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Student Equity Plan Review: A Focus on Racial Equity **Cuesta College**

Background

To date, California is the only state to have implemented a Student Equity Policy and to have a mandated plan to address racial disparities. The California Community College Chancellor's Office stands behind the "Vision for Success," another lever of change, which mandates racial equity as a goal and priority for the state's community colleges. For its part, Vision for Success lays out three clear goals to combat inequities:

1. **Transfer Equity:** Increasing by 35 percent the number of California community college students transferring annually to a UC or CSU campus.
2. **Expanding Attainment:** Increasing by at least 20 percent the number of students annually who earn associate degrees, credentials, and certificates.
3. **Mitigating Equity Gaps:** Reducing outcome gaps by 40 percent within 5 years and fully closing those gaps for good within 10 years.

To better understand how the California Community Colleges are addressing racial equity, the California Community College Chancellor's Office collaborated with the Center for Urban Education (CUE), to review the community college equity plans, completed June 2019.



What was the purpose of the review?

To Provide the Chancellor's Office;

1. Feedback on the process, including how to create a student equity planning structure with clear directions on what should be included in an equity plan
2. Concrete recommendations on how to embed racial equity within community college equity plans, specifically activities
3. Clear strategies and technical assistance needed for colleges to create equity plans that address racial equity
4. Clarity in terms of what types of professional development are needed in community colleges to close racial equity gaps



What the review was NOT

- The Student Equity Plan review was **NOT** an assessment or an evaluation of individual college plans, rather it was an analysis examining all submitted Student Equity Plans
- CUE, along with the Chancellor's Office, are sharing individual campus data with each college – as the review garnered a plethora of interesting data and insights for future equity planning in the state
- ***Both CUE and the Chancellor's Office acknowledge that the research agenda and guiding questions for the review do not represent what the colleges were asked to include in their plans***



How were the plans reviewed?

- CUE researchers created a protocol to examine each plan for racial equity
- Community college practitioners from across the state came together for a weekend in Fall 2019 to review the equity plans
- CUE researchers conducted a quality review of the analysis and provided the Chancellor's Office recommendations for future state equity planning

What was examined?

- CUE researchers and community college practitioners reviewed 1) each activity submitted via NOVA by the college and 2) the executive summary submitted by the college

What's Included?

- Key Terms (**Slide 7-8**)
- General Activity Statistics Across the State (**Slides 9-12**)
- Your College's Quantitative Activity Analysis (**Slides 13-31**)
- Equity Strengths & Take Aways (**Slides 32-34**)
- References (**Slides 35**)



KEY TERMS

EQUITY

“The state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair.”

The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. It is helpful to think of equity as not simply a desired state of affairs or a lofty value. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

Awareness of the racialized experiences students have in the classroom, the college environment, and in society that reinforce oppression rather than dismantling it.

EQUITY-MINDED

- Being color-conscious (as opposed to color-blind) in an affirmative sense
- Being aware that beliefs, expectations, and practices can result in negative racialization
- Being willing to assume responsibility for the elimination of inequality

INQUIRY

Inquiry is a systematic way to reflect on our own practices and practices of the institution with the goal of learning what is and is not working – specifically for minoritized students. Inquiry is the process of trying to understand why an equity gap is occurring.

Why are these key terms important?

- The key terms provided the framework for the review
 - Reviewers were asked to identify how these terms were present and manifested in each plan
- For example:
 - How is equity included in the plan?
 - Is the plan race-conscious?
 - What aspects of equity-mindedness are present?
 - Does the college include inquiry in their strategy to achieve racial equity?





