

# **SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE**

Report on the Racial Climate for Faculty and Staff

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June 2018

# MESSAGE FROM TEAM LEADER

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The University of Southern California is home to a dynamic research and organizational improvement center that helps professionals in educational institutions, corporations, and other contexts strategically develop and achieve equity goals, better understand and correct climate problems, avoid and recover from racial crises, and engineer sustainable cultures of inclusion and respect. We do rigorous, evidence-based work that educates our nation, transforms institutions and organizations, boldly confronts racism, and strategically achieves equity.

Colleges and universities across the nation frequently call on the USC Race and Equity Center to conduct campus racial climate assessments. We have conducted climate studies at nearly 50 institutions. In February 2018, we spent two days conducting interviews for a climate assessment at Southwestern College. Typically, a trio of researchers from our center spends 3-4 days on a campus. But given our proximity to Chula Vista, we were able to send a five-person research team to Southwestern and conduct all interviews over two days. The team included Yianna Drivalas, Oscar Patrón, Nadia López Moreno, Dayna Meyer, and me.

This report includes a description of our assessment process and a presentation of findings from interviews we conducted with racially and ethnically diverse groups of faculty and staff members at Southwestern. Several publicly available news stories and unsolicited documents sent to us via email from various employees of the College also informed our analysis. The report concludes with several recommendations for the Southwestern Community College District Governing Board, President Kindred Murillo, and other campus leaders.

Faculty and staff members at institutions where we conduct climate assessments often want to know how their campus compares to others we have studied. Unfortunately, Southwestern's climate is one of the 2-3 most toxic – many of our discoveries there are especially troubling. We hope our findings and recommendations can help the College foster a fairer, inclusive, less hostile, and more equitable climate for its employees.

**Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D.**

Executive Director, USC Race and Equity Center  
Provost Professor of Education and Business  
Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership

# ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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President Kindred Murillo contacted the USC Race and Equity Center in July 2017 to explore the possibility of having us come to Southwestern College to conduct an assessment of the campus racial climate for employees. Because our center was still transitioning from the University of Pennsylvania, its birthplace, we were unable to get the climate study scheduled before February 2018. Between July and February, we exchanged several emails and had multiple telephone calls with President Murillo and Janelle Williams, the College's Professional Development Coordinator. It is important to note that Kindred and Janelle were extremely careful about not contaminating our appraisal of their institution. They never provided specific examples of situations that had occurred there, but instead spoke broadly about the College having some racial issues that were in need of examination. Their carefulness is commendable.

Our five-person research team spent February 14 and 15 conducting 90-minute interviews with homogeneous groups of employees at Southwestern. Groups were separately arranged by race/ethnicity: Asian American and Pacific Islander, African American, Latinx, Multiracial, Native American, and White.

One team member was assigned to spend the entire day with the same racial/ethnic group. Focus group interviews were also arranged by role type: administrators, classified professionals, and faculty. There were a total of 30 interview slots across the two days in which 119 Southwestern employees participated.

It is important to note that the participant recruitment process was coordinated by the College, not by our research team.

On April 27, 2018, Shaun Harper returned to Southwestern to do a preliminary presentation of the findings. President Murillo, along with several dozen faculty and staff members attended; at least one governing board member was there. Findings presented in the pages that follow are the same as those described at the event, just in longer form and with some illustrative examples.

No one at any point suggested or insisted we modify our findings. Therefore, the six themes presented in the next section are uncontaminated and emerged from an honest analytic process.

Eight common questions were posed in each focus group. Team members asked follow-up questions to elicit elaboration, explanation, and illustrative examples. Here are the questions we asked, minus our follow-up probes:

1. If you were talking to an [Asian American] friend who wants to work at Southwestern, what would you tell them it is like to work here as an [Asian American] employee?
2. In what ways do [Asian American] employees experience Southwestern differently from employees of other races?
3. In what ways do [Asian American] employees experience Southwestern differently from [Asian American] students?
4. Employees of what race enjoy the strongest sense of belonging and respect here at Southwestern?
5. By a show of hands, how many of you feel that [Asian American] employees have fair and equal opportunities for advancement, pay raises, and promotion here at Southwestern? Say why you feel the way you do.
6. Talk a bit about how employees across different races interact and get along here at Southwestern.

