

VOICES OF EQUITY PODCAST

Episode 7 Season 1

DR. MARCIA BALLINGER

FEMALE VOICE (singing): 0:00 We are the voices of equity podcast. We are the voices of equity podcast listen up ...ooh ... ooh...ooh...ooooh listen up.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 0:25 Thank you for joining us for the Voices of Equity Podcast at Lorain County Community College. We are your co-hosts Denise Douglas...

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 0:32 And Kionna McIntosh Pharms.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 0:35 As a co-chair of the Equity for Students Team at LCCC, we're excited to share the work of this team, the voices of those who do this work, and the voices of the students who are the reason for our word. Today we have a very special guest with us, our very own Lorain County Community College President Doctor Marcia Ballinger.

DR. MARCIA BALLINGER: 0:52 Wow, thank you both Kionna and Dr. Douglas for inviting me to be a part of today's podcast.

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 1:01 Dr. Ballinger, I met you in I believe, 2011. Instantly, I felt that your spirit was genuine, genuine in the aspect of wanting to help individuals reach their goals. When you have said every students' dream matters, that's real to you. Will you share with us one story that best illustrates this for you?

DR. MARCIA BALLINGER: 1:28 Kionna, I can still remember the first time I met you and we were across campus at the Entrepreneurship Innovation Center, and you were a student senator. I remember having the conversation with you following the event. You were one of the events greeters that day and helping to host. And so, you know, I think about you and your dreams. And all of the students who we serve here. So, it's not just one student's dream, although I could look at you and vividly remember a decade ago because you made such an impression on me as do so many of our students. And having been here now for 30 years. I've met so many students, thousands of students throughout that time. But when you start to personalize and think about everyone and the story that each individual has, you have a story. Dr. Douglas, you have a story. I have a story and so for me, it's providing not only those opportunities but elevating the voice for each student. So that they truly understand that they do have a home here, at Lorain County Community College. So I hear from some of the students from time to time. And one of the individuals, well, actually two who I've heard from just in the past two months, are students who I really think about when we talk about every students' dream matters. The first one is Dr. Jordan Brown. His grandmother Charlesetta Brown raised him. When we created the early college high school, and I helped to create the initial plans for the early college high school. And she said to me at that time, Jordan is going to go to early college high school. Like that was a goal for her because he knew at a very young age, he wanted to become a medical doctor and sure enough, Jordan went through the early college high school. I then lost track of Jordan when he went off to college. Well, when I became president, the very first Commencement ceremony we were planning it and I thought what better way to celebrate Commencement, then having some of our student's success stories speak at Commencement? And I reached out to Jordan. He was in medical school at the time, and I asked if he would be interested in doing that. So, he did come back. He spoke at Commencement. Now fast forward, I received a beautiful email message from Dr. Jordan Brown, who just had passed everything and is now a medical doctor. To me, that's every students' dream matters.

MUSIC: 4:28 (INAUDIBLE).

DR. MARCIA BALLINGER: 4:34 One of our former student Senate presidents, Udell Holmes, Udell is certainly one of the most inspirational student leaders who I've met here. He contacted me and said Dr. Ballinger. I'm planning to apply to graduate schools. Would you consider writing a recommendation letter? And I said absolutely. I think there were three or four letters that he had asked me to send. And he sent me the most exciting email that in fact not only was he accepted, he is, Neuropsychology is the area. So, it's a PhD program, in neuropsychology, at Florida State University, which is ranked one of the top 3 for that program in the nation. That it speaks volumes. And then of course, celebrating the wonderful achievement of Nikita Johnson. And being named the Achieving the Dream Scholar for this year and her story of perseverance, determination, dedication. And she talks about the college giving her that voice. From our faculty to our staff and that's what it I believed. When a student thinks about their dream, we're dream makers. That's why we're here. It's why we do what we do. And so, as I think about Kionna, I think about you. I think about Jordan. I think about Udell. I think about Nikita. I think about Danyelle Pavilack, who's also one of our student Senate leaders. Danyelle represents for me just such hope and commitment beyond words. It has taken her more than a dozen years swirling in and out of Lorain County Community College because of life circumstances after she came through the foster system in our community. But she knew she wanted to become an independent, successful adult with a career. But life happened. And barriers became challenging and difficult. But she kept coming back and she's reaching her goals and she's reaching her dreams. And that's what dreams are all about. We all have dreams, And I think together we inspire each other to dream even bigger. And to me, that's part of why Lorain County Community College is special, because we do believe that every students' dream matters, Every single one of them.