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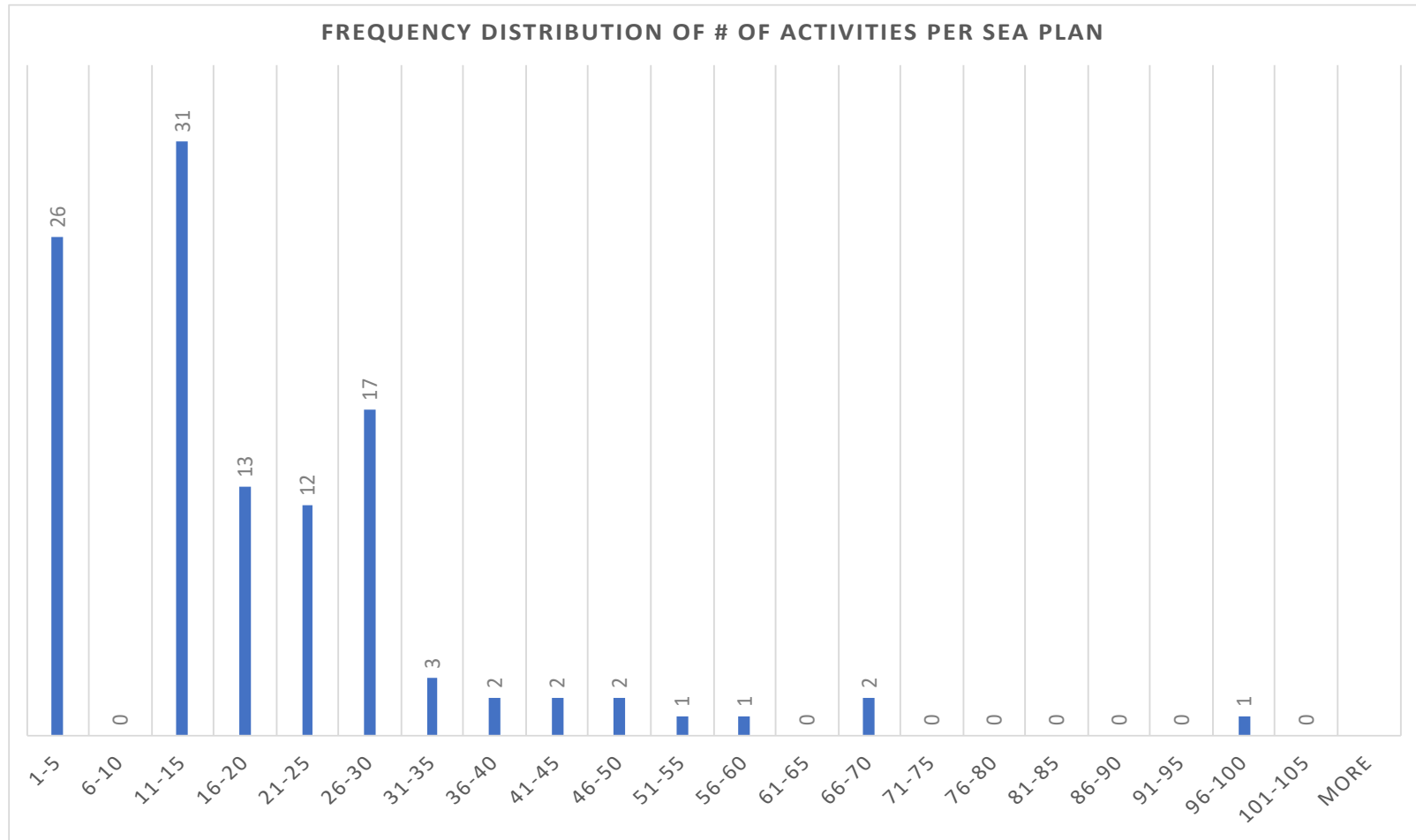
General Activity Statistics Across the State

As part of the plan, colleges were asked to submit “activities” or strategies that when implemented will close equity gaps that correspond to specific metrics.

In this section, and the rest of the report, the terms “activity” or “activities” refer to those specific strategies that were submitted as part of the equity plan.