7. Let's go back to the hypothetical question with which we started this conversation... your [Asian American] friend who is thinking about working here... let's say that friend gets the job... what advice would you give that friend about successfully navigating Southwestern College as an [Asian American] employee?

8. We are going to write a report to the Southwestern College administration. What recommendations should we give your campus leaders about better supporting and ensuring the success of [Asian American] employees here at Southwestern?

Each focus group was audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. We analyzed the transcripts to identify common themes which are presented as key findings in the next section.

In addition to the interview data, our appraisal of the climate is informed by our readings of news stories about racial incidents at the College. We also received an unusually large volume of unsolicited emails from Southwestern employees, including some who were not participants in our interviews. These documentary sources deepened our understanding of what we heard in the focus groups. Notwithstanding, this report is based almost entirely on data collected via our formal process.

# KEY FINDINGS

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Several themes emerged from our interviews with 119 employees at Southwestern College. The six presented in this section were either particularly salient or were discussed across multiple racial/ethnic groups and role types.

## **Presidential and Governing Board Commitment**

Employees across groups frequently referred to Kindred as the “clean up president.” They understood her to be the person whom the Board hired to fix many of the climate, cultural, and operational problems that led to the dismissal of the previous president. There was near-unanimous praise for the ways in which President Murillo messages the College’s commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Her email messages to the campus were repeatedly mentioned. Accordingly, she consistently uses those messages to convey her values and what she hopes will be the values that Southwestern enacts. Faculty, administrators, and classified professionals said over and over again that the USC Race and Equity Center was hired to do this climate assessment because President Murillo has a mandate from the Governing Board to improve the College’s image. Despite their appreciation for the much-

needed attention that President Murillo is placing on these issues, some acknowledged the paradoxical composition of her senior leadership team. They felt she has had opportunities to appoint people of color to significant leadership roles, but has chosen not to. Other critiques of President Murillo were offered in some of the unsolicited email messages we received. A synthesis of those is not offered here because the senders had problems with the College that extended far beyond the scope of our racial climate assessment.

On the whole, employees were pleased with Kindred’s approach to correcting Southwestern’s climate problems and they seemed grateful to have her leading the College. Notwithstanding, some pointed out that a Hispanic-Serving Institution with a mostly Latinx governing board hired another White president in the midst of a highly publicized racial crisis. Those persons questioned the Board’s commitment and recognition of a lost strategic signaling opportunity. They were not questioning President Murillo’s qualifications or her seriousness. But they were suggesting that hiring a person of color as Melinda Nish’s successor would have demonstrated the Board’s understanding of racial complexities on campus.

## **Myriad Manifestations of Anti-Blackness**

The overwhelming majority of the USC Race and Equity Center's campus climate assessments are conducted at predominantly white four-year colleges and universities. Over the past 11 years, African American students, faculty, and staff have shared with us especially horrendous examples of their encounters with racism on campuses. Unfortunately, we have grown accustomed to this. But honestly, the stories we heard from classified employees at Southwestern were the worst of any place we have been.

At all but one institution where we have done student-focused climate studies, at least one student (oftentimes more than one) has been called a nigger by a White peer, professor, or staff member. Never have we heard this from an African American employee in any of our climate assessments until our visit to Southwestern. Multiple classified employees have been called niggers by their White and Latinx colleagues on campus. African American custodians said that whenever they talk on two-way radios (walkie-talkies), their White and Latinx co-workers make monkey sounds. Other classified employees have repeatedly had the campus police called on them because White professors mistook them for trespassers and homeless persons. Noteworthy is that

with the exception of one specific incident, only African American classified professionals (not faculty and administrators) told us they had experiences such as these. The one now full-time faculty member, who was an adjunct at the time the incident occurred, says she was beaten by a police officer in a parking lot on campus because he mistook her for a trespasser. Being assaulted this way did not tarnish her view of the College, she said. It seemed that she was quite grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to successfully compete for a full-time faculty position. She did make clear that because of her upbringing, she does not often view situations through the prism of race.

