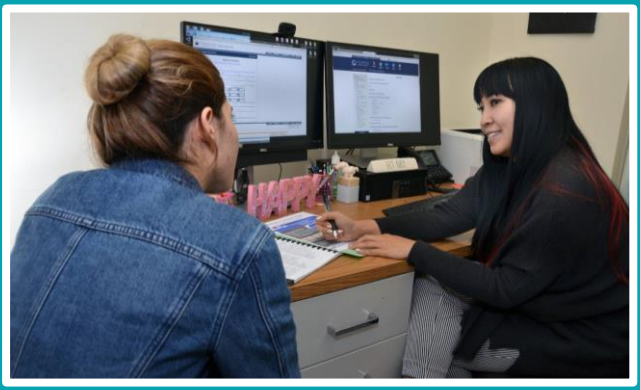

RACIAL EQUITY IN ACTION AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Delving into the What and How at Three Colleges Participating in the Guided Pathways 2.0 Effort

April 2024

This brief presents specific, practical, and actionable practices and strategies related to racial equity in Guided Pathways efforts that are unfolding at three California Community Colleges.

Colleges shared that they have developed or expanded centers, programs, and learning communities specifically for students of color. They are also providing ongoing training for faculty and staff, spaces to connect, shared learnings, and compensating faculty and staff which has proven to be particularly impactful.

At the institutional level, colleges provide examples of how engaged, committed, and influential champions can play an integral role in the shifts and evolution needed to advance racial equity at colleges. Data is described as a valuable source of information that galvanizes learning, reflection, and planning when it is designed, gathered, analyzed, and interpreted within an intentional, race-conscious frame.

Key facilitators to success include: being clear about how projects connect, having buy-in from senior leaders, compensating participants, combining funding sources, including diverse stakeholders, and broadening terminology. To learn more about the specific work of each college, we invite you to explore this brief.

Photo credit: Long Beach City College (top left),
Norco College (top middle), and Cuyamaca College (top right)

engage R&D

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Caveats

This learning brief was designed to highlight the equity work of three colleges that are currently participating in the California Guided Pathways 2.0 effort. The authors of this report acknowledge and **value the hard work and dedication of all the colleges** who are engaging in deep equity work within this project and throughout the system.

This brief reflects learning from interviews with college leaders at **three California community colleges** conducted in Fall 2023. We recognize that all the colleges listed in this brief are in Southern California and the **contexts vary** for each college in the state.

Given the **small sample size** used for this brief, we acknowledge limitations of the findings but hope that readers glean value from the strategies, successes, challenges, and advice offered by the dedicated educators who shared their time, knowledge, and experience to support learning.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to **College Futures Foundation** who commissioned Engage R+D's developmental evaluation of the California Guided Pathways Project (CAGP) 2.0, the college leaders from **Cuyamaca College, Norco College,** and **Long Beach City College** who contributed by sharing about their respective equity work and experiences, the **Drs. Minh Tran and Adrián Trinidad** from USC Race & Equity Center and **Dr. Eric Felix** from San Diego State University College of Education for their thought partnership, the **Foundation for California Community Colleges**, and the **36 CAGP 2.0 Project colleges** who have contributed to this learning endeavor through surveys, interviews, and learning sessions where they have shared about their successes and challenges on the road to designing equity-driven supports to ensure that students can accomplish their academic goals.

Introduction and Overview

This section provides a brief introduction to Guided Pathways, an equity-focused framework that supports colleges as they establish clear paths for students and remove systemic barriers to their success.

High-level information about the three colleges participating in California Guided Pathways 2.0 that are spotlighted in this brief is also shared.

To ground the work, definitions and frameworks of racial equity are presented for each participating college.

WHAT IS GUIDED PATHWAYS?

