

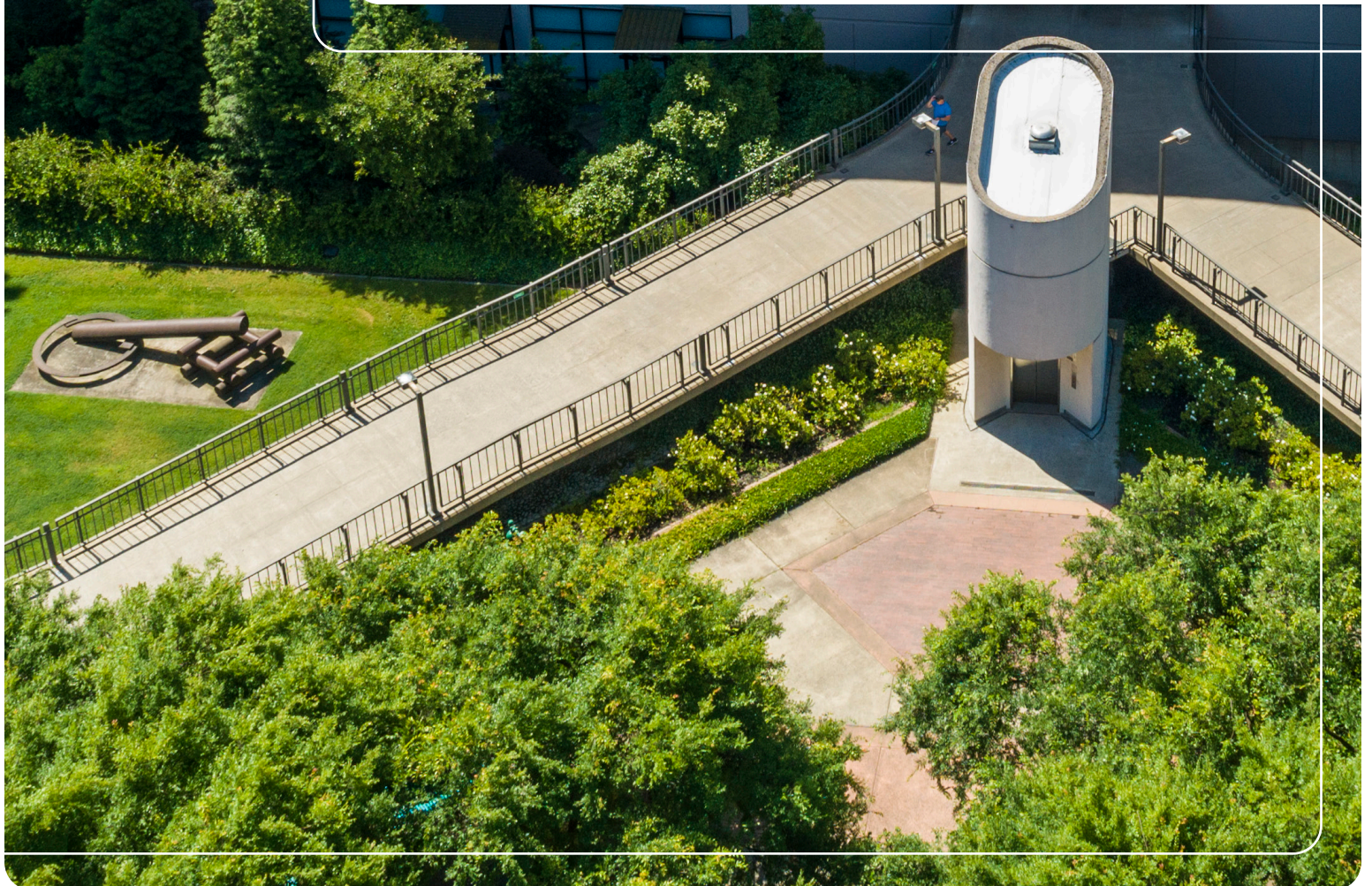


**Student Success Network**  
*in the California State University*

# **Five Year Anniversary of the CSU Student Success Network**

## **Working Together for Equity in the CSU**

*Annual Report 2021-22*







## Welcome!

The [CSU Student Success Network \(Network\)](#) in 2021-22 celebrated five years of working for equity and change in the CSU. We are thrilled to share our key accomplishments from the year, and we appreciate the many students, faculty, staff, and administrators who worked with us to advance equitable student learning in the CSU. In particular, we thank Dr. Bianca Mothé, professor of Biological Sciences at [CSU San Marcos](#), for her stellar leadership as Network Faculty Director during 2021-22. We also thank our institutional partners who make our work possible, including the State of California, the [CSU Chancellor's Office](#), [The Kresge Foundation](#), [Sacramento State University](#) (where we are housed), and all 23 campuses of the CSU.

