



# SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

CITY COLLEGE • MESA COLLEGE • MIRAMAR COLLEGE • COLLEGE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION



## Carlos O. Cortez, Ph.D.

---

Carlos O. Cortez, Ph.D., presently serves as the president of the San Diego College of Continuing Education (SDCCE), one of the four colleges of the San Diego Community College District, the seventh-largest community college system in the United States. SDCCE is the 11th largest institution in the California Community College system, out of 116, by headcount. In this capacity, he oversees more than 40,000 students annually at seven campuses and over 200 off-site locations. Dr. Cortez is also an adjunct faculty at John Hopkins University, New York University, and the University of California, Berkeley. 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 equity and access in urban education through literacy and policy initiatives.

Dr. Cortez has taught consistently for the past 23 years. He has served as an administrator for 16 years and as CEO for 11 years. Prior to leading SDCCE, Dr. Cortez most recently worked as the acting Vice President 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 D.C., Houston, New York City, Los Angeles, Berkeley, and San Diego. Cortez served as principal of New Village Charter School in Los Angeles, and as Assistant Principal of special education services at Grape Street Elementary School. In these positions, he was known for his dedication to teachers and students, the development of innovative programs and services, astute fundraising, and sound fiscal management.

Throughout his career, Dr. Cortez has elected to work primarily with underserved, ethnically diverse student populations from low-income communities. He has been a staunch advocate for policy and finance 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 and the Noncredit Coalition. 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 Campaign for Free College Tuition, the Trevor Project, the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE), the San Diego Workforce Partnership's Workforce Development Board, 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 Assembly member 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 League for Innovation in Community Colleges; and The RP Group Research and Planning Project award. 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.

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 feminist political history.