National Framework

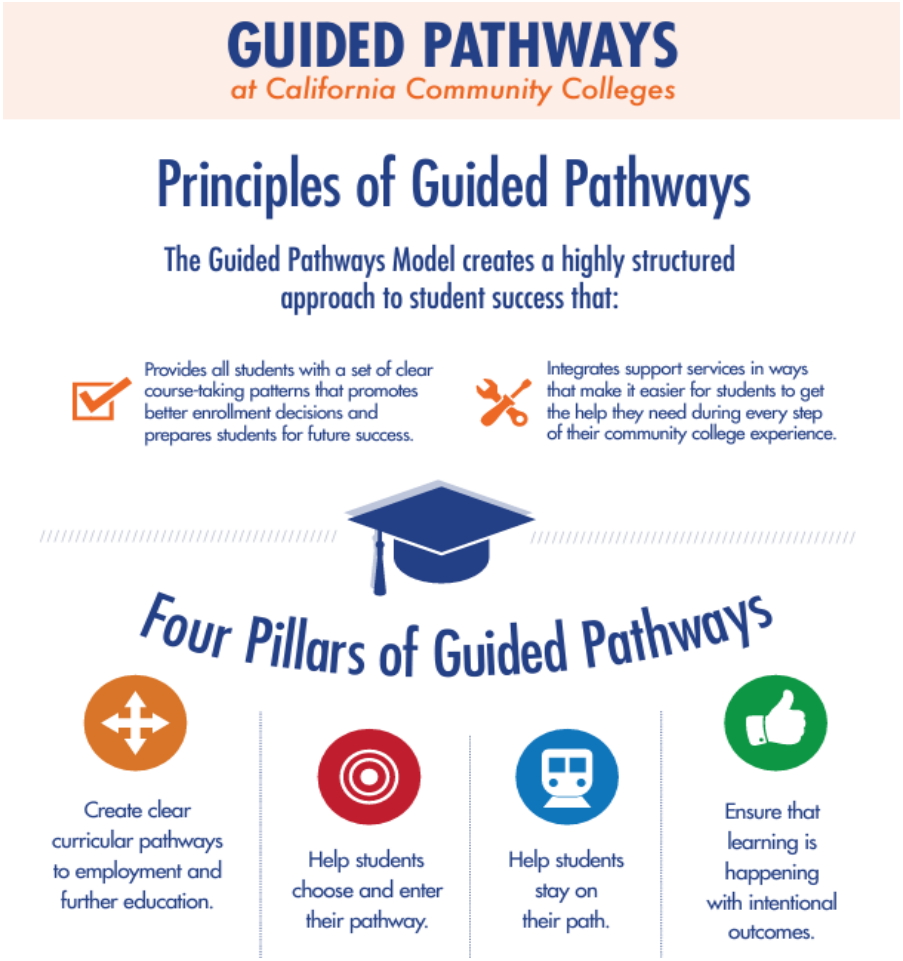
Guided Pathways is a national framework with which colleges can equitably optimize their students' experiences and outcomes. Colleges implementing Guided Pathways are encouraged to rethink program maps, onboarding, student advising, teaching, and learning. Implementing the Guided Pathways approach sets the stage for colleges to work in partnership across teams to improve student experiences and achieve equitable student outcomes by engaging in practices aligned with **four pillars:** (1) **create clear curricular pathways** to employment and further education; (2) help students **choose and enter their pathway**; (3) help students **stay on their path**; and (4) **ensure that learning is happening** with intentional outcomes.

The Guided Pathways Project in California

In 2016, College Futures Foundation - in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, and Teagle Foundation - launched the California Guided Pathways (CAGP) project. This project replicated the first American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) national Guided Pathways project in an effort to build momentum for Guided Pathways in California. This demonstration project provided financial and advisory support for 20 community colleges in the state.

In 2020, College Futures Foundation - in partnership with the Teagle Foundation and the James Irvine Foundation, sponsored a second phase of the project, which is referred to as California Guided Pathways (CAGP) 2.0. Thirty-six community colleges across the state are currently participating in this phase. The effort concludes in 2024.

Engage R+D is serving as a learning partner and is conducting a developmental evaluation of the CAGP 2.0 project.



WHICH COLLEGES PARTICIPATED IN THIS BRIEF AND HOW?