Due to COVID, we held events virtually this year, which provided challenges and opportunities. The challenges included continuing to develop ways for people to interact with and learn from each other virtually at a time when many felt overloaded by the sustained impacts of the pandemic. As to opportunities, we launched a new grants program, delivered a second annual student success conference focused on the CSU, provided seven [convenings](#), and expanded our [Middle Leadership Academy](#) to cross-campus teams. We developed a new research study examining how campus leaders addressed equity during a pandemic and we continue to share system-wide experiences from both students and middle leaders to support evidence-based change for equity. All these efforts were led by and for middle leaders—that is, faculty, staff, and administrators—in the CSU.

As the Network enters its sixth full year, we are excited about providing in-person events again while continuing to offer some virtual access as well. In both formats, we excel at creating spaces where middle leaders in the CSU can innovate, collaborate, share what they're doing, ask questions of each other, and expand their networks, all with the aim of advancing equitable student learning and success. **Please join us!**

Warmly,  
The Network Leadership Team

Bianca Romina Mothé, Ph.D.  
Academy Director

Dylan Lohmeyer  
Interim Operations Director

Kalifa Madden  
Communications Manager

Madeleine Kerrick, Ph.D.  
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Director

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Conference Director

Shonda Goward, Ed.D.  
Convenings Director





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## Highlights from the Network

The Network celebrated its five-year anniversary in 2021-22 and reached new milestones in supporting middle leaders in addressing the convergence of two pandemics: COVID and racial injustice. We organized our second annual conference around this topic. We structured a convening and published memos on our Knowledge Center about strategies to support students equitably and to sustain the work of middle leaders during a pandemic. We also launched a new grants program to support faculty, staff, and administrators in identifying and disrupting inequities on their campuses. Since its inception in 2016, the Network has engaged with over 1,900 middle leaders representing all 23 campuses.

### Accomplishments

This year the Network held its second annual [Student Success Conference](#) with the theme, “The Time Is Now: Forging New Visions for Equity in the CSU.” The gathering is the only annual conference focused on the CSU that brings together faculty, staff, administrators, and students across roles and campuses in support of equitable student success. This year over 340 students, faculty, staff, and administrators participated as presenters and/or attendees, representing every campus and the Chancellor’s Office.



Ten teams participated in the [Middle Leadership Academy](#) this year, including two that were addressing equity through system-wide approaches beyond individual campuses. Nineteen of the 23 CSU campuses have sent a team to the Academy since its inception five years ago. Twelve campuses have participated during two or more years. Five campuses have participated for three or more years.

The Network hosted three series of [convenings](#) this year, with a total of seven virtual gatherings. These included a series on leveraging data as an advocacy tool for racial equity and developing an action plan for change on campus; a session on sustaining the work of supporting students in a pandemic; a convening on understanding power dynamics on campus as a foundation for taking action; and a spring session on disaster preparedness and recovery for departments and campuses. These events brought together 175 participants across all 23 campuses and the Chancellor's Office.

The Network's fifth year brought the official launch of its [Knowledge Center](#), an online resource where middle leaders can find short, practice-based memos and briefs to support them in implementing equity-minded and student-centered approaches. We also published eight [Voices blogs](#) this year highlighting the perspectives and actions of middle leaders addressing equity in the CSU.

We also created a new pilot program this year, the [Equity in Action Grant Program](#), to support action-oriented research on CSU campuses. These grants are for faculty/lecturers, staff, and middle-level administrators to aid them in understanding and disrupting inequities on campus and to advance opportunities for students to learn, engage, progress, and complete their education.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

We are excited to enter our sixth year with a strong vision and a solid infrastructure for supporting middle leaders in addressing equitable student success in the CSU: an annual Student Success Conference, a year-long professional development Academy, timely Convenings on pressing issues, and a pilot grants program—all supported by action research and a Knowledge Center. With our small and dedicated staff, we are excited about continuing to improve these programs, extending our reach, and deepening our impacts. We are also enthusiastic about connecting people through in-person gatherings again.





## What Middle Leaders Are Saying

“I can’t reiterate how much I honor and appreciate your work. There’s really nothing around that can touch it ... because thus far your entire approach is exemplary. You have the frame that doesn’t shy away from institutional accountability, but then you also offer tools to look at how to make substantive changes—all done with pedagogically-grounded approaches that invite others to move in this direction and consider their own campuses and local circumstances. Having that macro to micro level of presentation took this all to a more sophisticated presentation than even national experts have done.”

— Participant of the Student Success Network Conference

“The Middle Leadership Academy gave us an opportunity to meet with other campuses to share stories and consult, and it provided a platform to break down the roles, the planning, and assessment that we had to consider. It gave us time to sit and hash out some of the nitty gritty things that we wouldn’t have had the opportunity to do at a larger leadership meeting.”