The painful experiences African American classified employees described led us to one reasonable conclusion: there is a palpable climate of anti-blackness at Southwestern College. It is important to note that anti-black views are not only held by White people, but also by their Latinx co-workers, many participants felt. Many had multiple examples of being passed over for promotions, while less-qualified colleagues from other racial/ethnic groups advanced. Some talked about despite having master's degrees and many more years of directly relevant experience, they were passed over for applicants with no college degrees and significantly less full-time professional work experience. We write much more about

this in the section of this report titled “How HR Processes Affect Racial Climate,” which begins on Page 11.

In addition to being called niggers, unnecessarily confronted by campus police, and associated with animals, African American classified employees had numerous other examples of being bullied and harassed on campus. One man was relocated from the main campus to the Higher Education Center at National City because a White female employee said she feared for her safety because of him, but could not specify why. He was moved off campus, not her.

Many years later, this same employee received hate mail at work in which he was called a nigger and there was a threat therein to murder his family. He reported it to administrators at the College, but no investigation was ever done. He and other African American classified employees in that same focus group agreed that swift and serious action would have been taken had a White or Latinx employee received a similar letter at work. This was not mere speculation. A Latinx employee received two angry letters in the mail; multiple African American classified employees were called in for interrogation by investigators. The investigators also interviewed employees at another nearby campus. The African American man who had a similar experience said nothing

was done for him. Another was placed on unpaid administrative leave, but was never told why. An African American woman talked about having her standing desk taken away to give to a White employee. A facilities worker just showed up at her office to remove the desk with no advance notice. No one seemingly cared that she needed this special desk for her documented physical impairments. Others shared stories of having been moved from offices to cubicles to accommodate co-workers from other racial groups who had less experience. One African American classified professional with a master’s degree works in a cubicle while a colleague at the same level who has no college degree at all enjoys a private office.

African American custodians said they have been forced to clean large buildings all alone or in pairs of two, while their colleagues from other racial groups are assigned in larger teams to clean smaller buildings. In one instance, they were exposed to toxic chemicals; one of them fainted. Now, custodians from other racial groups who clean that same building get protective gear. The African American men had previously asked for this same protection, but were repeatedly denied until one of them experienced physical harm.

They went on to give several examples of how their Latinx co-workers were allowed to return to work and advance at

the College despite having been reprimanded for various reasons. One person was escorted off campus by the police for sexual harassment, placed on a two-year leave, but was later allowed to return, they said. Another example was a White male colleague who fell on campus because he was drunk, but was allowed to come back the next day. This was not a secret; it was widely known. Had these employees been African American, they surely would have been fired, the classified professionals in this focus group maintained.

African American classified employees said they often felt they had no one they could talk to in their departments about these experiences mostly because they fear retaliation. They also have little to no faith that any corrective action will be taken. And they could not show any sign of frustration because they would be fired. Most are the only African Americans in their areas. Because of this, they said they can go days without seeing another African American person. We have repeatedly heard this in small predominantly white college towns, but did not expect to hear it in an ethnically diverse San Diego suburb. In one focus group, a classified employee explicitly named “racial battle fatigue” – the exhaustion that ensues as one is constantly forced to fight for racial justice, inclusion, and respectability. Classified employees made clear that most of their negative interactions on campus

were with Latinx employees. When asked which group was likeliest to feel the strongest sense of belonging and inclusion on campus, almost every person in that focus group unanimously exclaimed, “Hispanics.”

One African American Administrator, not a classified professional, shared an example from the previous evening. He was at a meeting in which a White female colleague playfully called him “dumb” in the presence of others. He politely smiled and said nothing in response. This administrator said he chose not to say anything because he worried that doing so would make the White colleague feel threatened – this was not a risk he could afford to take.

### **Powerless Latinx Mission Defenders**

Latinx employees at all levels were generally happy and felt a strong sense of belonging at Southwestern. They repeatedly described the environment as familial. “I have never worked at a place with so many Latinos,” one faculty member said. Similar sentiments were offered in other focus groups. Unlike their African American counterparts, Latinx employees did not share heartbreaking stories of disrespect and racial hostility on the Southwestern campus. Instead, they talked about how people looked out for each other at work.