MUSIC: 7:08 (INAUDIBLE).

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 7:12 Your description of for us around being the dream makers is just so powerful because I think all of us believe that. And the other part that you said about each one of us has a story and a dream, and by intersecting

with each other, we're really moving that forward and maybe even dreaming bigger than we thought that we could dream. So, thank you for that answer. I really appreciate that. 2016 you were named LCCC's fifth president and first woman president. How does your personal equity story inform your work today?

DR. MARCIA BALLINGER: 7:46 My journey and my career has never been planned in a way that I would have thought 30 years into Lorain County Community College that I would become president. When I think of my personal equity story and probably why it's so important to me to ensure that we have equity as a foundational value at the college. And that we live it out because it truly is about meeting people where they are. When I was young and growing up, I grew up in Western Pennsylvania and the very small coal mining town. I saw and experienced very vividly, what occurs when you do have an education and when you don't have an education. I was given an opportunity because I was adopted. Had was born to a single mother who did not graduate from high school and so my parents who adopted me. My dad was a schoolteacher. My mom did not have post-secondary education but was one of the wisest women I've ever met in my life. So, for me her wisdom and sage ran very deep. I had opportunities that I know others didn't have, even within my own family. I went to college. My sister did not go to college and our lives have been on very different trajectories. Most of my family members did not go to college extended relatives. I hadn't been back to my birthplace for probably five or six years. Just this past fall, I had the opportunity to travel back there, and I was actually stunned to see how lives continued to take on a downward spiral. And how the community overall was not very positive. You know, I think about equity. And I think about what does it mean to individuals where they are and what have opportunities meant to me. And so, it very much, you know, informs the work that I do because I understand how important it is to take what we learn and to apply it. And to become engaged and involved with one's community and the power uplifting each other together and having that greater aspiration of what does it mean for community to be vibrant into thrive. Which we're all committed to here at Lorain County Community College because of our 10,000 Degrees of Impact. And so, I think about the journey that I've had in how challenging it has been to move in this career path raising daughters at the same

time and struggling to be that mother. As you're raising daughters to work, to, go back to school. It was about equality, not about equity, and the difference between meeting students where they are versus giving everybody the same thing. I appreciate what tutoring means and how valuable our adjunct faculty are. Who like our full-time faculty step forward, and help and assist and so it's informed my work through the direct services that we provide to the policies that we have to think that culture of care that not only we ascribe to, but we live out every day.

MUISC: 11:30 (INAUDIBLE)

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 11:35 Given the extensive equity work that has been done and continues to be done and ensuring equitable outcomes for students, what do you believe are the next steps for the college that we need to take in terms of its equity work?

DR. MARCIA BALLINGER: 11:50 Well, I am so excited and appreciative of the equity team and the leadership that both of you have provided. It has just been so gratifying to see in the intensive and deliberate and intentional work and outcomes that we have been achieving. And so, it is about every students' dream mattering. But it's also about every employees' dream mattering. Lorain County Community College is a family. It's our students, our graduates, our faculty, our staff. It's all of us in this together. I believe that next step is how do we systemically move from the Equity for Students' team to embed and embrace equity across the entire continuum? And we're working on that! And that's where I believe, as we deeply embed not only the values but the expectations and the outcomes, throughout our entire vision strategic plan, our priorities. We can't overemphasize it enough. We've we've been climbing that mountain, and now we're going for the sky and we couldn't be in a better position than with the tremendous leadership that both of you bring to it and the passion throughout our entire campus. When I reflect on the fall conversations that we had, and the engagement and the continued passion that is palpable. Where you can feel it. You people have