— Dr. Dora Lee, Director of Academic Support and Learning Services, Cal Poly Pomona

“I loved seeing how people were coping (personally and professionally). It was nice to hear and be reminded how wonderful people are in supporting their students, but also finding ways to keep things safe—and admitting how hard it can be to take care of oneself, but affirming the need to do so.”

— Participant of Navigating Uncertainty Together



“The [Academy] structure was critical in helping me to expand my leadership acumen. It gave us an opportunity to engage with like-minded individuals from other campuses in the CSU ... that was really beneficial.”

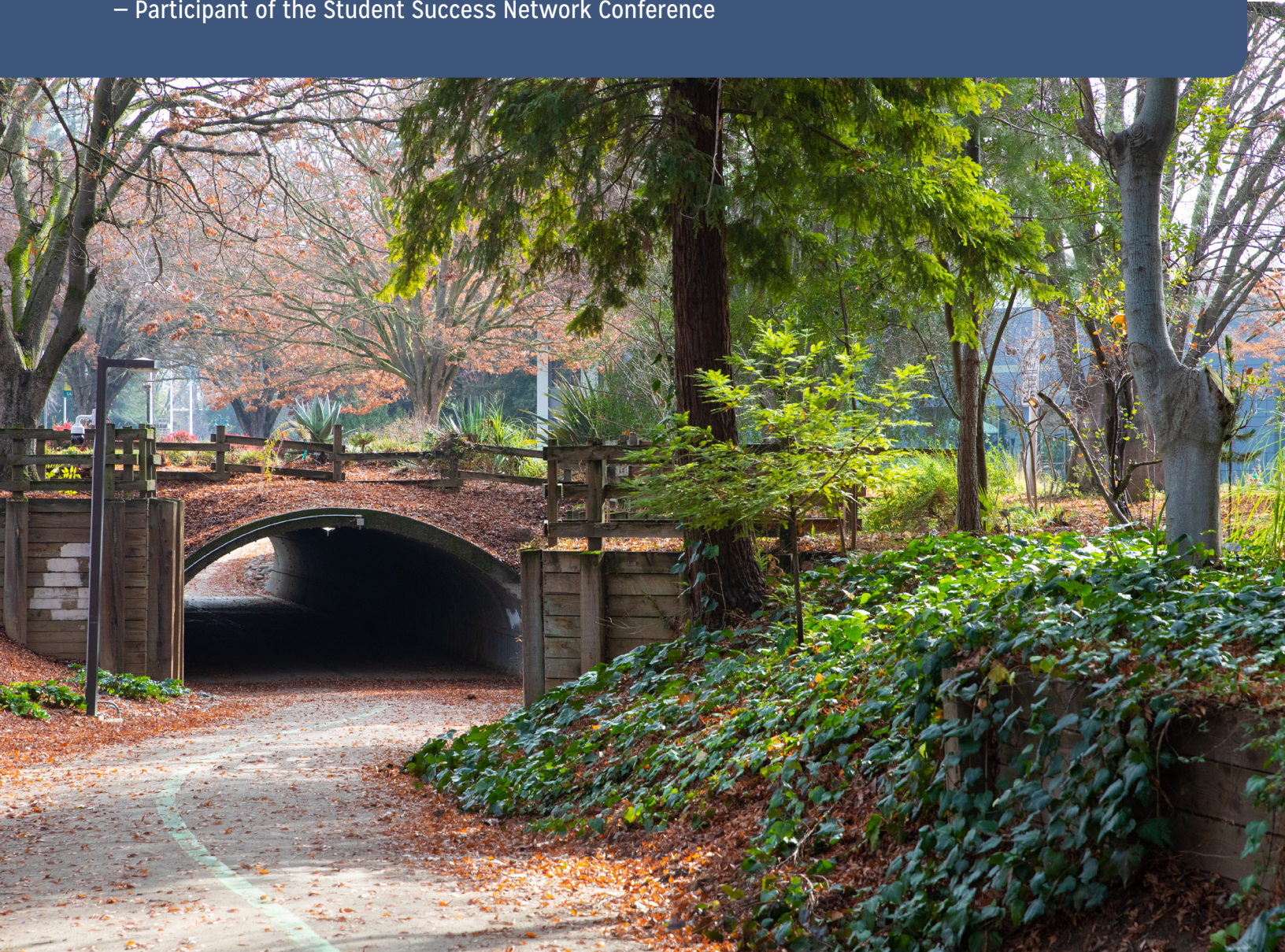
— Dr. Karyn Scissum Gunn, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, CSU Long Beach

“One of the things that the Network is really working on across the CSU is building a foundation for anti-racist activity. On our campus, we have engaged in the creation of an anti-racist planning document that will be released out to the campus community. What are other campuses doing in these areas, and how is that work going? That’s the kind of sharing of strategies that the Network facilitates, both within and across campuses.”