When asked what engendered for them such high degrees of satisfaction, most cited the opportunity to work with so many Latinx students and colleagues – they often tied this to the mission.

Latinx employees we interviewed frequently referenced the College’s status as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). This was clearly a point of pride for them. It was also obvious that they felt a strong sense of individual and collective responsibility to have Southwestern not be an HSI in name and qualifying enrollment headcount only. Instead, they deemed it important to foster and sustain a campus culture that reflects the large numbers of Latinx students who are enrolled at Southwestern. Many Latinx employees even suggested that the composition of the faculty, staff, and senior administration should more closely mirror the student demographics. “More than 70% of our students are Latino. Shouldn’t 70% of the employees be Latino,” is a question one staff member asked.

Despite their satisfaction at work and commitment to making the College a true Latinx-serving institution, employees offered a surprising and near-unanimous response to the question about which group of employees enjoy the strongest sense of belonging and inclusion on campus. Unlike African Americans who said it was their

Latinx colleagues, the overwhelming majority of Latinx employees felt their White co-workers had the most favorable experiences at Southwestern. They attributed this to White people’s access to power. Specifically, they noted that Whites comprise the majority of the faculty, and that is where power is mostly concentrated. Furthermore, the academic senate and employee union is mostly led by White people year after year, Latinx employees observed. These positions are at the power epicenter of the campus. As such, a shortage of Latinx people and an overrepresentation of Whites in those roles confers more privileges to Whites.

As noted earlier, Latinx employees also highlighted the lack of Latinx people in senior leadership positions, including the presidency. Again, they felt the faculty and upper-administration should be more reflective of the student body. This really seemed to be the only major source of climate-related dissatisfaction among Latinx employees. In addition to enjoying strong feelings of family and community with their same-race colleagues, Latinx employees we interviewed also talked about how well they get along with co-workers from other racial and ethnic groups. In most of the interviews, there was no mention of Black/Brown tensions among Southwestern employees. In the few instances in which someone brought them up, the issues were never directly named.

It was obvious to us that focus group members were skillfully talking around particular situations that involved conflicts between Latinx and African American employees. It could be easily surmised from these conversations that African Americans have the problems with Latinx co-workers, not vice versa.

### **White Racial Abstinence and Pivoting**

Across focus groups, White employees said they were well aware of the tensions between African American and Latinx employees. However, they almost always stayed out of these conflicts. Some reportedly abstained because the situations did not involve them and they did not think it was their “place” to intervene. Others feared the racial politics were potentially too explosive to get involved. This also seemed to be true of their involvement in larger campus-wide racial problem solving – meaning, they abstained beyond Black/Brown conflicts. It was clear that abstinence was not a byproduct of cluelessness. That is, White employees were well aware of Southwestern's deep racial problems. One White employee, for example, shared that she heard other employees refer to African American co-workers as Niggers. Where there seemed to be ambivalence among White focus group participants were in conversations concerning power and their location

to it. They did not discuss their overrepresentation among faculty members, senate and union leaders, and senior administrators on campus. They also said nothing about how Latinx employees likely made sense of being underrepresented in these roles vis-à-vis other jobs on campus that pay less and confer less power. Instead, White employees claimed to highly value diversity, equity, and inclusion without acknowledging how their power hoarding contradicts their espoused commitments. There was no acknowledgement that faculty hire faculty, and how a largely White faculty at an institution with mostly students of color routinely hires White faculty and elects mostly White leaders.

White focus group participants across levels often referenced Southwestern's HSI status. They said they respected this, understood how it shaped enrollment, and appreciated the culture it created on campus for Latinx students. But some White classified staff members felt certain jobs were foreclosed to them because they were not Latinx. Put differently, they did not get jobs for which they felt they were qualified because they were White and the hiring committees were so staunchly beholden to the College's Hispanic-serving mission. This was the one serious critique they had of the racial climate for employees on campus.