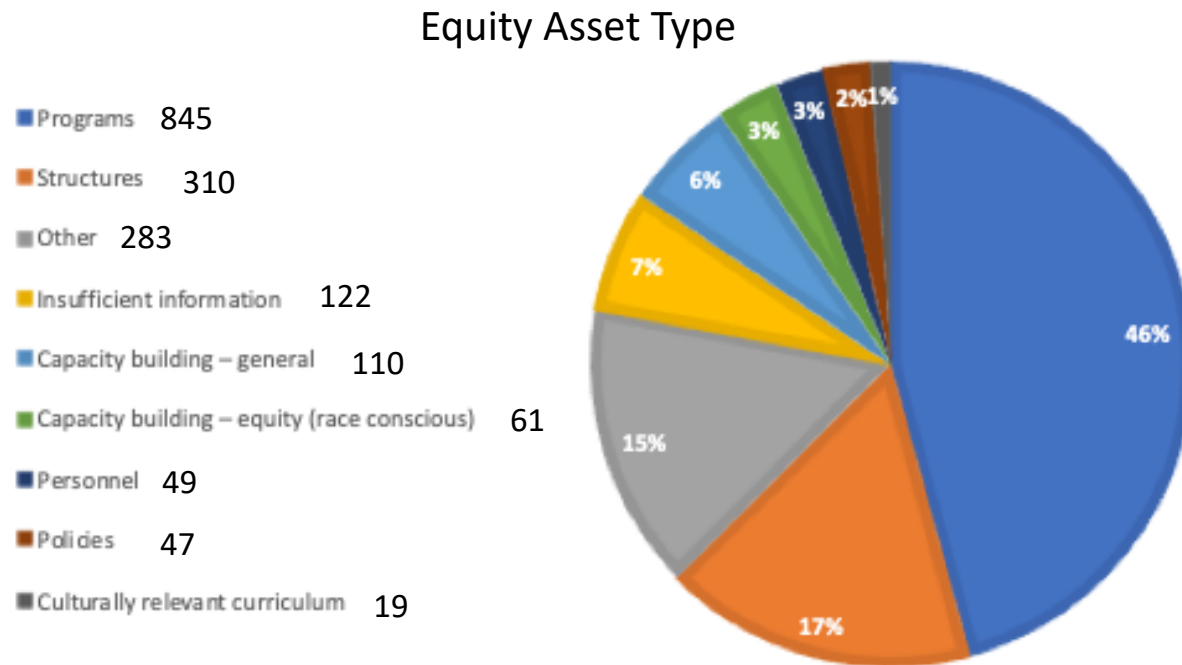
General Activity Statistics Across the State



A total of 1,853 activity descriptions were examined. The number of submitted activities ranged from one college plan proposing two activities and another college proposing 100 activities. The average number of activities for all of the plans was 16 activities. The frequency distribution of number of activities per college plan shows the largest group of plans (31) proposed between 11-15 activities followed by 26 plans at 1-5 activities and then 17 plans at 26-30 activities.



General Activity Statistics Across the State



To better understand how colleges are attempting to increase equity in student success, the Student Equity plan reviewers categorized each activity by “equity asset type”. An equity asset type is a method for categorizing the type or kind of activity. For a complete list of Equity Asset Types, please see the next slide.

The majority of activities (46% or 845) were identified as programs, followed by the creation of structures (17% or 310). Colleges submitted activities categorized as policies (2% or 47) and culturally relevant curriculum (1% or 19) the least.



Equity Asset Types

EQUITY ASSET TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Structures	<p>Creating anew or reintegrating how units, offices, and roles on campus work towards improving student success and outcomes.</p> <p>Implementing a technological system to support students, faculty or staff.</p>
Programs	<p>Specific activity proposed to address student equity.</p>
Personnel	<p>Hiring new staff/faculty/administrators to coordinate proposed equity activities or to support the equity effort in some capacity.</p>
Policies	<p>Developing new or revising existing guidelines and rules that govern the operation of the institution/daily routine.</p>
Capacity Building - General	<p>Professional development focused on providing training to staff, faculty, and administrators.</p>
Capacity Building - Equity (Race Conscious)	<p>Professional development focused specifically on training staff, faculty, and administrators to be reflective practitioners and to develop equity-minded competence.</p>
Culturally Relevant Curriculum Development	<p>Redesign of curriculum to be culturally relevant.</p>