— Ántonia Peigahi, Director of Policy and Records Management at Sacramento State

“Through Network activities, I gain a broader picture of what is occurring at the various CSU campuses—also a recognition that there are many others committed to the work of creating equity in education in the system.”

— Participant of the Student Success Network Conference







## About the Network

The Network was created by faculty, staff, and administrators from across the CSU to foster innovation, leadership, networking, and shared responsibility for improving equitable student learning and success. Since 2016-17, the Network has raised funds and delivered services to help middle leaders plan and implement institutional changes to achieve excellence and equity in the largest university system in the U.S. The Network's activities encourage people to share their knowledge, experiences, and innovations as they step into leadership roles to improve equitable student learning and success.

**The Network's vision** is to transform the lives of Californians by unleashing the full potential of the CSU as a broad-access, public university whose faculty, staff, and administrators work together to provide students with outstanding and equitable opportunities and outcomes for postsecondary learning.

**The Network's mission** is to support CSU faculty, staff, and administrators as they embrace their power to imagine, plan for, and implement systems that achieve equitable student learning, engagement, progression, and completion.

The Network receives financial support from the State of California, with initial seed funding from [College Futures Foundation](#), [The Kresge Foundation](#), and [The James Irvine Foundation](#). The Network is facilitated by the [Education Insights Center \(EdInsights\)](#) at [Sacramento State University](#), a research and policy center devoted to student success and the public benefits of education.

### Cultivating Leaders from the Middle

Leadership is an action. Its potential depends not on where we sit but on what we do. Through our events and activities, we provide structured spaces to support middle leaders in stepping into leadership roles to advance equitable learning for students. The Network defines middle leaders as faculty, staff, and administrators who work with students and serve in leadership roles on their campus, though their titles may not acknowledge these roles.

Why are middle leaders situated to be key innovators in the CSU? This is due to their longevity of service on campus, their knowledge of institutional practice and policy, their active networking assets, and their proximity to students. We can achieve so much by working together.

***Are you a middle leader in the CSU? Join us by participating in an event.***





## Accomplishments and Outcomes

The Network provides an infrastructure of diverse events and activities to support leadership development among faculty, staff, and administrators in the CSU. Through these activities, we build capacity among middle leaders to work together across departments, divisions, and campuses to achieve equitable student learning, progression, completion, and success on their campus.

### Student Success Conference

*Sharing evidence, ideas, and strategies for equity across the CSU*

The Network's Student Success Conference, held every fall, is the only annual conference focused on the CSU that brings together faculty, staff, administrators, and students across roles and campuses to share evidence, practices, and actionable research in support of equitable student success. On October 13-14, 2021, the Network held its second annual conference with the theme, "The Time Is Now: Forging New Visions for Equity in the CSU." The context was the convergence of two pandemics—COVID and racial injustice—and how this convergence has magnified structural inequities in the U.S. and created renewed momentum for immediate change, including in higher education.

This online conference featured 29 sessions, including a student plenary in partnership with the California State Student Association; special sessions on student engagement and men of color; two knowledge-exchange conversations; and many presentations and panels by faculty, staff, and administrators across the CSU, including the Chancellor's Office. There were also several sessions exploring impacts from Network activities.

For fall 2022, our conference theme is "Sustaining Momentum for Equity and Change in the CSU" as we focus on continuing the strides made to support and invest in equity efforts. Our goal is to exchange information about approaches that build from limited resources to support the whole student; that are attentive to self-care for all involved, especially students and equity leaders; and that are directed toward creating a more equitable future for our students, the CSU, and California.



“

The presenters and workshops were expertly tailored to meet the needs of faculty invested in student success.

– Conference Participant

[The Student Success Conference] is a well-crafted way of encouraging people to create and provide equity opportunities on their campuses and not be paralyzed by the enormity of systemic inequities facing our students—and thus feeling overwhelmed or ineffectual. You provide a very firm substrate to cultivate practitioner agency and do so in a manner that connects and allows for sharing of such efforts and successes.