Attempting to move the conversations away from race to other structural, organizational, procedural, and cultural problems at the College was one thing that White participants did far more often than did others. It happened in nearly every focus group interview with White employees. Even as the interviewer attempted to steer them back to the questions on our protocol, somehow these participants skillfully found ways to pivot the conversations to raceless topics. This suggests that racial problems are not viewed as the most important and most urgent issues confronting White employees. While tensions between African American and Latinx employees persist, Whites enjoy the professional luxury of focusing on other issues that impact their work.

### **Erasure of Particular Employees of Color**

“This is the worst place I have ever worked,” one classified employee exclaimed. Other Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial employees we interviewed generally expressed more positive feelings about the racial climate at Southwestern. They were not often on the receiving end of racial hostility from their colleagues. Notwithstanding, three dimensions of the climate shaped how they experienced the College as employees from their respective racial/ethnic groups. First is composition. Most noted that they are severely

underrepresented on campus – almost always the only persons like themselves in their work unit. Given this, they were disappointed that the College has failed to employ a more strategic set of efforts to diversify beyond African American and Latinx. To be sure, no one suggested there should be fewer employees from these two particular racial/ethnic groups. But instead, they were hoping Southwestern would hire larger numbers of Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial employees at all levels. Given the rich diversity of Southern California, some felt the College could easily find more employees from these racial/ethnic groups.

The second climate issue is most likely a byproduct of the first. Because there are so few employees of color from the aforementioned groups, the few who work at Southwestern said they rarely see each other. They would very much enjoy cultivating community with others like themselves, which is difficult given their numbers. Noteworthy is that the focus groups provided a version of space these employees wish existed more regularly on campus. In one, participants brought food – it felt familial and communal. They said they wanted more spaces that would allow them to meaningfully interact and connect with each other, not only for cultural celebration over food, but for other forms of cultural affirmation and professional support.

The final issue affecting Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial employees is their erasure on campus. Accordingly, they are often forgotten about. Conversations about the needs and experiences of people of color rarely focus on them. Consequently, they feel unimportant and less valued by their colleagues. Because of this and other longstanding climate issues affecting all employees, participants across these particular groups were skeptical of the College's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Furthermore, they, like their Latinx counterparts, recognized that White employees occupy the most significant positions of power and decision-making on campus. Many Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial employees we interviewed were critical of this.

### **How HR Processes Affect Racial Climate**

The most common finding across all racial/ethnic groups and role types is the dysfunctional mishandling of hiring and other human resources activities at the College. Apparently, this has long been a problem. While people across groups described it at great length, it seems that African American classified professionals are seemingly most disadvantaged by it. They talked about their Latinx counterparts passing them over for job opportunities to hire less-qualified Latinx friends, sometimes siblings,

parents, and other family members. Classified employees also recalled Latinx hiring committee members abruptly switching from English to Spanish in meetings as a way of excluding African American committee members from the conversations. In addition, many shared stories of Latinx colleagues strategically stacking committees with as many Latinx employees as possible to ensure that a Latinx person was hired. They said there was no institutional oversight or accountability for this.

In addition to African American classified employees, others described loopholes like being able to appoint someone to an interim role for lengthy time periods to automatically qualify them for the permanent positions. Discarding previously agreed upon educational requirements, or placing someone in a role while they were pursuing their degrees (despite having more experienced applicants who had already earned the desired degrees) were other examples.

Conversations about these issues were not strategic pivots from questions about the racial climate. Many employees viewed them as interconnected because HR process errors often produced friction between groups, led to misunderstandings, and allowed some to disadvantage others along racial lines.

# 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

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The USC Race and Equity Center's reports always end with what we hope are useful and reasonable recommendations for institutional leaders and everyone else who helps shape campus climates. As is the case in every report, we offer one cautionary note herein: the 12 recommendations that follow will not, on their own, completely transform Southwestern College. Solutions are as complex as the problems written about in the preceding pages. Though not enough to correct all the College's longstanding racial issues, we believe the dozen ideas presented below are necessary actions that will produce some much-needed change for Southwestern employees across all racial groups.