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Activity Analysis

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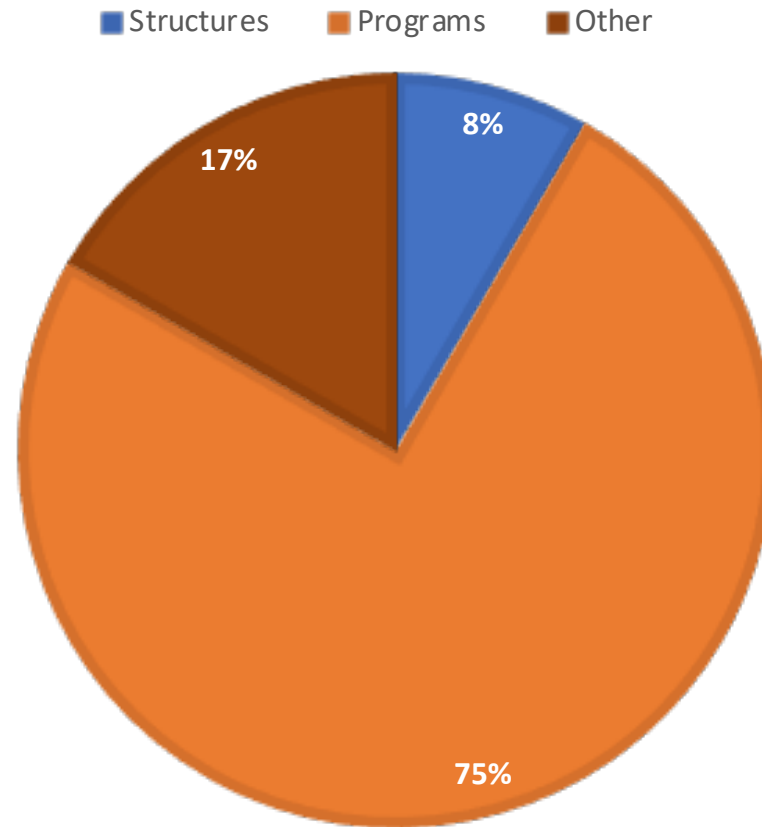
School of Education



California
Community
Colleges



Equity Asset Types



- The college submitted 12 total activities as part of the equity plan.
- The majority (75%) of activities in the equity plan were identified as “programs,” 17% as “other,” and 8% as “structures.”

Note- Please see Slide 12 for Equity Asset Type definitions



Race-Neutral vs. Race-Specific Metrics

- Reviewers examined all activities submitted by the colleges to understand if the corresponding metrics for the activity were **Race Specific** or **Race-Neutral**

- **Race-Neutral Metrics:** None of the metrics refer to a specific racial group (i.e., Black) for that given activity

Corresponding Metrics:

Overall : All : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year

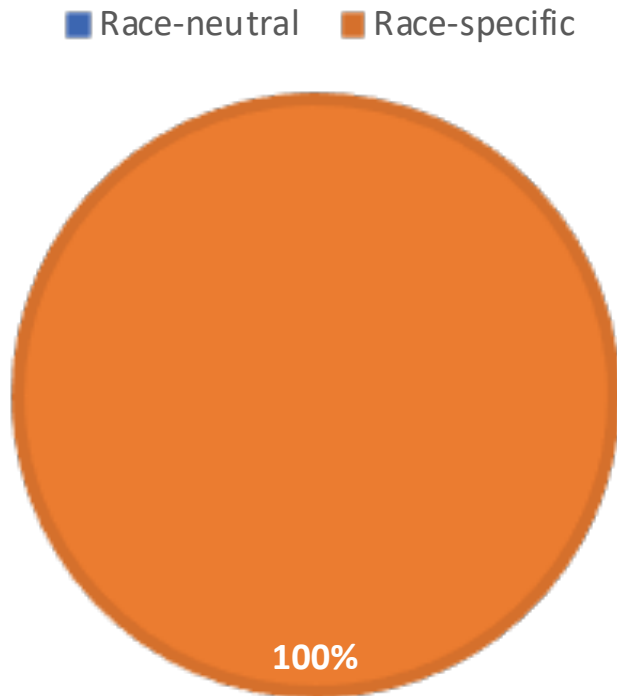
- **Race-Specific Metrics:** At least one of the listed metrics refers to a specific racial category (i.e., Black or Latinx students)

Corresponding Metrics:

Black or African American : Female : Enrolled in the Same Community College



Distribution of Activities with Race-Neutral vs. Race-Specific Metrics



Activity Metrics, Categorized as Race-Neutral or Race-Specific

- All of the activities submitted had corresponding metrics that were race-specific.
- This means that all of the activities submitted specifically named at least one racial ethnic group within the metrics targeted by that activity.



Race-Neutral vs. Race-Specific Activity Description

- Reviewers examined all activities submitted by the colleges to understand if the activity *description* was **Race-Specific** or **Race-Neutral**
 - **Race-Neutral:** The activity description does not refer to any specific racial group (i.e., Black)
 - **Race-Specific:** The activity description mentions at least one specific racial group (i.e., Latinx)

Examples provided on slides 18-19



Example: Activity Description that is Race-Neutral

Design and implement a mentoring program, special orientation and monthly support sessions aimed to increase certificate and associate degree completion.