– Conference Participant



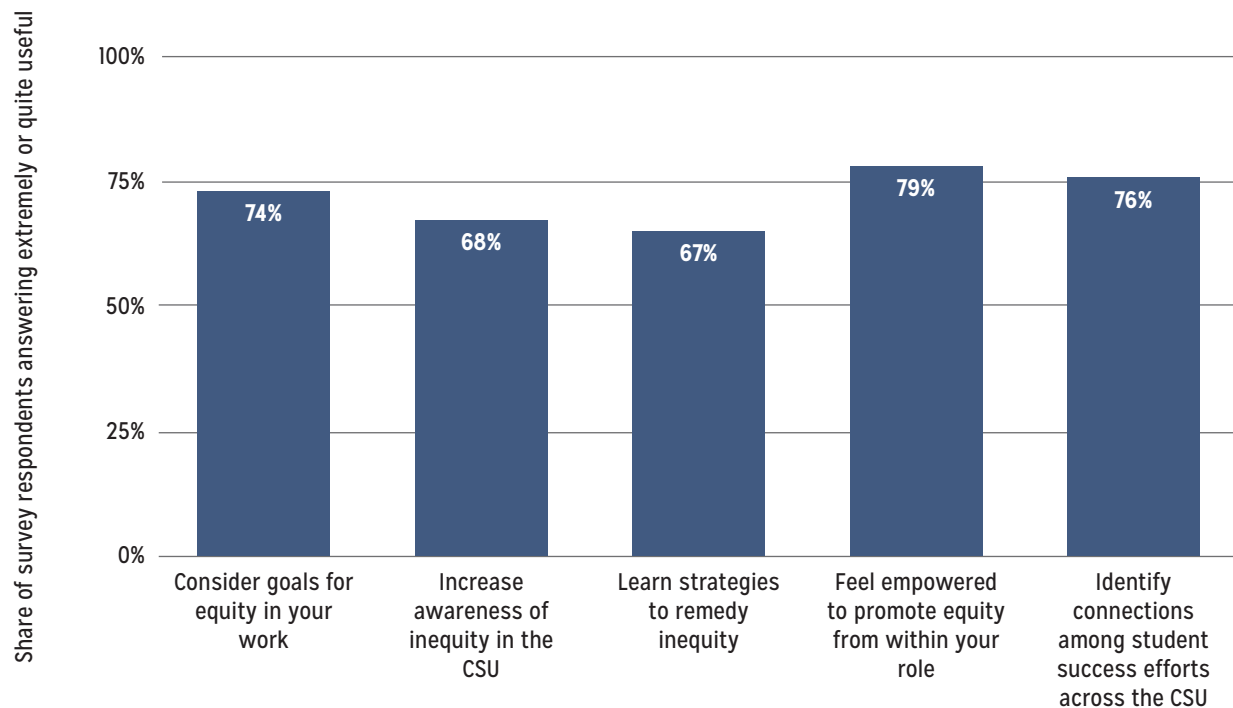
#### *Outcomes from the conference*

Over 348 students, faculty, staff, and administrators participated in the conference this year, representing every campus and the Chancellor's Office. Afterwards, over 75% of survey respondents said they were either extremely or quite satisfied with the presentations, knowledge-exchange sessions, and special accommodations. Participants also rated highly the conference's usefulness for understanding and acting to advance equity, and for identifying connections across campuses (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Survey of Conference Participants, 2021

How useful was the conference as a whole in helping you to:



## Middle Leadership Academy

### *Stepping into leadership roles to improve equitable student learning on campus*

The Middle Leadership Academy, the flagship program of the Network, is making inroads in helping campuses address their equity goals by supporting faculty, staff, and administrators in stepping into leadership roles to improve equitable student learning and success. Nineteen of the 23 CSU campuses have sent a team to the Academy since its inception five years ago. Twelve campuses have participated during two or more years. Five campuses have participated for three or more years.

The Academy is unique in the CSU in offering campus teams of faculty, staff, and administrators a year-long, hands-on opportunity to plan and undertake a substantial equity project on their campus. The teams bring together people who work on common issues but from different perspectives, across divisions, programs, and units on campus. The Academy creates structured time for them to work collectively to engage with student data, map out plans for equitable change, reach out to other stakeholders on their campus to shape these plans, and overcome resistance in implementation.

Ten teams participated this year, including eight that represented individual campuses and two that represented multiple campuses. This was the first time multi-campus teams participated. The multi-campus teams sought to address system-wide approaches to equity; one focused on adult re-entry learners and the other on Project Rebound for formerly incarcerated people. The Academy met virtually due to COVID.



For 2022-23, the Academy plans to return to in-person gatherings while retaining the most popular and effective aspects from the virtual curriculum, including student panels. The Academy also plans to dedicate more time engaging teams in analyzing campus data disaggregated by race, and telling a compelling story using these kinds of data.

