



FACILITIES PLAN TECHNICAL REPORTS

# Critical Race Theory

In partnership with:  
Intent & Purposes LLC  
Amara H. Pérez



# Intent & Purposes, LLC | Final Report

## Critical Race Theory in Facilities Planning

By Amara H. Pérez, M.Ed.  
Submitted to Portland Community College Bond Office  
April 2018

### Table of Contents

PCC Strategic Vision .....	3
Critical Race Theory .....	3
CRT in Facilities Planning: An Integrated Approach.....	4
Daylong Training Session .....	4
Work Sessions .....	4
Space Matters: A Student Voice & Inquiry Project.....	5
Pedagogical Tools.....	5
Repository .....	6
CRT as Tool for Change .....	6
References .....	7

*“The architecture of school buildings and the organization of school space mediate the experience and aspirations of schooling” (McLeod, Goad, Willis, & Darian-Smith, 2016).*

## **PCC Strategic Vision**

In November of 2014, Portland Community College’s (PCC) Board of Directors approved a strategic vision for the college that has since become a guide for planning and action. The strategic plan, organized into six interconnected themes, articulates PCC’s values and goals.

“PCC seeks to take intentional action that creates a climate of learning where people from all backgrounds and abilities enjoy equal access to the opportunity to teach, learn, work, and serve the community and the world. PCC promotes the success, dignity, and worth of each individual by providing a safe environment where the examination of divergent ideas, experiences and systems of inequality adds depth to the learning experience.” (<https://www.pcc.edu/about/administration/strategic-plan/diversity/>)

Theme five demonstrates PCC’s vision to create a nationally renowned culture for diversity, equity, and inclusion. A strategy for planning and action, PCC’s vision seeks to practice racially conscious systems of analysis, including Critical Race Theory (CRT), to examine and dismantle systems of inequality at the college. Since 2014, PCC has worked in various ways to engage and practice CRT as an approach to equity and inclusion.

To ensure that long-term decision making is strategic, inclusive, and mission-focused, PCC has engaged in facilities planning to provide a comprehensive framework for assessing the campus environment and linking future capital and maintenance needs with PCC’s strategic vision. Through PCC’s Bond Planning Office, the key leadership of facilities planning, including members of the task force, steering committee, and workgroups, work collectively to support and implement PCC’s strategic plan.

In the fall of 2017, in an effort to foreground equity, facilities planning partnered with Amara H. Pérez, M.Ed. of Intent & Purposes, LLC, to design and coordinate a four month initiative to apply CRT as a tool to align planning and design to the colleges’ commitment to equity and inclusion. Pérez was the former PCC Sylvania Multicultural Center Coordinator, Co-Coordinator of Sylvania’s Teaching

and Learning Center, and co-founder of the first college-wide CRT initiative, the 2016 Whiteness History Month project. For the last three years Pérez has conducted dozens of trainings on CRT for PCC administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Currently Pérez is a third year doctoral student researching applied CRT as a means of equity and inclusion. This new CRT initiative in facilities planning project was also part of her dissertation study. The aim of the study is to increase knowledge that may help educational leaders and campus planners to align facilities planning and design with institutional values for equity and inclusion. In partnership with Facilities Planning Pérez developed a comprehensive and integrated approach to engage CRT to support the discovery phase of the multi-year project. The intention of this project is to engage and practice CRT in facilities planning as a means of advancing equity and inclusion at PCC.

## **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) offers a theoretical and praxis-oriented framework to draw attention to racism and racial hierarchies. CRT is described as a movement of activists and scholars dedicated to studying and transforming relationships among race, racism, and power (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). Originating in critical legal studies, CRT has expanded beyond law and obtained relevance in education and other social sciences. Applied to education, CRT offers a way to rethink traditional educational scholarship and persistent problems of racism in schooling (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). Through multifaceted interconnected tenets, CRT invites an acknowledgment of a set of claims that offer profound insight into the maintenance and reproduction of inequity based on race.

Racism is embedded and engrained in all aspects of society and exists as a permanent feature of American life (Bell, 1992; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). Acknowledging racism as pervasive invites critical and creative strategies for social change. CRT also draws our attention to dominant narratives purporting equal opportunity, meritocracy, and color blindness, that is, tropes that function to conceal systems and structures given to the maintenance of racial inequity (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Savas, 2014). These serve as the master narratives and social myths that function as a hidden curriculum in the reproduction of racial hierarchies. Exposing broader and institutional narratives that function to justify, normalize, or conceal dimensions of racial inequities is a central tenet of CRT. For example, consider the community college claims of an “open-access” institution. CRT invites an examination to the degree to which “open access” functions as a myth or a reality. It identifies challenges and

exposes obstacles facing students of color entering and navigating academic demands and campus climate. Paying attention to the stories and the histories through which racial privilege obtains validation provides an opportunity to reveal the mechanisms of social reproduction and institutional rationales for racial realities and dominant ideologies (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

CRT foregrounds the voices and experiences of people of color. CRT acknowledges people of color as multidimensional and essential in collective efforts to challenge dominant narratives and advance social justice (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, p. 168). By the nature of multidimensionality and positionality, people of color have “multiple-consciousness” that is, the ability “to perceive something in two or more ways...as a member of his or her group would see it and as a white would” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, p. 168). Such an “epistemic advantage” (Narayan, 2004) is critical in the work to reveal and understand institutionalized racism. People of color “can operate with two sets of practices and in two different contexts...this advantage is thought to lead to critical insights because each framework provides a critical perspective on the other” (Narayan, 2004, p. 221). Counter-narratives challenge dominant myths of racism and amplify the voices of those most silenced by racism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Dixon and Rousseau, 2005).

Interest convergence, another tenet of CRT, suggests the advancement of civil rights for people of color is often predicated on the self-interest of those in power and who are also the beneficiary of racial hierarchies (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). CRT draws attention to deeply embedded ideological, systemic, and structural facets of domination based on race and other social identities, to advance social justice (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012).

The scholarship on CRT is expansive. Applied in scores of studies examining patterns of racial inequity, CRT has proven to be an invaluable analytical tool. Applied CRT has served as a means to expose patterns of whiteness in teacher education programs (Katsarou, 2009; Brown, 2014); in the context of student affairs, CRT has served as a guide to examine practices on college and universities campuses (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007); micro aggressions on college campuses (Solórzano, Miguel, & Yosso, 2000); to transform classroom dynamics and practices (Knaus, 2009; Garcia, 2015); to analyze and disrupt color-blind frameworks in education (Garces and Gordon da

Cruz, 2017); and as a tool to evaluate qualitative research methodologies and epistemologies (Parker and Lynn, 2002). Less research exists however, on applied CRT in facilities planning within educational settings. This project offers an approach to applied CRT as a strategy to create specific, concrete, institutional, and transformative change in facilities planning in a community college in service to educational equity and inclusion.