CUYAMACA COLLEGE

San Diego County / 8,862 students

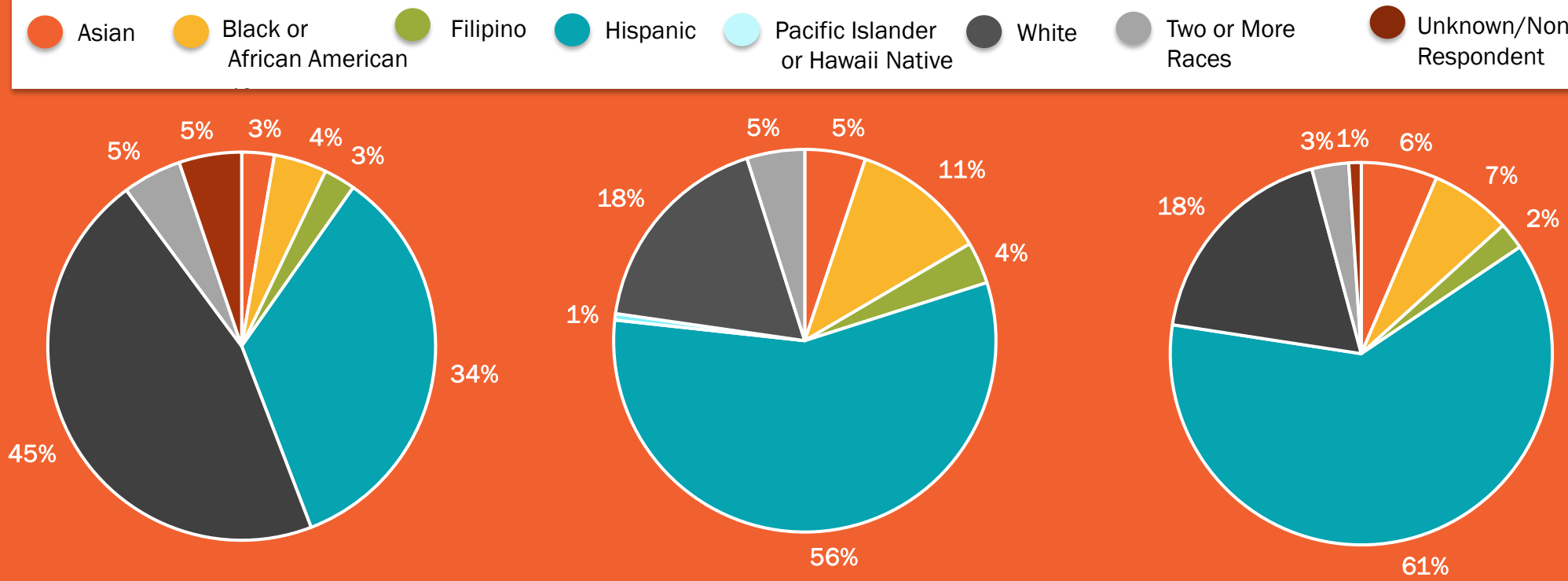
LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

Los Angeles County / 24,634 students

NORCO COLLEGE

Riverside County / 9,676 students

Students' Race by College*



Based on findings from the ongoing developmental evaluation of the California Guided Pathways 2.0 project and suggestions from project partners and participating colleges, a list of colleges that described intentional efforts to integrate and address racial equity was developed. A range of colleges were asked to participate in interviews about their efforts and three colleges agreed to participate. In October and November 2023, representatives from the three colleges participated in 75-minute interviews outlining specific strategies and example of their work in relation to racial equity.

In addition to interviewing college teams, the Engage R+D team also analyzed: relevant documents shared by interviewees (e.g., equity plans); college websites; data from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office; and other publicly available reports about Guided Pathways implementation in California. This brief includes data from all of these sources.

**Source: California Community Colleges LaunchBoard. Data are based on degree/transfer students who were enrolled at the college during the 2021-22 academic year.*

HOW ARE COLLEGES DEFINING RACIAL EQUITY?

Each college was asked how they define racial equity Although some colleges might not have one specific definition of racial equity, they have language about their focus on and value of racial equity.

