with an additional 45 minutes of audience Q&A. More than 200 employees were pre-registered for the event.

Dr. West stayed afterward in the lecture hall lobby for almost an hour to meet with each person who wanted to speak with him personally.

Funding for the event was provided by the Student Equity funds directed toward employee professional development. Due to capacity limitations of the venue, the event was not widely publicized to students but it is estimated that over 100 students attended the lecture – including many from student equity organizations.

Additional components of this event included a student workshop by activist Nate Howard media interviews, and a professional development course for faculty – which will be reported on separately.



Evidence of Integrated Planning for this Event

Prior to approval of this event, a review was conducted by the Professional Learning Team of all appropriate campus planning documents to determine its appropriateness and potential value to the College. The following were identified as meaningful linkages between the objectives of this event and existing campus planning activity, specifically:

Link to College Mission:

“The College will carry out this commitment by providing an engaging and supportive teaching and learning environment for students of diverse origins, experiences, needs, abilities, and goals.”



Links to College Strategic Plan:

College Goal # 9: The College will provide opportunities for increased diversity and equity for all across campus; Mitigate disproportionate impact based on gender, race/ethnicity, disability, age, emancipated foster youth status, or economic status for student access, retention, degree and certificate completion, ESL and basic skills completion, and transfer.

Links to Equity Plan Goals:

Project F-22 Teaching and Learning Professional Development: Equity conferences and lectures: Invitations to experts and prominent speakers to discuss cultural awareness, research, trends, current conditions, resources, tools, symposiums, and planning that foster collaboration amongst faculty, staff, and students.

Links to Professional Development Plan Goals:

- 1.1 Customer Service/Cultural Competency
- 1.4 Student Support/Cultural Competency
- 3.1 Teaching and Learning Best Practices/Student Equity in Performance Outcomes

Survey Results

Method

A Qualtrics survey was sent immediately after the event and again in January 2017 and 84 people responded. With 380 people in attendance at the event, this is a sample percentage of about 22% of the lecture attendees.

General Satisfaction

- 9% of respondents did not know what to expect going in to the lecture. Of the rest, 99% said their expectations were met (63% said the event was *more than they expected*).
- 97% of respondents were satisfied with this event, with 86% of those indicating they were “very satisfied.”

Community

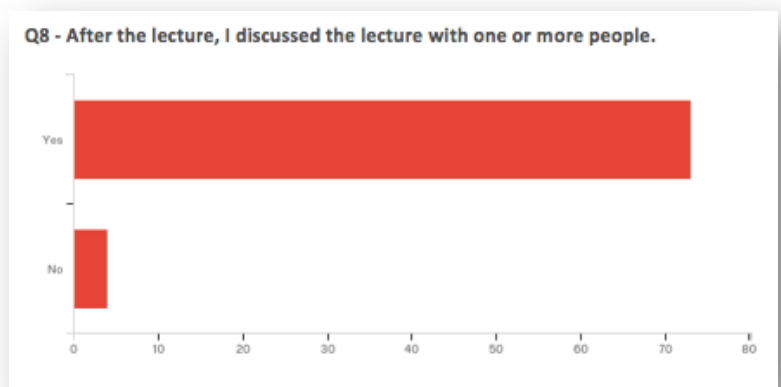
- 96% of respondents agreed that they felt a sense of community among the event attendees, with 56% strongly agreeing.

Equity Work Motivation and Ongoing Impact

- 96% left with a greater sense of purpose about their role in supporting our diverse student body. Of those, 73% “strongly agreed” that they were leaving with a greater sense of purpose.
- 95% of respondents discussed the lecture with one or more people after the event.

When asked, “What did you talk about?” many narrative responses indicated that subsequent conversations have already occurred based on this event related to our campus equity work. Sample comments:

- The importance of equity and building community bridges
- Several of the social equity themes Dr. West discussed as well as the issue of self accountability
- Advocating for underrepresented students
- We talked about being inspired to take Dr. West's message into the classroom and into our own lives



- Dr. West, Student Equity, Race Relations in America, and Our Role in achieving true education.
- His passion for promoting equity within all walks of life. Our responsibility to help students beyond just attaining their educational goals (e.g. helping them develop into socially minded citizens, helping them mature and find purpose). How he explicitly said that we have to love our students because for some of them we may be the only loving person in their lives. I agree that everything we plan and do for students should have the primary principal of love.
- I felt inspired and hopeful for what the future of education brings and how I can be more of an advocate.
- We also discussed, in depth, ideas dealing with equity at school, work, and life in general.
- I talked about how I felt challenged to seek deeper learning and examine if I am contributing enough in my role at Mt. SAC.
- Ways we could help our diverse students. Changes are necessary and social justice issues need to be addressed.
- Helping students see why they really pursuing their education Understanding what it is to see and learning more about cultural sensitivity and diversity
- His talk engaged everyone at the lecture, got us to talk and question, and made us reexamine our understanding of diversity.
- I shared about what I had learned: the need to speak out against injustice, avoid the temptation to be indifferent to suffering/injustice, work as a peace agent, relying on faith tradition, work towards equity, justice, peace; doing things out of love.
- We were able to discuss Dr. West's commitment to marginalized communities as well as the work we must do here on campus - not to focus on rigidity but appreciate nuance and foreground the difficult conversations.
- That equity work starts with self-reflection and self-inventory.
- The value of creating an Equity Mission Statement

Some respondents took time to detail some **specific actions** they have already taken based on their event attendance:

- I took a few notes during the talk. One quote that stood out was "Try again. Fail again. Fail better." This has so many implications for our work with students and in our personal lives. I shared this quote with our Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders at our last SI training meeting and plan to share it again in future semesters. It's a reminder that there is no learning without failure. We must try, try again and again, and improve each time. I've even changed my email signature quote to this as a reminder to always keep trying and learning and to not avoid learning something

for fear of failure. Dr. West's talk combined with a past diversity training from last fall also gave me an idea for an icebreaker that SIs can do with their students aimed at tapping into the students' motivation for being successful in college. I'm excited to try it with the SIs this winter/spring, and I hope they use it in their sessions too.

- I started re-reading Race Matters. I also looked into several more books to read over the winter break to remind myself of what Dr. West said, and think of ways I can apply some of it in my daily life and teaching life.

Closing the Loop

Closing the loop on professional development-related equity activities is extremely challenging – especially connecting employee attendance at a lecture directly to specific student success data. A more holistic assessment is needed for some plan components. At the core of our equity plan are human challenges that will not be solved by providing someone with a laptop or a space for study. We will only achieve equity when the people in the organization understand it, believe in it, and are willing to change both themselves and the institution to achieve it. *Our equity plan is only as good as our employees who enact it.* To this end, programs that provide context and motivation for our equity work are essential to the overall plan success – and should be assessed for their achievement of those goals.

Through events like this one, the Professional Learning Team hopes to ignite the “radical fire” in our employees to both comprehend and aggressively pursue equity goals and, in doing so, lead them toward additional professional development opportunities that will enable them to achieve specific and measurable components of our equity plan. We appreciate the institutional support of this approach, and responses from this event suggest we are on the right path.

Acknowledgments

PLT Members: Liesel Reinhart, Sun Ezzell, Julie Laverty, LeAnn Garrett

Additional Planning Team Members: Lianne Greenlee and the POD Team; Audrey Yamagata-Noji, Marcus Williams, Dalia Puentes, Michelle Stewart-Thomas.

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