The activity description is focused on the general student population. Poor alignment with metrics.

Corresponding Metrics:

Overall : All : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year

Black or African American : Male : Attained the Vision Goal Completion Definition

Hispanic or Latino : Male : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year

Hispanic or Latino : Female : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year



Example: Activity Description that is Race-Specific

The college will conduct targeted outreach activities to increase the number of **African American and LGBTQ students** that complete the matriculation process. Activities may include making presentations about the Umoja program and LGBTQ services at local high schools, college preview days, promoting dual enrollment opportunities, and contacting applicants via the call center to answer questions about the matriculation process.

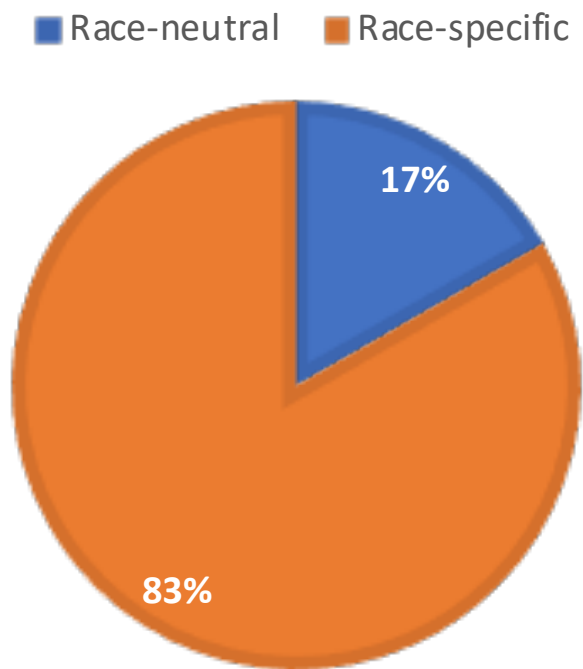
The activity description is focused on a specific racial/ethnic group - which aligns with the targeted metrics for this activity. Alignment between metrics and activity are critical to closing equity gaps.

Corresponding Metrics:

Black or African American : Female : Enrolled in the Same Community College



Distribution of Race-Specific vs. Race-Neutral Activity Descriptions



Activity Descriptions, Categorized as Race-Neutral or Race-Specific

- Of those 12 activities, 17% had an activity description that was race-neutral and 83% race-specific.
- This means that the majority of activity descriptions submitted named at least one racial-ethnic group within the description of that activity.
- Both the metrics and descriptions associated with each activity were primarily race-specific.



Reviewers Examined Activity Descriptions for a Focus on Student Services or the Classroom



Student Service Focus

The primary aim of the activity is to provide some type of support service to students (i.e., orientation or counseling)

Classroom Focus

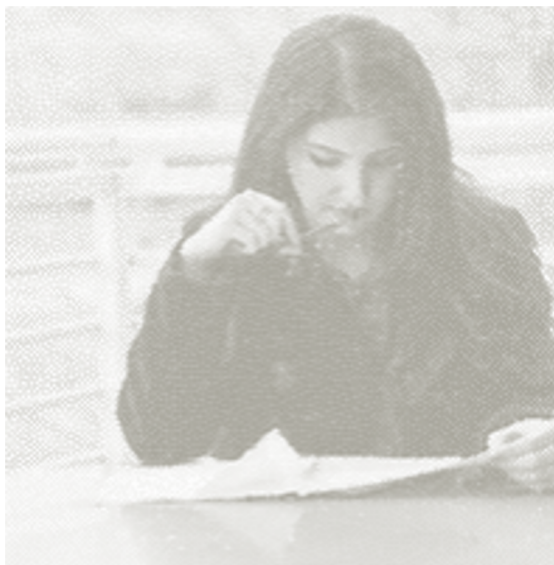
The primary aim of the activity is focused on what happens inside the classroom (i.e., training faculty on equitable classroom practice)

Both Student Service/Classroom Focus

The activity incorporates both elements (i.e., Umoja learning community)