### **CRT in Facilities Planning: An Integrated Approach**

Guided by an integrated theoretical and praxis-oriented framework that draws upon the scholarship of CRT and spatial theory, the initiative aimed to explore socio-spatial dimensions of race and the PCC built environment. Activities included: training and discussion groups for college leaders, campus planners, and architects; a student participatory research project, the design of pedagogical tools, and an online repository of resources on race, space, and equity. Situated as an “exploratory phase” of a larger project, an integrated framework served as a tool to reveal new questions and considerations for aligning PCC facilities with college values of equity and inclusion.

#### **Daylong Training Session**

In December of 2017 a daylong CRT training was offered to college leaders, campus planners, and architects. Through a series of activities participants were introduced to CRT and spatial theory, invited to practice the application of theories to analyzing everyday spaces, and work collaboratively to consider how an integrated lens might reveal unexamined facets of the PCC spaces. Through the practice of engaging theories, emphasis was made on revealing new considerations and questions, not problem solving or “fixing” issues that emerged.

Over 50 participants attended. Overall evaluations indicated the training was useful and contributed to a deeper understanding of the guiding theories of the project. Evaluations indicated the need for more opportunities to apply and practice theories.

**See APPENDIX A: CRT Training Evaluations**

#### **Work Sessions**

In February and March 2018, workgroups met to continue the discussion on CRT and spatial theory as tools for equity and inclusion. As a follow up to the daylong training, workgroup sessions served to clarify CRT tenets, deepen an understanding of the integrated framework and explore possibilities for facilities

planning. In service to exploration, dedicated time with individual work groups offered a unique opportunity to generate ideas on ways to apply CRT on specific projects or related to upcoming phases of planning and design. For example, the Sustainability workgroup imagined an opportunity to apply CRT to campus-based learning gardens. The Information Technology workgroup applied CRT to examine the issue of campus-wide Wi-Fi access in relation to institutional equity and inclusion.

### ***Space Matters: A Student Voice & Inquiry Project***

Space Matters was a student engagement and inquiry project. Through training and practical experience, Space Matters aimed to introduce a cohort of PCC students of color to CRT and spatial theory as a means to consider their own socio-spatial experiences, to analyze PCC spaces, and to design a college wide inquiry tool to learn from other students about their perceptions of the PCC environment.

In order to recruit a cohort of students of color from across the four campuses, a comprehensive multimedia plan was designed to support a college wide outreach effort. To help get the word out, face-to-face meetings were conducted with resource center coordinators, personalized emails were sent to faculty and staff, and an information flyer sent across the college. An outreach website was developed and a short video was produced to offer an overview of the project and generate excitement over this unique opportunity to work with other students of color to explore race and space at PCC. The website now functions as an archive and includes a project overview, profiles of student participants, a photo gallery of pictures, and a link to resources:

[www.spacemattersatpcc.com](http://www.spacemattersatpcc.com).

**See APPENDIX B:** Space Matters Outreach Video Image

The video was part of an outreach website created for the project that invited students to submit interest forms. Nearly 60 interest forms were submitted from PCC students of color across the district and served to reveal the diversity of multiple identities represented among students of color. Demographic information is included in the four data charts.

**See APPENDIX C:** Interest Form Data (by Campus, Gender, Credit Hours, Race)

In addition, of the 58 submitted interest forms:

- 53% First Generation College Student
- 26% LGBT
- 10% Veterans

- 10% Disability
- Undocumented, survivor, refugee, immigrant, criminal record

Space Matters was a five-week participatory action research project. Students participated in 3 daylong workshops, conducted research activities in between workshop sessions to further college-wide inquiry project (ex: taking photos, talking to peers, conducting surveys), and organized a community forum to share insights and recommendations for institutional change. Through training and practical experience, Space Matters invited students to apply CRT and spatial theory as a means to explore their individual and collective socio-spatial experiences, to identify and catalog spaces on campus, and design and disseminate a survey to learn from other students about their perceptions of the college environment.

On March 16<sup>th</sup> student participants organized a Community Forum titled: *How Space Matters: Reflections from a Student Inquiry Project on Race, Space and the PCC Landscape*. Over 60 people attended this two-hour student-led program on CRT, spatial theory, and key project reflections.

**See APPENDIX D:** Space Matters Community Forum Program March 2018

Students invited PCC staff in Facilities Planning, educational leaders, architectural design consultants, and other stakeholders to consider a set of reflections when conceiving and designing educational space. These insights emerged from student's lived experiences as students of color, spatial field notes, and a student survey conducted across PCC campuses.

**See APPENDIX E:** Space Matters Student Reflections and Insights

As an inquiry project designed to explore students' insights and questions invited more questions and the need for further research. Moving forward, students recommended opportunities for student-led research to be able to continue this important work to further benefit the experiences of students of color at PCC specifically and in academic spaces in general.

### ***Pedagogical Tools***

To support on-going opportunities to practice and internalize CRT and spatial theory, two pedagogical tools were developed and introduced to stakeholders: an inquiry framework and Space Cards. Pedagogical tools are designed to facilitate learning and application. In service to applied CRT, pedagogical tools for this project served as a means to engage and practice CRT in the area of facilities planning, that is, opportunities to apply CRT to explore socio-spatial dimensions of PCC's built environment.

The inquiry framework aligned tenets of CRT to critical questions as a guide for spatial inquiry. Workgroups were invited to identify and engage tenets and questions in specific project areas to explore under-examined facets of the college environment and inspire new questions to investigate.

**See APPENDIX F:** CRT Inquiry Framework

Space Cards is a pedagogical tool comprised of words and images on “flashcards” that invite reflective perceptions of space and critical interpretations of built environments. Flashcards displaying words invite people to identify and explore spaces that come to mind when distinct spatial categories are named.

Flashcards can be used to identify spaces at PCC, in Portland, or more broadly from early childhood experience. Flashcards displaying images invite people to reveal and examine socializing messages embedded in built environments. Image flashcards invite participants to expose hidden socializing messages in a range of built environments that potentially teach about race, class, gender, authority, or dominant values. This process invites storytelling and critical discussion.

Both sets of flashcards aim to raise critical awareness on *how* space matters across educational and everyday spaces. Exploring socio-spatial experiences serves as an entry point into deeper discussions on culture, power, equity, and inclusion. The intention of the Space Cards is to open possibilities to increase spatial awareness and practice spatial analysis as a means to reveal under examined facets of the built environment. Collectively revealing under examined dimensions of the built environment may support institutional efforts to align educational settings to values of equity and inclusion.