## **1. Issue a Formal Apology to African American Staff**

Perhaps more heartbreaking than the stories African American classified staff shared is that no institutional leader (e.g., a governing board member or the president) has privately or publicly apologized to them for the racial trauma and disrespect endured at the College. Some experiences described in this report have been written about in newspapers and elsewhere, hence they are presumably well known at the institution. Any serious

demonstration of commitment to racial healing must begin with acknowledgement and apology. In our view, a written statement alone would be insufficient. The acts of anti-blackness these people persistently experienced were not only conveyed in writing – they were verbally communicated to African American professionals as they attempted to serve Southwestern with dignity and excellence. For this reason, the apology should be written and conveyed verbally in a meeting with institutional leaders and African American classified staff. It would also be good to apologize to the faculty member who was beaten in a parking lot on campus years ago.

## **2. Host a Quarterly Employee Forum on Race**

Participants across focus groups said there are not many formally organized spaces for employees to talk about race, racism, and their interactions across racial/ethnic groups. Given this, a quarterly event for the campus community could be useful. It does not necessarily have to be a space in which employees come to publicly air their grievances (even though some space should be occasionally made for this). Forums can be on a specific topic or decidedly open and broad. They also can be

offered in a variety of formats – panels, facilitated intergroup dialogues, town hall-style forums, discussions of short films or common readings, expert presentations followed by in-depth Q&A, to name a few. The point would be to make talking about race culturally normative among employees on campus. Another goal would be to improve people’s racial literacy – the ability to talk fluently about racial topics, to read racial situations, and to complicate one’s understandings of race and improve one’s racial interactions by reading publications on a range of racial topics. A college with racial problems as pervasive as Southwestern’s cannot afford to sustain an environment where its employees talk around race, only discuss it with others in their respective racial/ethnic groups, or abstain altogether from conversations about race.

### **3. Facilitate Listening Sessions with Classified Staff**

While some administrators and faculty members had stories to share and critiques of the College, it was clear to us that classified professionals are most affected by climate issues. President Murillo and members of the Presidential Commission that we propose in the fourth recommendation should meet at least twice each year with classified employees to hear how they are experiencing the institution and if there are improvements as a result of various strategies that are being employed.

Perhaps listening sessions hosted in the fall should be facilitated separately by racial/ethnic groups. Spring could be a time to bring classified professionals across all racial/ethnic groups together in one space to share their perspectives and experiences. The latter would also provide a valuable opportunity for classified employees to hear about how they are experiencing each other.

### **4. Establish a Presidential Commission on Race**

President Murillo should evolve the current task force that has been working on climate issues to a permanent Presidential Commission on Race. The Commission should include an even number of employees from all racial/ethnic groups. This would help avoid the “there are too many African Americans on the task force” complaint. It should also include employees from all levels and role types (classified professionals, faculty, and administrators). The Commission should advise the President, as well as coordinate a range of activities and efforts. Some ideas are presented below.

### **5. Create Conversation Guides on Race**

To promote smaller discussions at the unit-level, the Presidential Commission should collaboratively develop

common sets of questions to be posed in faculty, staff, and leadership team meetings in various offices, academic programs/departments, etc. A question set would be explored around the same time period (e.g., during the October faculty or staff meetings of each group). This would be a way to get employees to talk more often about race with colleagues who are most proximal to them. Some question sets should be intentionally crafted to solicit actionable ideas for improving the racial climate within that specific unit, as well as more broadly on campus. Directors, department chairs, and other leaders will likely need some guidance on how best to facilitate these semi-structured conversations to minimize risk of explosion and maximize participation.

## **6. Strategize Ways to Increase Faculty Diversity**

Southwestern College needs a strategic action plan to diversify the faculty. President Murillo should give a charge to academic deans, department chairs, faculty union representatives, and academic senate leaders to develop this plan. The plan development period should have a specific timeframe like six or nine months; otherwise, faculty could spend years discussing and negotiating every detail. The plan itself should have milestones for Years 1, 3, and 5, as well as measureable outcomes and details concerning implementation,

accountability, communication, resourcing, and assessment.