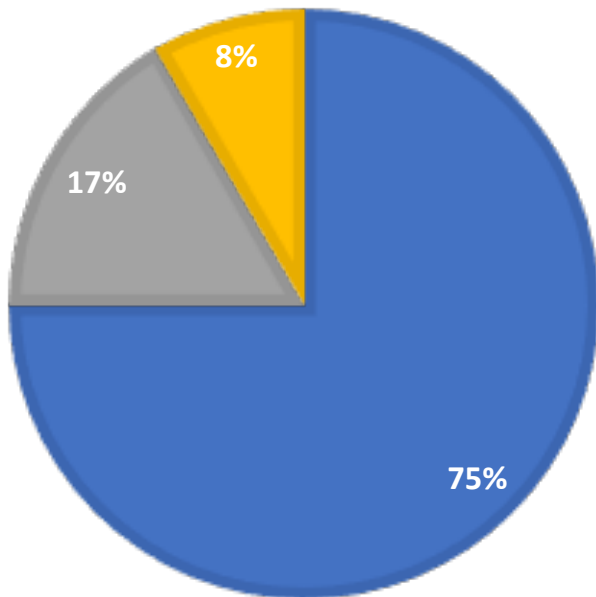
Neither Student Service/Classroom Focus

The activity cannot be identified as either student services or classroom focused (i.e., development of a data coaches program)



Distribution of Activity Descriptions by Student Services-Focused vs. Classroom-Focused

- Student support services
- Both student support services/classroom-focused
- Neither

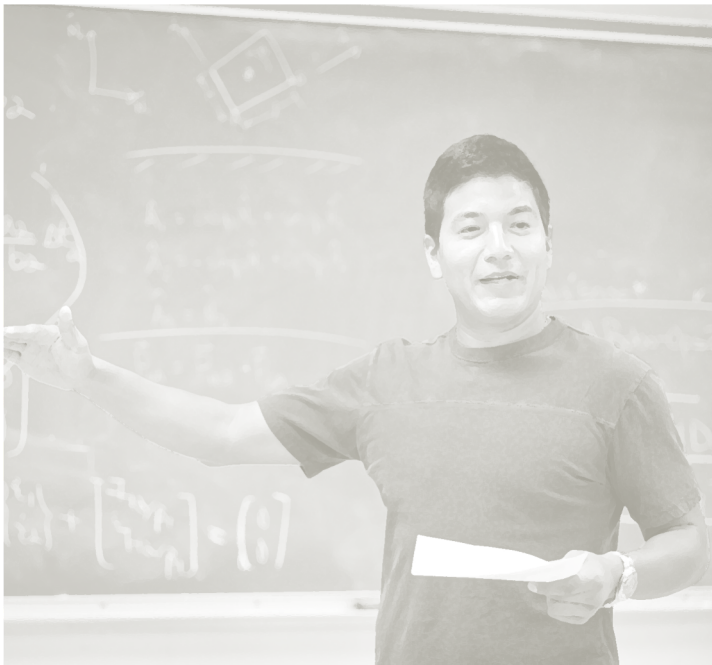


- Of the 12 activity descriptions submitted, 75% were focused on student services, 17% as both student services and classroom-focused and 8% as neither.

Percentage of activity descriptions focused on student services or the classroom



Reviewers Examined Activity Descriptions for Instructional Faculty Engagement



Yes, Faculty Engaged

Instructional faculty members are specifically mentioned/involved in the activity description

No, Faculty Not Engaged

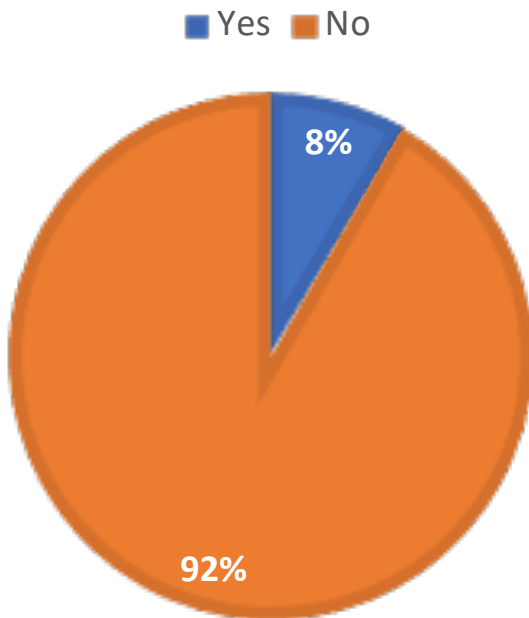
Instructional faculty members are not specifically mentioned/involved in the activity description

Unclear

The activity description is not clear whether the activity will include instructional faculty members in the activity



Distribution of Activity Descriptions that Engaged Instructional Faculty Members



Percentage of activity descriptions that include or engage instructional faculty members

- Of the 12 activities, 8% specifically engage instructional faculty members and 92% do not.
- This means that for the majority of the activities submitted, instructional faculty are not specifically part of the activity.