**See APPENDIX G:** Space Cards Image

### **Repository**

To support professional development and capacity building among stakeholders and the college at large, the project developed a new online repository of resources on race, space, and equity. In partnership with the college library, the purpose of the repository is to share information and resources for teaching, learning, and practicing Critical Race Theory (CRT). This collection of resources was compiled in the context of facilities planning:

<https://guides.pcc.edu/CRTinEducation>

### **CRT as Tool for Change**

CRT and spatial analysis offered exploratory questions as a means to increase awareness, to inspire further inquiries, and to imagine what else is possible in facilities planning. By drawing attention to un- and under-examined aspects of race, space, and equity, CRT and spatial analysis offered an integrated lens to critically “read” material objects, spatial arrangements, and built environments. A work in progress, this collaborative process aimed to develop the experiences, skills, and practices of PCC leaders and campus planners to apply CRT in facilities planning and design. While the exploratory phase of this multi-year project is transitioning to other phases, the college remains committed to CRT as a tool for institutional change in service to equity and inclusion.

## References

- Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well*. New York: Basic.
- Brown, K. D. (2014). Teaching in color: A critical race theory in education analysis of the literature on preservice teachers of color and teacher education in the US. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 17*(3), 326-345.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press.
- Dixon, A. & Rousseau, C. (2005). And we are still not saved: Critical race theory in education ten years later. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 7-27.
- Garces, L. M., & Gordon da Cruz, C. (2017). A strategic racial equity framework. *Peabody Journal of Education, 92*(3), 322-342.
- García, J. R. (2015). Using a critical race praxis to examine and resist the discursive practices that reproduce racism, misogyny, and homophobia. *Qualitative Inquiry, 21*(3), 315-323.
- Katsarou, E. (2009). Reading African-American literature to understand the world: critical race praxis in teacher preparation. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 12*(2), 253-266.
- Knaus, C. B. (2009). Shut up and listen: Applied critical race theory in the classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 12*(2), 133-154.
- Ladson-Billing, G. & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education, *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68.
- Narayan, U. (2004). The project of feminist epistemology: Perspectives from a nonwestern feminist. In S. Harding (Ed.), *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies* (pp.213-224). New York: Routledge.
- Patton, L. D., McEwen, M., Rendón, L., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2007). Critical race perspectives on theory in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services, 120* (pp. 39-53).
- Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What's race got to do with it? Critical race theory's conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology. *Qualitative inquiry, 8*(1), 7-22.
- Savas, G. (2014). Understanding critical race theory as a framework in higher educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 35*(4), 506-522.
- Solórzano, D., Miguel C., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial micro aggressions, and campus racial climate: The Experiences of African American College Students. *The Journal of Negro Education 69* (1/2) 60-73.

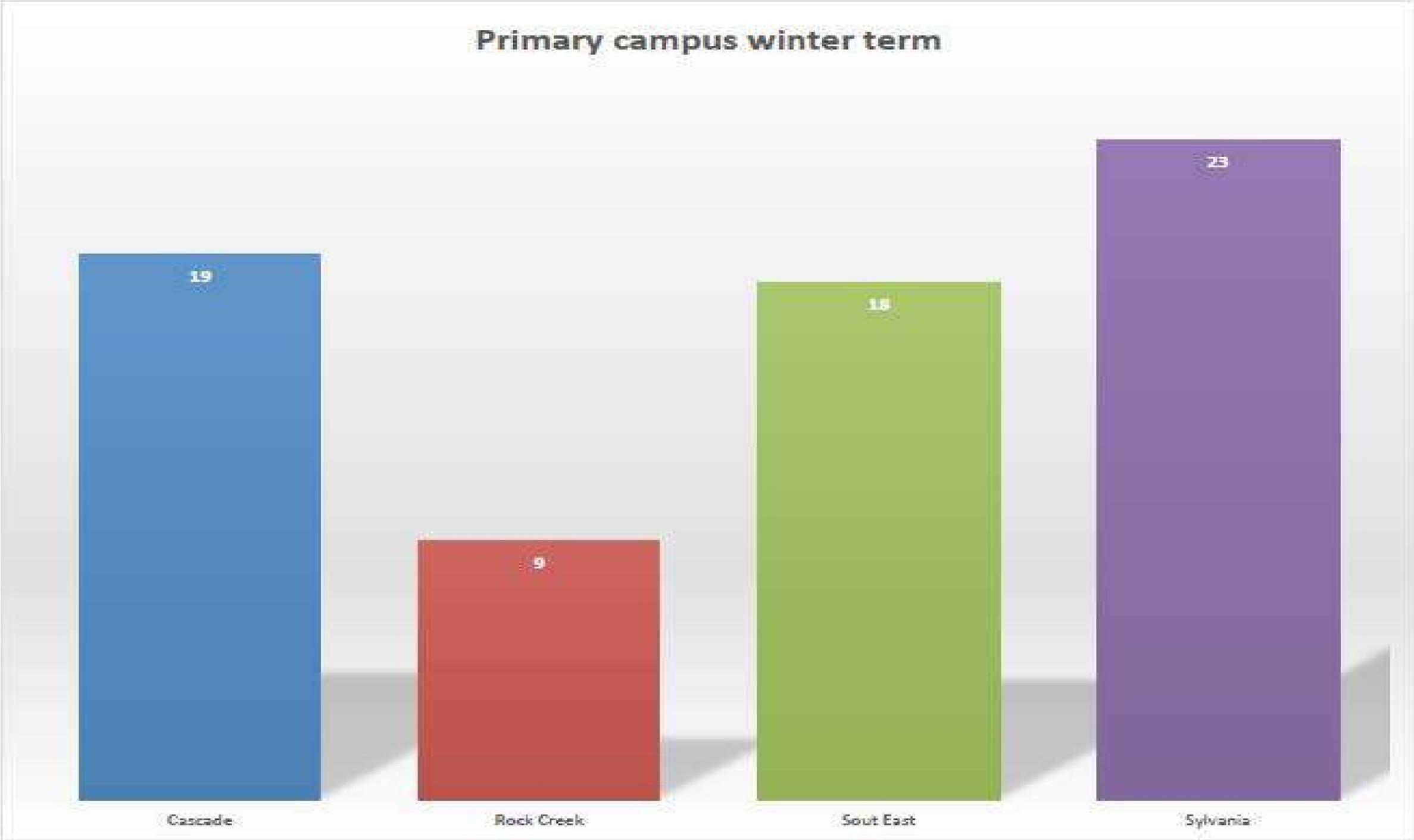
# APPENDIX A: CRT Training Evaluations

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Disagree
I understand more about the CRT Initiative in Facilities Planning and Design.	65%	35%	0%
This workshop expanded my knowledge of an equity lens.	80%	20%	0%
This workshop expanded my knowledge of critical spatial inquiry.	65%	35%	0%
This workshop expanded my knowledge of CRT.	85%	15%	0%
This workshop offered a balance of theory and application.	40%	60%	0%
This workshop helped me to imagine ways of applying CRT to support phases of Facilities Planning and Design.	45%	55%	0%
This workshop supported relationship building and collaboration among colleagues.	63%	37%	0%
The learning environment was inclusive and fostered an open exchange of ideas and questions.	80%	20%	0%
The workshop design (curriculum, content, activities, flow, and pace) fostered meaningful and cooperative learning.	83%	17%	0%