“

**It's very nice to be able to filter ideas through the perspectives of other campuses. It helps to be around people who share your values and your approaches but are distanced from your campus culture and politics.**

— Academy Participant

**Seeing how other campuses are working to address equity issues, and the challenges and successes they've had with implementing their projects, has been very helpful. Even if the topics are not the same, I've learned a ton about financial aid, improving retention for Black students, trying to re-engage returning students, and more.**

— Academy Participant

### *Outcomes from the Academy*

In our surveys before and after the Academy this year, we saw statistically significant increases on nearly all questions related to the Academy's impacts on participants' confidence in taking action to address equity. This included confidence in:

- identifying strategies to improve equity issues related to student success;
- engaging in opportunities to address student-centered, equity-focused change at their campus;
- identifying strategies to engage resistance; and collaborating with colleagues from other CSUs around equity-related issues.



This year we also found impressive longer-term impacts of the Academy on campuses. For the campuses participating in the first cohort from 2017-18, for example, evaluators found that the Academy served as:

- **A catalyst for implementation** of the Chancellor's Office's Executive Order III10, which mandated the elimination of all remedial courses in English and math. All eight participating campus teams we spoke with brought back a plan or a framework that shaped their campus' implementation.
- **An enabler of middle leadership.** The Academy created a space and structure for faculty, staff, and administrators to step forward collectively to engage with student data, map out plans for equitable change, and reach out to other stakeholders to shape these plans and overcome resistance.
- **A creator of inter-campus linkages.** The inter-disciplinary and inter-campus structure was a boon to participants and campuses. Team members advanced innovations by building relationships with other campuses and programs.
- **Yet substantial work remains.** The Academy supported every participating campus team in addressing the requirements for mathematics in EO III10, but substantial work remains in narrowing equity gaps, according to team leads.

## Convenings

### *Sharing knowledge and practices on pressing topics and challenges*

The Network hosted three series of convenings this year, with a total of seven virtual gatherings. Our virtual convenings last two to three hours and bring together middle leaders to discuss and address pressing issues and challenges that impact equity on campus.

**Equity Now! Series for the CSU** We partnered with the Race & Equity Center of the University of Southern California to host an Equity Now! workshop series for the CSU. In four weekly meetings, the series supported CSU middle leaders in unpacking concepts associated with internal and institutional racism, building skills for racial literacy, leveraging racial equity data from their campus, and developing an action plan for meaningful and sustainable change on their campus. Over 150 middle leaders from the CSU joined the series.

“

**Each campus brought to the *Equity Now!* convenings “institutional data as it related to persistence, graduation, and how it compared to other student groups across gender, race, and ethnicity. I think just being able to pull that data and paint a picture of where our campus currently stands - that allowed us to really intentionally move forward in developing our services.**

– Miguel Jiminez, Program Coordinator of the Male Success Initiative, CSU Stanislaus



**Navigating Uncertainty Together** Since the onset of the pandemic, our Navigating Uncertainty Together series provided structured spaces for CSU middle leaders to discuss how to support students equitably during this time of crisis. In fall 2021, we maintained the structure but shifted the focus of the series. In a September session, middle leaders exchanged ideas about how they support themselves and sustain their work during a pandemic. Our November gathering probed power relationships on campus, with an eye toward supporting middle leaders in achieving “asks” that support equitable student learning.

**These Precedented Times** In spring 2022, These Precedented Times: Crisis Management in the CSU brought together a panel of national experts to share their experience and suggestions for helping campuses and departments prepare for and recover from disaster. Thirty-four middle leaders from 14 CSU campuses participated. Afterwards, we published a “tips and strategies” memo on our Knowledge Center to share key findings and to emphasize the strong role that middle leaders can play in planning for and recovering from disasters.

### *Outcomes from the Convenings*

Our convenings brought together 175 participants across all 23 campuses and the Chancellor’s Office. Based on our surveys, these events proved to be rich spaces for the exchange of information and practices across the CSU.

- After the *Equity Now!* series, survey respondents noted significant increases in confidence in using equity concepts to create and sustain equity-minded change on their campus.
- After September’s Navigating Uncertainty convening, survey respondents said they particularly appreciated discussing challenges with peers from other campuses who work in similar roles. After the November convening, respondents said they appreciated being able to talk openly with peers about power dynamics on campus—and they welcomed opportunities to do this again.
- After the Precedented Times convening, survey respondents identified several actions they planned, including re-examining their campus’ current emergency plans and discussing learnings with department colleagues.

## **Knowledge Center and Applied Research**

### *Creating a body of evidence for middle leaders in the CSU*

The Network’s fifth year brought the official launch of its Knowledge Center, an online resource where faculty, staff, and administrators can find short, practice-based memos and research briefs to support them in identifying and implementing equity-minded and student-centered approaches on their campus. Over the year, the Knowledge Center had over 16,500 views of its publications. New publications include:

- [CSU Faculty and Staff Share Strategies to Support Students Online](#)
- [CSU Student Success Network Strategies for Practitioners](#)
- [“I Had to Surpass”: Administrative Barriers that First-generation College Students of Color Face](#)
- [Supporting Black Students in the CSU through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Representation, and Respect](#)
- [Supporting the Success of Transfer Students of Color by Strengthening Your Transfer-Receptive Campus Climate](#)
- [Disaster Management Tips and Strategies](#)



In addition to these resources from the Network, this year we invited CSU middle leaders to submit equity-focused “Literature from the Field” that they find useful. We are actively pursuing these resources and are planning to grow this section of the Knowledge Center.