The definitions shared in this brief were provided in interviews and in documents available on each college's website.

"What [racial equity] looks like is **targeted interventions** that are specific to those student groups and targeted work to **remove barriers** to those student groups. Both looking at it from a student-facing perspective and from an institutional perspective."

- Leader from Norco College

Norco College

In their interview, Norco College's team shared that they have always been very clear about using the State Chancellor's Office guidance around identifying students who are disproportionately impacted. At Norco College, racial equity means "ensuring that particularly our disproportionately impacted students, who are typically Black and Latinx, have the same and or increased interventions in support and access and equitable outcomes."

Cuyamaca College

Cuyamaca College adopted an Equity Affirmation Framework in 2023 to support their efforts to promote learning that is socially just, both in online and in-person classes. Based on the framework, they call "particular attention to the roles of racism and socioeconomic disparity, as these are two of the biggest contributors to equity gaps, which are widest in online classes." They believe that "by centering race, we do not ignore disparities for other marginalized identities. Instead, as we attend to disparities for other groups, we consistently and intentionally address the experiences of students of color within those groups. We center race in our work and discussions even as we act to mitigate other group disparities."

Cuyamaca also has specific language about equity and social justice in their equity lens, Student Equity and Achievement Plan, and Distance Education Plan.

Long Beach City College

Long Beach City College adopted a Framework for Reconciliation in 2020. The framework acknowledges the existence and long-standing impacts of systemic racism at LBCC and includes findings from listening tours with accounts and experiences of racial injustice, inequity, or harm from community members. It also references the development of a plan of how LBCC is going to address anti-racism as an institution.

GUIDANCE FOR READERS

Navigating the Brief

Each section includes icons to identify where activities are in alignment with the **four pillars of Guided Pathways:**

Pillar 1: Clarify the Path

Pillar 2: Enter the Path

Pillar 3: Stay on the Path

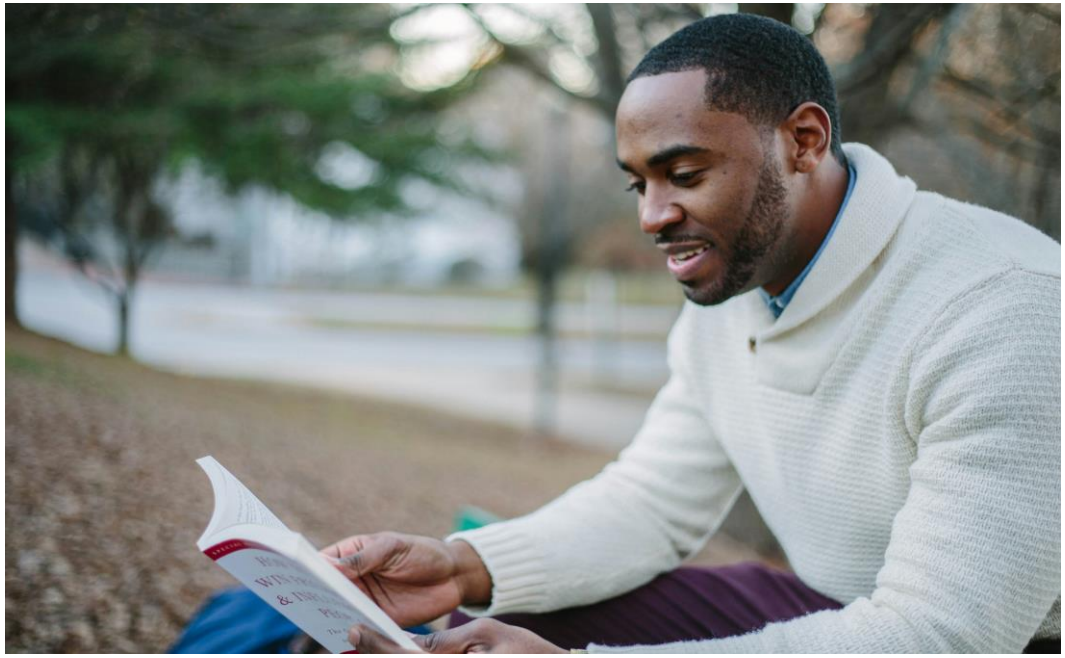
Pillar 4: Ensure learning

More detail about each pillar is provided on page 3. Additional information about Guided Pathways is available on the California Community College Chancellor's Office website.