## **7. Creating Leadership Pipelines**

The College needs a system that targets employees of color and strategically prepares them for ascension to senior leadership positions within their units/divisions, academic departments, and the academic senate. Also needed is a program that explicitly aims to convert more underrepresented employees from adjunct to full-time teaching and counseling roles. The Presidential Commission should adapt effective practices from leadership cultivation programs at other colleges and in businesses. Employees who participate and people who invest in them should be somehow incentivized.

## **8. Make Employment Data Transparent**

The College should conduct a racialized census of where people work, their years of full-time professional work experience, degrees they have earned, and how much they are paid. Perhaps with the exception of individual-level salary data, all this information should be made public and used to ignite productive conversations about hiring and promotion processes. Inequities cannot be addressed until they are more publicly known and widely



discussed. It could be that people are not aware of the ways in which they reproduce inequity when they participate in hiring processes for individual employees. Seeing it in the form of a census is likely to be more revealing. Doing it annually would allow the College to assess the effectiveness of its corrective actions over time.

### **9. Hire a Consulting Firm to Fix HR**

The College should invest in having a consulting firm like Deloitte assess the way it does HR and to build new processes. A system that includes the appropriate checks and balances is unlikely to be generated internally, as the problems are too significant and longstanding. An objective third-party can help create an entirely new system that ensures fairness, equity, and accountability.

### **10. Do Not Aim for Quotas in Hiring**

As previously noted, some participants argued that 70% of employees should be Latinx since 70% of students are Latinx and the College is an HSI. We strongly advise against this. Strategic efforts should be employed to make Southwestern as racially and ethnically diverse as possible. Quotas would almost assuredly exacerbate feelings of insignificance among Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial employees.

Furthermore, doing so would likely sustain workplace tensions between African American and Latinx employees. Lastly, quotas are unlawful and would make the College vulnerable to lawsuits.

### **11. Appoint a Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

Our stance is that the important work of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) ought not fall on a single person – it must be distributed throughout the organization. However, it is apparent to us that Southwestern needs a full-time senior leader who is responsible for advising President Murillo and the governing board. This person would partner with the Presidential Commission on Race, the academic senate, the employee union, and other stakeholders to advance EDI on campus. Additionally, this senior leader could help coordinate student-focused EDI efforts. It is important for this person to be a full member of the president’s cabinet. We highly recommend that this be a vice president, not an assistant/associate vice president or a director role. Additionally, this senior leader should be given a substantial budget, space for an office suite, and an appropriate number of full-time staff members. It would be a big mistake to appoint this person without giving them authority and resources.



## **12. Encourage the Launch of Employee Affinity Groups**

To bolster sense of belonging and community on campus, the College should encourage employees to create affinity groups. This could be one way to address the feelings of insignificance that Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial employees articulated. It could also help strengthen the already established group for African American staff and faculty. Additionally, there should be a group for White employees who are interested in learning about race and collectively disrupting racism on campus. The College should provide some financial resources to support these groups' activities.

Again, we do not believe these 12 actions will fix all climate problems at Southwestern College. But we are certain they will help correct many issues employees discussed in our focus group interviews.

The College has agreed to do an eight-week USC Equity Institute, which will include 20 Southwestern employees. In addition to eight topical modules, four teams will design sustainable racial equity projects that will ideally launch at the end of the eight weeks. This will be an incredible opportunity for the 20 participants to develop additional strategies to correct longstanding climate problems.

We are grateful to President Murillo and Janelle Williams for their invitation, and more importantly for their integrity. We also appreciate the 119 Southwestern employees who generously gave us their time and useful perspectives on the campus racial climate. Through the recommendations offered in this report, the important work that 20 employees will do during the eight-week USC Equity Institute experience, and other meaningful efforts that governing board members and President Murillo will undertake, we are confident that Southwestern will become measurably more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Our center appreciates the opportunity to help the College with its transformational aims.

# CONTACT INFO

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**Professor Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D.**

University of Southern California

Race and Equity Center

3470 Trousdale Parkway

Waite Phillips Hall 1103

Los Angeles, CA 90089

Phone:

(213) 740-0385

Email:

[sharper@usc.edu](mailto:sharper@usc.edu)

Website:

[race.usc.edu](http://race.usc.edu)

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Equity Center