The Network also conducted two extensive research studies this year, with publication of findings expected in 2022-23:

- **CSU Leaders Navigating the Pandemic and Racial Injustice.** This multi-campus study focuses on how leaders in the CSU are responding to the pandemic and to calls for racial justice at their campus.
- **Understanding How CSUs Support Justice-involved Students both Before and Following Their Release.** This study examines existing bachelor’s degree programs for currently incarcerated students; the strengths, challenges, and strategies for engaging in cross-sector partnerships; the design, structure, and elements that may be replicated by other CSU campuses; and strategies for facilitating student transitions from carceral to postsecondary institutions.

## Equity in Action Grant Program

### *Supporting evidence-based work that addresses equity in the CSU*

The Network created the Equity in Action Grant Program during its fifth year, as a pilot program to support action research and evaluation conducted by middle leaders on CSU campuses. The one-time grants were available to faculty/lecturers, staff, and middle-level administrators to identify, understand, and disrupt inequities on campus and to identify, understand, and advance opportunities for students to learn, engage, progress, and to complete their courses of study. The grants support innovative thinking, research, and evidence-based practices that lead to institutional change to address equity and opportunity gaps inside and outside the classroom.

The development of this experimental program was led by Dr. Ioakim Boutakidis, Ph.D., department chair and professor of Child and Adolescent Studies at CSU Fullerton. After receiving 34 applications for funding, the Network funded [20 grants from 13 CSU campuses](#) for a total of \$381,870. The first interim reports are due in spring 2023. Program continuation after the first year will depend on funding and on assessment of first-year results.







## Communications

### *Bringing Network events and research to the CSU*

The communications team supports all Network activities and goals through an active social media presence on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#), direct outreach to over 2,000 middle leaders in the CSU, video and blog posts on our website, and branding. This year, the Network published eight [Voices blogs](#) highlighting the perspectives and actions of middle leaders addressing equity in the CSU.



**Aimee Arreygue, EdD**  
@DrAimeeA

Today's sessions were powerful: how can using data affect true structural inequities? How does the intersection of systemwide topics contribute to broad solutions for our many different CSU students?  
@CSU\_SuccessNet @EdInsightsCtr  
#CSUStudentSuccessNetwork  
#CSUMiddleLeadership



**Dr. Sabrina Sanders**  
@SabrinaKSanders

Replying to @RashidaCrutch @Michelson20mm and 5 others

Sat in a group with @CSU\_SuccessNet Middle Leadership Academy on the need for housing for formerly incarcerated students in #higherred. So much work needed in this area. Thank you for your tireless leadership on #BasicNeeds for #college #students.