Reviewers Examined Activity Descriptions for Inquiry

Inquiry is a process of trying to understand why an equity gap is occurring and can be structured in different ways.



Classroom Inquiry

Inquiry into classroom practice might include the analysis of course-level data disaggregated by race or a document review of course syllabi and assignments from an equity perspective.



Student Services Inquiry

Student service inquiry may take the form of observations of the transfer center or tutoring center or a website review from a racial equity perspective. The goal of inquiry, regardless of office/unit/practitioner role, is to better understand how practices may not be working for racially minoritized students.

Note- The examples in this slide provide an illustration of the different forms of inquiry by which practitioners can engage. This is not an exhaustive list of inquiry activities.



Example: Activity Description that Includes Inquiry

The Office of Institutional Research, in consultation with appropriate campus programs and committees, will conduct a comprehensive assessment of student support services and communication/ marketing documents using an action research lens by creating inquiry teams. Action research brings together and trains practitioners (called “practitioner-researchers”) who are in positions to bring about direct change and make decisions, to actively participate in assessment and evaluation of specific practices, policies and related documents, and programs....

The college plans to bring together administrators, faculty and staff to examine their own practices to better understand the inequities on their campus

By participating in reflective practice, practitioners do not assume that they know why inequities are occurring but instead engage in a structured process to better understand how institutional or practitioner practices may not be effective

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Example: Activity Description that Includes Inquiry

The action research will involve equity-minded inquiry that assesses the effectiveness of services across campus through a racial equity lens. The inquiry team will be trained on the principles of equity-mindedness and on key methods of inquiry: observations, interviews, and document reviews. The focus of the inquiry activities will be to systematically map all services, activities, structures, and staffing that contribute to equity planning metrics.

Practitioners will approach inquiry from a “racial equity lens” – meaning that they will examine how racially minoritized students fare as result of the practice

The inquiry team will review and evaluate the documents, websites, practices etc. around core services and programs that help students achieve the metric outcomes, including, but not limited to: • The onboarding process • First-year student services • Transfer services • Career services • Academic support services (SI, tutoring) • Early alert systems

The methods of inquiry allow practitioners to better understand the fine-grained daily practices of specific student services and how they may or may not be supporting racially minoritized students

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Example: Activity Description that Includes Inquiry

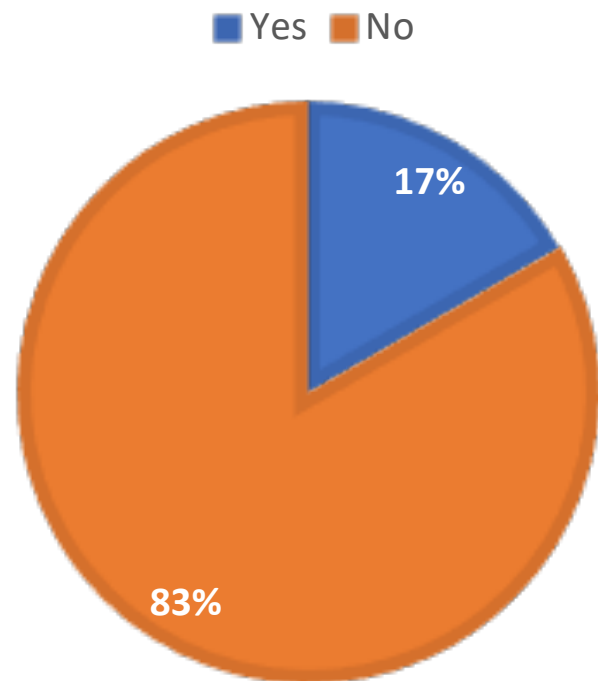
The goal of this activity is to achieve the following outcomes for racially minoritized students:

1. Documents, practices, procedures, and policies of core services are updated/revised, are more student-friendly overall, and are welcoming and accessible for racially minoritized students;
2. New documents, practices, procedures, and policies of core services will be designed to address any gaps;
3. Racially minoritized students who are targeted by the revised/new strategies will report that the services meet their needs;
4. Members of the inquiry team will have an increased understanding of the specific needs and experience of racially minoritized students and will feel more agency in addressing student needs;
5. Partner with program review to incorporate this process in measuring effectiveness of interventions and closing racial equity gaps department wide.