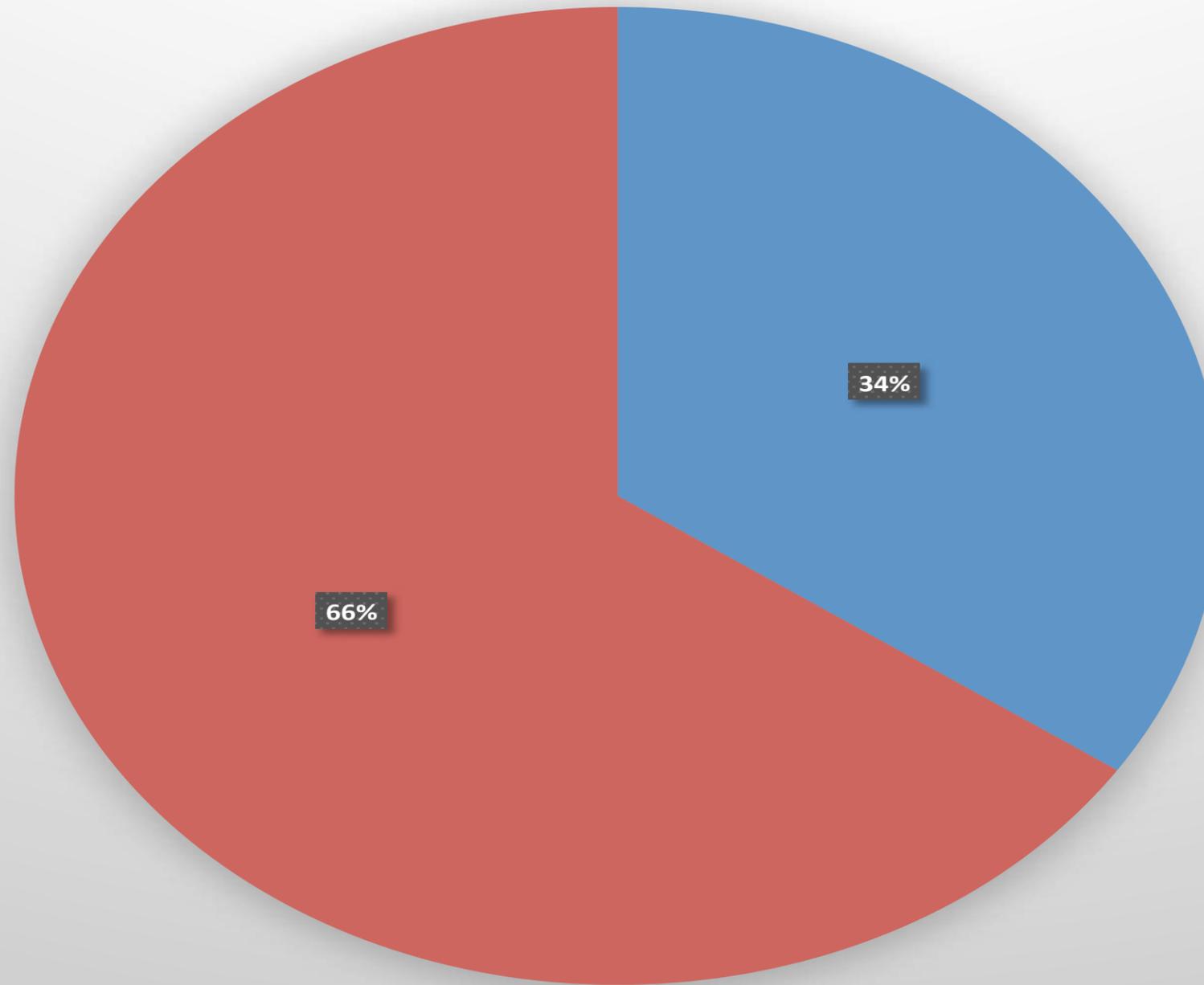
APPENDIX B: Space Mattes Outreach Video Image