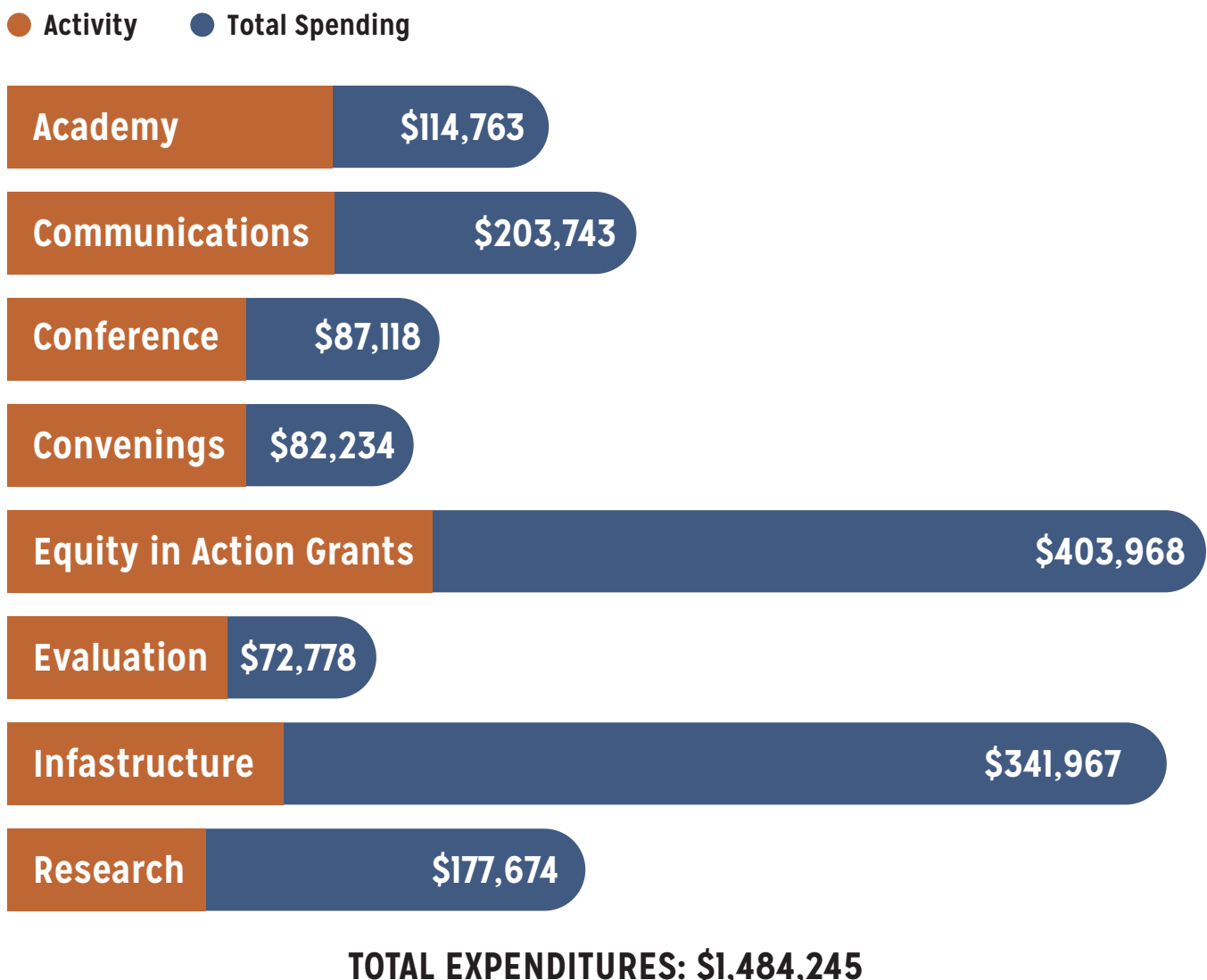


# Financial Report

The Network received \$1.1 million from the State of California for fiscal year 2021-22 and spent \$1,484,247. Using carryover funds from prior years, the Network was able to develop and deliver its Equity in Action Grant Program. The Network plans to continue using its carryover funds in a variety of ways, including expansion of its current activity offerings and increasing staff capacity to support infrastructure, research, and evaluation efforts.

All Network activities are free of charge to participants, and as we return to in-person gatherings, we will continue to reimburse reasonable and allowable travel, food, and lodging costs. Infrastructure costs support all core Network functions, and include salaries and benefits, general meeting expenses, supplies, and services.

*Figure 2. Expenditures, Fiscal Year 2021-22*





## Advisory Board, 2021-22

The Network's [Advisory Board](#) members are drawn from active middle leaders on CSU campuses. The Board meets several times a year, shares information about trends and student needs on campuses, and provides feedback and guidance on Network priorities and focus areas. Board members also serve as Network liaisons on their campus, sharing information about Network activities and opportunities to get involved.

### Channel Islands

Ernesto Guerrero  
*Director of Academic Advising*

### Humboldt

Mary Virnoche  
*Professor of Sociology*

### San Diego

Michelle Lopez  
*Assistant Dean for Student Success*

### Chico

Anthony Ruiz  
*Interim Associate Dean,  
Undergraduate Education*

### Long Beach

Karyn Scissum-Gunn  
*Provost*

### San Francisco

Kim Altura  
*Associate Dean of  
Undergraduate Education*

### Chico

Ellie Ertle  
*Interim Associate Dean,  
Undergraduate Education*

### Monterey Bay

Katherine Kantardjieff  
*Provost and Vice President of  
Academic Affairs*

### San Marcos

Adam Petersen  
*Director of Strategic Initiatives for  
Academic Success*

### Fresno

Bernadette Muscat  
*Interim Dean of  
Undergraduate Studies*

### Pomona

Victoria Bhavsar  
*Director, Center for the Advancement  
of Faculty Excellence (CAFE)*

### Fullerton

Catherine Ward  
*Executive Director of Retention  
Initiatives*

### Sacramento

Ántonia Peigahi  
*Director of Policy Records and  
Management*

Be part of a community of faculty, staff, and administrators in examining evidence, developing innovative approaches, and sharing what works. Join us by participating in an event, or reach us at [studentsuccessnetwork@edinsightscenter.org](mailto:studentsuccessnetwork@edinsightscenter.org).





# Student Success Network

*in the California State University*



**California State University, Sacramento  
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