Food for Thought

Whether you're an experienced Guided Pathways leader, a new member of a Guided Pathways team, or someone who is interested in learning about what practitioners are accomplishing, we encourage you to review this brief with the following questions in mind:

- In what ways does this align with what I have seen or done on my campus?
- In what ways can the ideas provided here be adapted or shifted to apply in my context?
- What additional opportunities do you foresee based on what you're reading?



Racial Equity in Action

Leaders from Norco College, Cuyamaca College, and Long Beach City College shared how their colleges are addressing equity gaps in their Guided Pathways work. This section provides specific examples from each of the three colleges regarding what they are doing for and with students, faculty, staff, and at the institutional level to support and advance racial equity.

Facilitators to success, challenges they are currently experiencing, and advice for other colleges that are embarking on Guided Pathways efforts are also presented.

It is important to note that numerous other colleges across the system are engaging in ongoing and impactful racial equity efforts. This section captures a snapshot of some of the many activities at the three colleges that participated in interviews in Fall 2023.

WHAT ARE COLLEGES DOING FOR STUDENTS?

Affinity Group Student Centers, Categorical Programs, & Learning Communities. Colleges have developed or expanded centers, programs, and learning communities specifically for students of color.

- **Black Student Success Center /** Pillar 2: Enter the path. LBCC opened the Black Student Success Center in April 2024. The essence of the center is celebrating "the African Diaspora and providing a supportive community for students, with important mental, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and financial support services to advance students' personal and academic progression while embracing and honoring their cultural identity."
- **UMOJA Program /** Pillar 2: Enter the path. Cuyamaca, LBCC, and Norco have UMOJA programs on their campuses. The programs provide educational and cultural experiences for Black/African American students, with a curriculum focused on the legacy of the African and African American diasporas. At Norco specifically, Guided Pathways was used to expand and increase the capacity of their UMOJA Program. With support from their academic deans, department chairs, and counseling faculty, the program was expanded from two courses and cultural activities to a learning community of more than 10 courses per academic year and a Summer Bridge program which was established in 2019. The program now serves over 200 Black/African American students in one term rather than 30 students per cohort. Every student who wants to join the program gets access to transfer courses designed for UMOJA students, curriculum based on the African Diaspora, academic support, early registration, university tours (including at Historically Black Colleges & Universities), dedicated UMOJA counselors and success coaches, and textbook resources. The college has seen an increase in GPA for UMOJA students. Specifically, in Fall 2018 (prior to the Summer Bridge program) UMOJA students had an average GPA of 1.75 in the first term. After the addition of the Summer Bridge program, the Fall 2019 cohort had an average GPA of 2.56 in the first term.
- **Male Success Initiatives /** Pillar 2: Enter the path. LBCC and Norco have Male Success Initiatives that are designed to meet the needs of men of color by connecting them to resources, providing mentoring and other supports, and fostering a sense of brotherhood and community. At Norco specifically, their Men of Color Scholars program was expanded from an affinity group to a learning community led by English and Counseling faculty members. The leads received approval to use funding from a vacant position to hire a Success Coach for participants. In addition to coaching, participants enroll in specific courses, receive peer mentoring, scholarships, and basic needs resources, and participate in Man Cave talks (community talks), events, and other workshops.

"The **[Men of Color Scholars] program** has become a shining example of how we can be responsive. They are **some of the most engaged, active, [and] involved [students]**...they show up at graduation and cheer each other on...It's amazing."

- Leader from Norco College

WHAT ARE COLLEGES DOING FOR FACULTY & STAFF?

Professional Development & Communities of Practice. Colleges have found that providing ongoing training for faculty and staff, spaces to connect, and shared learnings has been particularly impactful.