**APPENDIX C: Interest Form Data by Campus**

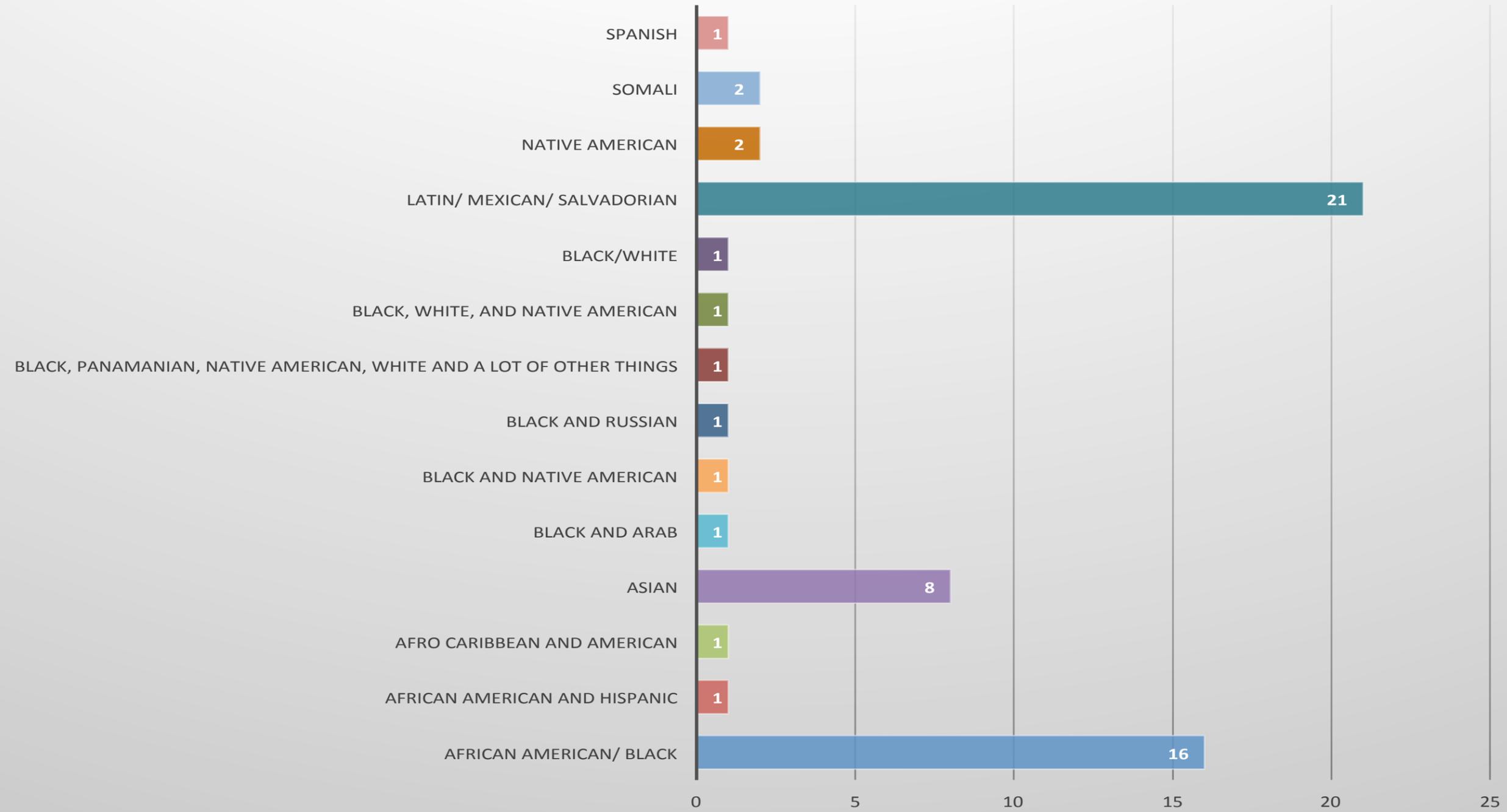


### Credit hours winter term

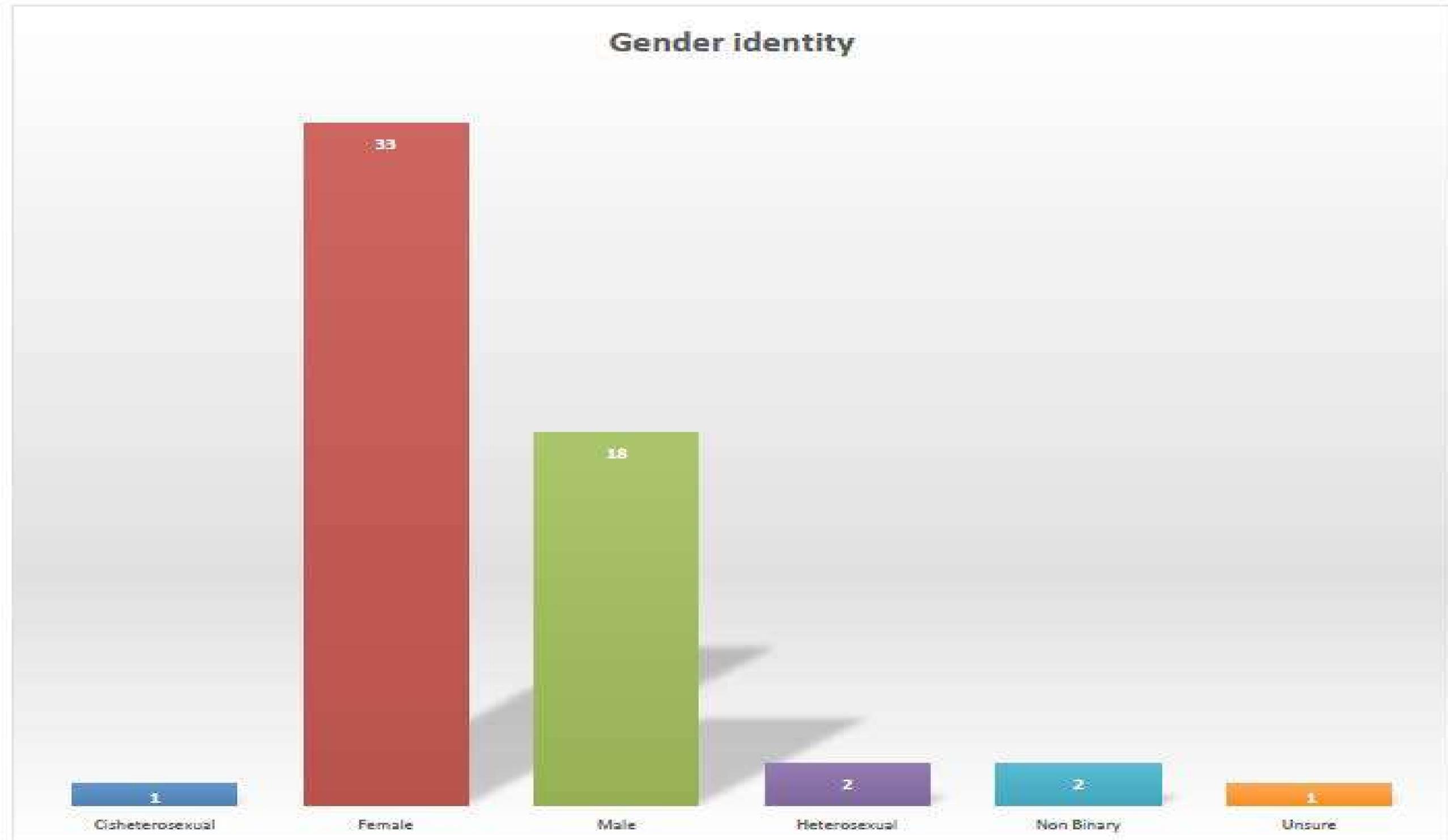


- Part time
- Full time

## Racial/Ethnic identity



## APPENDIX C: Interest Form Data by Gender Identity



a project of PCC Facilities Planning

# SPACE MATTERS

## Race, Equity, and the PCC Landscape

Project Coordinator: Amara Pérez



### About

- a student engagement and inquiry project to explore the relationship between space and race.
- 3 daylong workshops, a survey, mini research and spatial field notes.
- part of a dissertation study to increase leaders and campus planners knowledge to plan and design for equity and inclusion.

### Student cohort



A special thanks to Malea Billbrew for all her help and support!



Left to right

First row: Fi Alagoz, Derrick McDonald, Malia Forney

Second row: Brenda Prestegui, Keyana Lowe, Delia Torres-Enciso, Cesar Santiago, Mohamed Sheikh, Erika Villanueva

Third row: Ngoc Nguyen, Gerson Rodriguez, Christy Avila, Aidee Medel Diaz, Cory Gillette, Luiz Lopez

**Gerson Rodriguez**  
My name is Gerson, and I'm a first generation college student. I am pursuing a psychology major this fall, and want to apply my academic and life education to better the lives of others. I joined the Space Matters project to learn more about Critical Race Theory, and for the opportunity to work alongside other students of color.

**Christy Avila**  
My name is Christy Avila, I am a queer, Chicana feminist majoring in sociology and women s/gender studies. My goals include publishing a book of creative non-fiction, continuing my education to the doctorate level, and working towards achieving equity and positive representation for all marginalized people. I wanted to be a part of Space Matters because I felt that the project illuminated the important, yet often dismissed experiences of students of color.

**Aidee Medel Diaz**  
My name is Aidee. I am a first generation college student and identify as a person of color, as a Latina. I am a business major and plan to attend Portland State University next year. I joined Space Matters because I wanted to learn more about space and its relation to race. I thought it was a really interesting and important concept to explore and one that tends to be overlooked. I also appreciate that it is a student led project by students of color. I hope this isn't the last of Space Matters where we continue to further the work we have done.

