

CARLOS OSVALDO CORTEZ, PH.D.

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BIOGRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

Carlos O. Cortez, Ph.D., recently served as the chancellor of the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD), the seventh-largest community college system in the United States. In this capacity, he oversaw more than 100,000 students annually and was responsible for a \$1 billion budget. As chancellor, Dr. Cortez oversaw the reopening of the district's 10 campuses following the COVID-19 pandemic, rebuilding enrollment, and restoring the district's finances through careful fiscal planning and establishing new revenue streams. He also spearheaded the development of a districtwide strategic plan that will take the SDCCD through 2030.

Previously, Dr. Cortez served as the president of San Diego College of Continuing Education (SDCCE), one of the four colleges that comprise the SDCCD. Dr. Cortez has served as faculty at Johns Hopkins University, National University, New York University, and the University of California (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and San Diego). His research interests center on the role of educators and administrators of color in the historical development of American social welfare and education policy. Dr. Cortez is also an expert in the area of promoting inclusion in urban education through literacy and policy initiatives and a champion of higher education accessibility.

Dr. Cortez has taught consistently since 1999. He has served as an administrator for 18 years and as CEO for 13 years. Prior to leading SDCCE, he worked as the acting vice president and dean of instruction at Berkeley City College (BCC). Before BCC, he served as director of Education Extension at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). He began his career in education as a Teach for America Corps member. His experience spans the public, private, and charter school sectors in Washington DC, Houston, New York City, Los Angeles, Berkeley, and San Diego. Dr. Cortez served as principal of New Village Charter School and as assistant principal of special education services at Grape Street Elementary School, both in Los Angeles. In these positions he was known for his dedication to teachers and students, the development of innovative programs and services, policy advocacy, astute fundraising, and sound fiscal management.

Throughout his career, Dr. Cortez has elected to work primarily with underserved, ethnically diverse student populations from systemically marginalized communities. He has been a staunch advocate for policy and financial reform as a member of various state and federal-level legislative task forces, including his current service on the California League of Community College's Advisory Committee on Legislation, the Campaign for Free College Tuition, and the Major District Budget and Policy Advocacy Council. His commitment to social justice drives his passion for urban education reform. Dr. Cortez serves on several regional and national non-profit boards, including the Promises to Kids, the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE), the San Diego State University College of Education, the Jackie Robinson YMCA, and Goodwill, Inc. San Diego.

In 2017, Dr. Cortez was awarded the Martes Award for Excellence in Research by the Association of California Community College Administrators and was recognized as San Diego Male Leader of the Year by California State Assemblymember Shirley Weber. In 2018, he received the Excellence in Continuing Education Award from the Association of Community and Continuing Education (ACCE); the 2018 Innovation of the Year Award by the League for Innovation in Community Colleges; and The RP Group Research and Planning Project award. He has served as the principal investigator on \$5.7 million of competitive federal research grants.

In 2019, he was awarded the Teach for Innovation McGrory Award for Innovative Alumni Leadership, and his organization was named the 2019 NACCE Heather Van Sickle Entrepreneurial College of the Year. In 2020, Dr. Cortez was awarded the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) Lighthouse Awards as a Turnaround School Leader and was named a 2020 Top 100 Leaders in Education by the Global Forum for Education and Learning. In 2022, he was recognized by the American Council on Education with the prestigious Reginald Wilson Diversity Leadership Award as well as the San Diego Business Journal's Top 50 Latino Leaders of Influence Award.

Dr. Cortez's educational background includes a bachelor's degree in History and Sociology from Georgetown University; a master's degree in Race and Gender Politics from New York University; and a doctor of philosophy in Education Policy and Administration from the University of Southern California. All three degrees focus on African American Womanist political historical contributions to social welfare and education policy reform.