Activity description lists racially focused goals



Distribution of Activity Descriptions that Included Inquiry



- The majority (83%) of activity descriptions did not include inquiry, whereas 17% did include inquiry.

Percentage of activity descriptions that include inquiry

See slides 26-28 for an example of an activity that includes inquiry.



Reviewers Examined Activity Descriptions for the Inclusion of Transfer

Why is transfer an important issue of equity?

California community colleges are the institution of choice for the growing Latinx community, first-generation college-goers, low-income students, and many more who have been deprived of educational opportunities that are taken for granted by economically-advantaged populations.

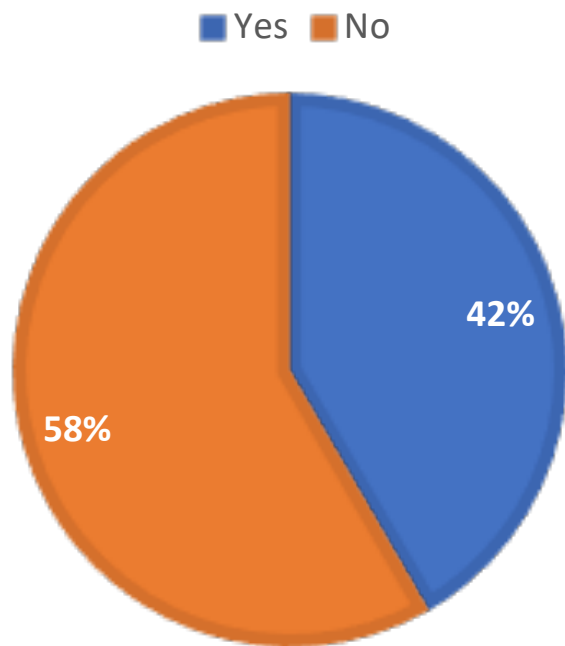
Yet, less than half of students transfer to four-year institutions or finish a degree/certificate within *six* years.

Thus, each activity description was examined for the inclusion of transfer.

“Yes” indicates the activity description mentions the term transfer and the activity is aimed at the function of transfer (i.e., expanding the transfer center or training faculty on how to be “transfer agents”)

“No” indicates the activity description either does not mention transfer or if transfer is mentioned, it was not aimed at increasing transfer or transfer support (i.e., the mention of “transfer-level math” is not a transfer-focused activity)

Distribution of Activity Descriptions that Specifically Included Transfer



- Approximately 42% of the 12 activities specifically include transfer and 58% do not include transfer.

Percentage of transfer related activity descriptions





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Strengths & Take Aways



Strengths: Executive Summary

“The plan is well written including internal and external inquiry and details 12 activities that focus on supporting racially minoritized students. Additionally, the plan tackles issues of whiteness head on which can be difficult to do and discuss.” –*Community College Expert Reviewer*

“They are race conscious, take institutional responsibility, focus on efforts that change practitioners rather than students, and tend to do so in more culturally relevant ways.” —*Community College Expert Reviewer*

Large Take Aways

“At times there is too much in each activity that it is hard to know what is actually being done. What are new efforts versus existing efforts that are being scaled up? There is an opportunity to differentiate new uses of institutional resources and changes to what’s already in place.” – *Community College Expert Reviewer*

CUE Recommendations:


1. Clearly **delineate different types** of activities and goals (e.g, capacity-building, programs, etc.) rather than discussing numerous types of activities under the same goal.
2. Work to incorporate more **classroom-focused** equity efforts and **engage instructional faculty**.
3. Consider **structural** and **capacity-building** equity activities to foster institutional change.
4. **Align equity planning with Vision for Success,**

Note-The take aways listed here are ONLY based on what was submitted via NOVA, June 2019 and the content of the executive summary. It does not reflect other strategic planning documents.

References

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- Harper, S. R. (2012). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *The Review of Higher Education*, 36(1, Supplement), 9-29.





If your college has specific questions or comments regarding the analysis, please reach out to the Center for Education at the contact below

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