**Luis "Luxo" Lopez**  
My name is Luis Lopez, Aka. Luxo. My major is Architectural Graphic & Design. My goal is to finish my two year associate, then transfer to a 4 year university to obtain my Bachelors and then go to a graduate school if life allows me. As a Latino I believe that spaces we occupy in the education system need to be improved and designers need to realize that we are also humans and that spaces can affect us in many ways. We are part of society, so we need a space where we feel that sense of belonging. I am really happy to have had the opportunity to help achieve this important research that will help for future generations.

**Delia Torres-Enciso**  
I am a first generation Mexican-American Born and raised in Salem, OR. I enlisted into the Army reserves at the young age of 17, where I served 6 years and left with the rank of Sergeant. I moved to Portland after graduating from The National Personal Training Institute to become a personal trainer. After being a trainer for a year I decide to change my career goals and am now pursuing a bachelors degree to become a journalist.

**Keyana Lowe**  
I am an employed parent, student of color, low-income affiliate of the LGBTQ community. As such, I am a representative of these communities, and for those striving to better themselves and enrich their lives. I aspire to be a Physical Therapist and joined the Space Matters research team to build a stronger community between oppressed peoples. I want to help revolutionize how we apply Spatial Theory and Critical Race Theory into building, design and architecture for the inclusion and equity of ALL individuals

**Amara Pérez**  
My name is Amara Pérez and I am the daughter of two first generation college students who both pursued careers in education. My ethnic roots are English, Scottish, Venezuelan, Puerto Rican, and Cuban. I identify as a popular educator, community organizer, participatory action researcher and curriculum-spatial-CRT theorist. I am third year doctoral student, former PCC Multicultural Center Coordinator, and Space Matters is part of my dissertation study. My interest in this project is largely inspired by my community-lesbian women of color who are always contesting, claiming, and transforming social space. Hasta la victoria siempre!

\*\*\*We want to acknowledge five PCC student participants who for various reasons were unable to finish the full 5 weeks of the project. Their stories, ideas, and curiosities were invaluable to the process and insights: Tomomi Itagaki, Andres Lemus, Cleophas Limbrick, Lycresha Matamoros-Martinez, D'Varrio Rice.

**Malia Forney**  
I moved to Portland about seven months ago and my perspective on the world has completely changed. Portland has encouraged me to investigate the space around me, notice what is lacking, and to reclaim the space that belongs to me. I am now a sociology student at PCC and I hope to transfer to a historically black college or university after my stint in Portlandia. In my free time, I like to bike and reflect. I reflect through conversations with myself and challenging conversations with friends, family, and new prospects. I'm on a mission to be a happy and healthy black woman and to live my best life every single day!

**Cory Gillette**  
My name is Cory Gillette, and my identity is subject to context; I primarily navigate the world as a black male. I do not have a declared major yet, but plan on double-majoring in Mathematics and Linguistics. My life-goals orient around my personal development and the alleviation of suffering to my highest capabilities. I joined this project because it presented a fantastic opportunity to learn about working as a team with leaders while contributing to a cutting-edge field of knowledge.

**Ngoc Nguyen**  
As a member of an underrepresented group of students (Asian, immigrants), I do feel the joy and responsibilities to participate in the program I know would benefit me and many of my peers. I've never had any formal opportunity to sit down and discuss so openly about why and how spaces can affect students of color until Space Matters. I have no doubt the project will not only bring students fresher eyes on our educational settings, but also speak volume about our joint effort to the more equal and transparent Portland Community College's campuses.

**Derrick McDonald**  
My name is Derrick McDonald. I am biracial, a veteran, and a small-business owner. I am dual-enrolled at PCC and PSU, working towards a degree in Economics. I would like to apply my interests and insights to community development. I chose to be a part of this relevant and vital program because it empowers the disenfranchised with the perspective and language to challenge the status quo and envision a more equitable future in the communities that they belong to.

**Erika Villanueva**  
My name is Erika Villanueva, my people are first generation students, hardworking, and family oriented. I am still undecided on a major but hope to pursue a career where I can help my community. My goal is to be able to help my community in every way possible to make a better place not just for us but also for future generations. I wanted to participate in Space Matters because I had never thought about space affecting certain outcomes, but the more I thought about it the more I realized it does. I wanted to learn how it affected a place where I spend so much time, like PCC.

**Cesar Santiago**  
My name is Cesar Santiago. I identify as male and Latino. My major is Graphic Design. I am he who loves all, when in the mood. I like art/design and I enjoy photography. One of my goals is to be a mentor to students who want to learn about Design/Art. I'm a sucker for sour gummy worms and I like to look at the design and structures of bridges. I am trilingual and currently learning a 4th one. I like Stranger things and the walking dead. Years ago I discovered the meaning of life but I forgot to write it down. I wanted to join Space Matters because not only could I grow my leadership skills but also help others like minorities become aware of CRT and their space around them.

**Brenda Prestegui**  
My name is Brenda Prestegui. My major is accounting and my goal is to finish college. My people are funny, Mexicans, Chicanos, Educated, Bilingual, Different Ethnicity and hard workers. I wanted to participate in the project because I wanted to see it different and wanted to have our voice heard in space matters. I think that being a minority we deserve to have a space where it feels like we belong.

**Mohamed Sheikh**  
"You can't make footprints in the sands of time by sitting in your butt. And who wants to leave butt prints in the sands of time (Bob Mo'wad). I am going to leave my footprints and they're gonna be giant! My identities include Somali, engineer, and Muslim. My major is Mechanical Engineer. My goal is to obtain my masters in mechanical engineering and work with NASA. I am interested in this project because when I moved to Portland last year and started PCC, I struggled connecting with the campus. There was a lot I was unaware of and places that felt unwelcoming to me. I want to make sure that I and the current/future students of PCC never feel this way.

## How Space Matters: Reflections from a Student Inquiry Project on Race, Space, & the PCC Landscape

Space Matters was a student inquiry project and part of an innovative critical race theory (CRT) initiative in Facilities Planning at Portland Community College (PCC). During winter term 2018, as part of a “discovery” phase in planning, PCC students of color spent five weeks exploring dimensions of race, space, and educational settings, to reveal new insights and examine critical questions about inclusion.

As participants in this project, we invite PCC staff in Facilities Planning, educational leaders, architectural design consultants, and other stakeholders to consider the following reflections when conceiving and designing educational space. These insights emerged from our collective lived experiences as students of color, spatial field notes we collected, and a student survey we conducted across PCC campuses.

As an inquiry project designed to explore, our insights and questions invite more questions and the need for further research. Moving forward, we recommend opportunities for student-led research. We hope to be able to continue this important work in order to further benefit the experiences of students of color at PCC specifically and in academic spaces in general.

### Reflections: Lived Experience

- Knowledge-building is a collaborative effort.
- The perceptions of people of color regarding race and space, while valid, are often not considered.
- While some patterns emerged, students of color were not homogenous in their responses to questions regarding space.
- There is a lack of education about CRT among PCC community members.
- People of color are more complex than just our racial and ethnic identities.
- People of color are under-represented in PCC spaces, curriculum, artwork, faculty, administration, and other dimensions of educational environments.
- When conceptualizing campus spaces there are opportunities to create platforms where dominant narratives, that perpetuate historical injustices, can be addressed through design.
- White supremacy prevails in society through norms, traditions, and beliefs that manifest in built environments, dissolving the integrity of humanity.
- A colorful space does not necessarily communicate an inclusive environment to people of color.
- Normative built environments reinforce and conceal “the white gaze,” which alienates some students of color from PCC spaces, and inhibits the confidence to engage fully in learning experiences without self-censorship.

#### Questions to Consider...

- How will you amplify the voices of people most affected by inequity so their concerns are implemented in campus design?
- How have stakeholders studied and practiced critical race theory?
- How does the diversity of stakeholders reflect the PCC student body?
- How will the environments you create condition the people that inhabit and travel PCC campuses?
- How might design maintain or disrupt the status quo?
- How do the interests and experiences of stakeholders inform design decisions?

### Reflections: Spatial Field Notes

- Challenging the status quo and disrupting dominant narratives requires innovation.
- Students of color should participate in all stages of the design process for PCC spaces.
- Space invokes feelings according to lived experience, which shapes our approach to social interactions; this illuminates a major concern for design, especially in educational settings.
- There are places with resources for “marginalized” people but they are out of the way and inconvenient; personal adherence to internalized narratives can cause negative feelings about asking for help and discourages some students of color from seeking out and accessing resources.
- Students of color are eager to be part of the planning process, but lack the institutional power and tools to improve the conditions we critique.
- If the point of design is to facilitate human life and human life is centered around connection, then good design ought to provide channels for humans to connect.
- Planning can frequently follow a linear trajectory and emphasize binary thinking; CRT re-directs this focus towards non-linear narratives and life-stories, which can lead to a more organic design process.
- Spaces that promote a common sense of belonging and empathy may support engagement in uncomfortable but necessary conversations to understand our differences and further cooperative learning.

#### Questions to Consider...

- How might rationales for spatial arrangements, such as efficiency and safety, reproduce racial inequities in built environments?
- How do built environments provide points of connection and access to resources for community college students who spend limited time on campus beyond classes?
- How will the spatial arrangements of material objects within built environments that you plan invite holistic human relationships and subvert systemic barriers to equity over time?

## Reflections: Student Survey

### On conducting surveys on space:

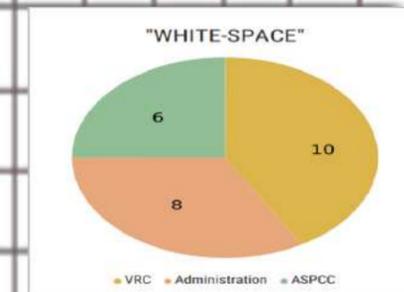
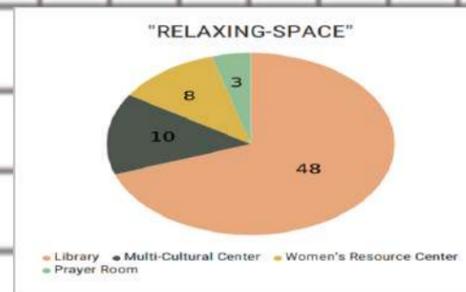
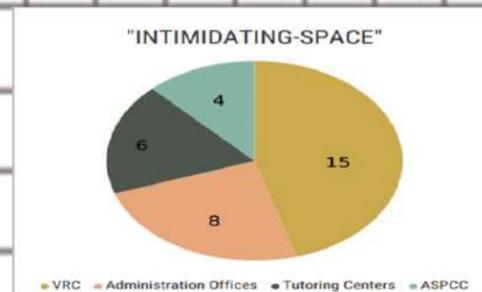
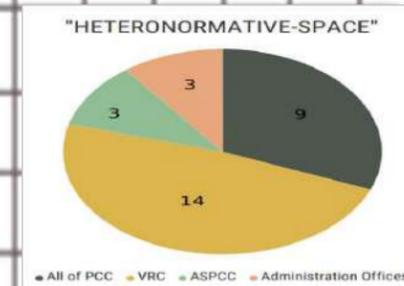
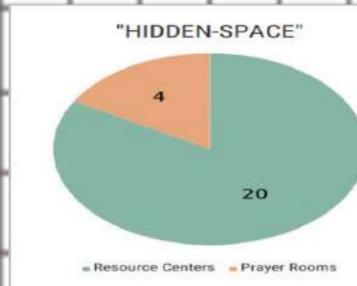
- We found the survey difficult to plan, design, and execute comprehensively due to time and resource constraints.
- As an informal inquiry project much of what we learned is inconclusive.
- Participant awareness of terminology regarding spatial categories was a barrier to responses.
- Findings help illuminate direction for more formal research in the future.

The following findings emerge from survey questions that probed into perceptions of PCC spaces. Much of the findings are inconclusive and point to the difficulty in understanding students' perceptions of space, particularly through a survey. For example, while spaces may come to mind when categories are named, we do not know what factors influence that perception—people? activities? experiences? events? rumors? built environments? Nonetheless, we believe the raw data furthers the discovery phase and draws attention to possibilities for further investigation.

### Out of **138** students of color surveyed across the district, the following observations were made:

- 36% said they did not feel that spaces in the PCC environment represented them.
- Student suggestions indicated three potential contributions to spaces that would feel more inclusive: artwork and visual representation, forums that allow students to talk about concerns and issues, and spaces which encourage connection and collaboration.
- Three potentially significant reasons students provided for avoiding spaces include: a lack of representation, crowdedness, and access to/distance from spaces.

- 44% of student responses claimed resource centers came to mind as “intersectional-space”
- 72% of student responses claimed resource centers came to mind as “under resourced-space”



## About Space Matters

Space Matters was a project of PCC Facilities Planning as a means to align built environments with PCC's strategic vision for equity and inclusion. Through training and practical experience, Space Matters invited students to explore CRT and spatial theories as a means to design campus-based inquiry projects that seek to explore relationships between race and space at PCC. Students participate in 3 daylong workshops, conduct activities in between workshop sessions to further campus-based inquiry projects (ex: taking photos, talking to peers, conducting research), and present project insights and reflections to the PCC community.

Space Matters is also part of a dissertation study. The aim of the study is to increase knowledge that may help educational leaders and campus planners to align facilities planning and design with institutional values for equity and inclusion. The experiences and perceptions of PCC students of color provide valuable insight into ways in which CRT may open possibilities for equity and inclusion in facilities planning and design at a community college. For more information about Space Matters contact Amara H. Pérez, [ahperez@uncg.edu](mailto:ahperez@uncg.edu).

CRT and Spatial Analysis in Facilities Planning & Design:  
Discovery Phase

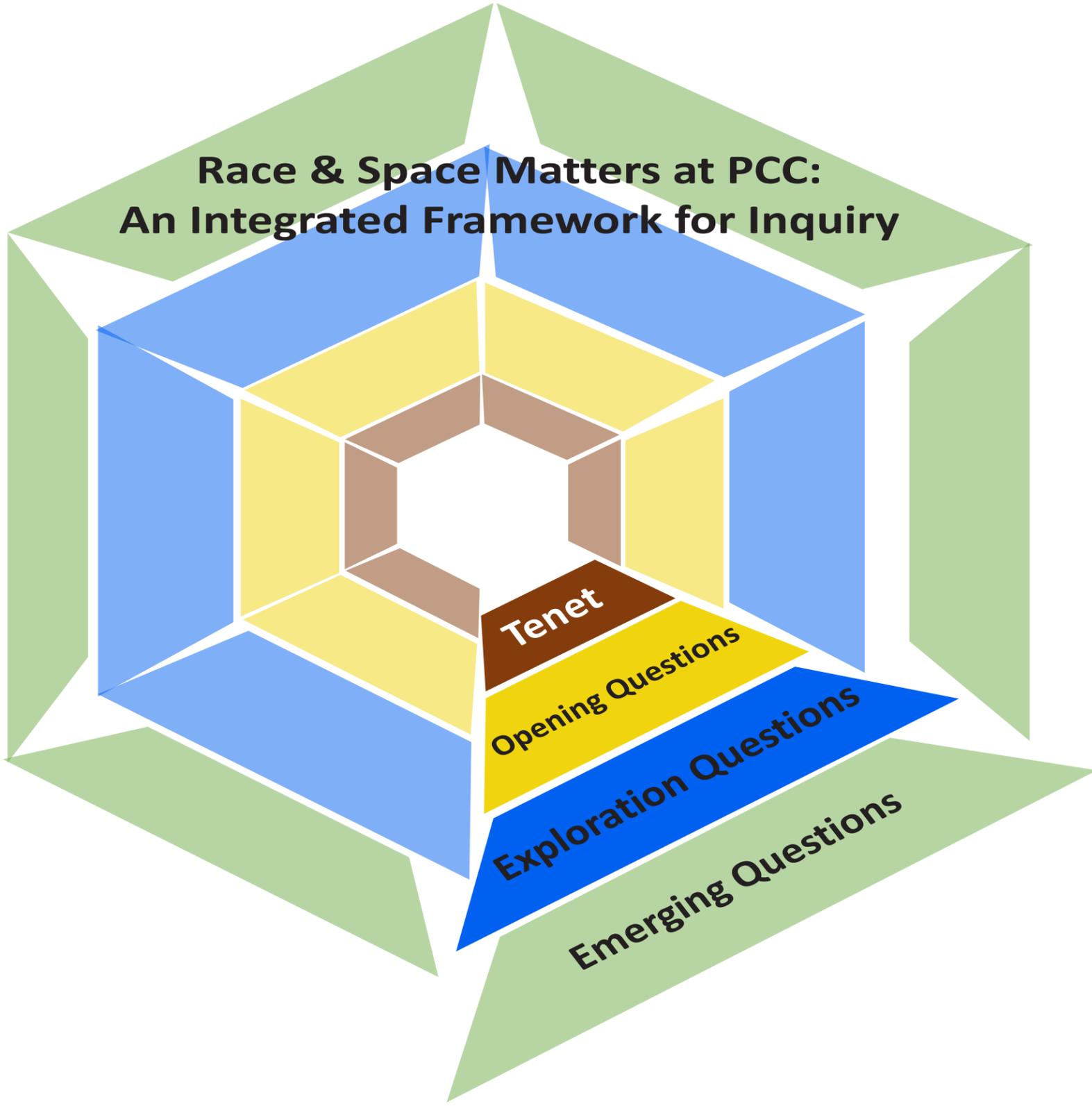
**Context**

CRT and spatial analysis open possibilities for institutional change in service to equity and inclusion. This integrated framework offers exploratory questions as a means to increase awareness, to inspire further inquiries, and to imagine what else is possible. By drawing attention to un- and under-examined aspects of race, space, and equity, CRT and spatial analysis offer an integrated lens to “read” critically material objects, spatial arrangements, and built environments. A work in progress, this collaborative process aims to develop the experience, skills, and practice of PCC leaders and campus planners to apply CRT in facilities planning and design.

**Space**

Guided by critical spatial analysis, this framework is based on the following assumptions:

1. Space is not neutral (Soja, 2010).
2. Material objects, spatial arrangements, and built environments are cultural artifacts (Tuhiwai Smith, 2013).
3. Space communicates messages that teach and normalize social hierarchies and dominant belief systems (Costello, 2001).
4. Messages function to reproduce inequity in ways that are often unacknowledged, concealed, invisible, under-examined (Friedman & van Ingen, 2011).
5. Socializing messages communicated through material objects, spatial arrangements, and built environments shape our worldview (Costello, 2001).
6. Space is central to the construction of race and race is central to the unfolding of spatialities (Delany, 2002).



## CRT Tenets *(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)*

Racism/white supremacy is embedded and ingrained in all aspects of society	Multidimensionality of oppression exists	Dominant narratives mask racism/white supremacy	Voice, storytelling, counter-narratives, and experiential knowledge are necessary for institutional change	Interest convergence is a determining factor in racial justice	Dismantling racism/white supremacy advances social justice
--	--	---	--	--	--

What does this tenet invite us to acknowledge or examine?  
 What does this tenet draw our attention to?  
 How might this tenet help us to *read* the PCC landscape\*?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is racism/white supremacy embedded in the PCC landscape?</li> <li>How might the PCC landscape explicitly/implicitly ignore, neglect, or exclude communities of color?</li> <li>How are diverse cultures reflected in the PCC landscape?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How might the PCC landscape acknowledge/deny the intersectionality of racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of people of color?</li> <li>How might people of color read and experience the PCC landscape differently based on other social identities (ex: class, gender, ability)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How might the PCC landscape function to communicate dominant narratives like: color-blindness, meritocracy, and equal opportunity?</li> <li>How might the PCC landscape explicitly/implicitly mask, conceal, or justify racism/white supremacy?</li> <li>How does the PCC landscape counter dominant narratives?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What role might space play in amplifying/silencing the voices and experiences of PCC students of color?</li> <li>How might the perceptions and experiences of PCC students of color inform campus design to communicate safety and belonging?</li> <li>How might counter-narratives illuminate spatial needs of PCC students of color?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In what ways might a more inclusive and equitable landscape converge/conflict with institutional interests of PCC?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In what ways might centering the perceptions and experiences of PCC students of color contribute to the design of a more inclusive college landscape?</li> <li>How might CRT advance/limit equity and inclusion in PCC facilities planning and design?</li> </ul>
---	---	--	--	--	--

What new questions do CRT tenets generate for PCC facilities planning and design?

\* **Landscape refers to: material objects, spatial arrangements, and built environments**

## Pedagogical Tool: Space Cards