- **Social Justice, Anti-racism, Cultural Diversity, and Cultural Sensitivity Training /** Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Part of Long Beach City College's strategic plan includes a Framework of Reconciliation that indicates how they are going to create an anti-racism institution. They put plans into action in 2020 by hiring a Black/African American consultant to design and conduct a **series of meetings and mediations** between Black/African American faculty and non-Black/African American faculty. One example of a follow-up from this work was offering staff in the Counseling Student Support Services Department a **Social Injustice Culturally Diverse Training** series by Lasana Hotep. The training includes two hour in-person sessions over the course of three months. Examples of session titles include *It's More Than An SEP: Being A Student-Ready Counselor*; *Dismantling the Colorblind Approach*: *Culturally Competent Counseling*; and *Interrogating the Systems: A Transformative Approach to Counseling*. This training is directly linked to LBCC's Guided Pathways work with its focus on equitable access, building a sense of belonging, and connecting with students.
- **Training on Equitable Research Practices and Design Principles, Logic Models, Evaluations, and Assessments /** Pillar 4: Ensure learning. In 2023, Norco College launched inquiry teams comprised of faculty, classified professionals, managers, and student research assistants to focus on the experiences of students of color, specifically disproportionately impacted students. As part of this effort, they are conducting a qualitative research study. To support the inquiry teams in this effort, they partnered with a consultant (who identifies as a person of color) to provide **training on equitable research practices, design principles, logic models, and qualitative research**. The consultant also provides access to qualitative research software so participants can gain hands-on experience analyzing and interpreting data. The inquiry teams meet on a regular basis to connect and reflect on the ongoing professional development and support they are receiving. As one team member noted, "It's not just one-and-done and now go off and do it. We have to bring them back. It's a big effort."
- **Equity-Minded Teaching and Learning Institute and Communities of Practice /** Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Equity-minded practices in the classroom are a priority for Cuyamaca College. Part-time and full-time faculty participate in a **yearly cohort-based professional development institute (Equity-Minded Teaching and Learning Institute; EMTLI)** in which faculty analyze their classroom data, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and then make changes to their curriculum and teaching practices using equity-minded teaching frameworks. Faculty are compensated their non-classroom rate for meeting times or $1,400 (whichever is greater) for participating. As of February 2024, 37% percent of part-time and 45% of full-time faculty have participated in the EMTLI. The learning continues post-completion, as smaller EMTLI-informed **communities of practice** focusing on specific teaching techniques are being held in some departments.

"Since starting this community of practice, we have seen **changes in our equity gaps and our students' success based on race.** The Physics and Engineering departments achieved gender parity and nearly matched the college's racial demographics, narrowing the gap from >5% to within <1% for students of color. The Physics department closed the success gap for Hispanic students during the spring semesters, and reduced it to <10% in the fall."
- Leader from Cuyamaca College

WHAT ARE COLLEGES DOING FOR FACULTY & STAFF?

Compensating Participants. Colleges elevate the importance of compensating faculty and students for participating in Guided Pathways activities that are beyond their typical roles and responsibilities.

> "We have to invest in our practitioners until it's their normal…This is not in their contract. It's not part of professional development. Somebody can go to the theater and that's professional development, and [can be] checked off. What we're asking folks is to go really on a different lane, different path, and to **go above and beyond**. There has to be some level of **compensation and commitment** from the institution."
> - Leader from Cuyamaca College

- **Equity Funds** / Pillar 4: Ensure learning. For participating on survey teams (e.g., Hotep Equity Audit), inquiry teams (e.g., qualitative studies about the experiences of students of color), taskforces (e.g., Racial Justice Taskforce), and other Guided Pathways activities, Norco College compensates faculty and student participants for **special projects** via **equity funds**. They also compensate student research assistants through equity funds. In contrast, Managers and Classified Professionals get compensated with non-monetary items (e.g., certificates) due to limits based on their classification.

- **College Service Time** / Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Long Beach City College's offers faculty the opportunity to participate on their Equity & Action team as a way to support equitable change while satisfying their **college service hours**. Guided Pathways funds the Leads time during the primary terms and during the intersessions, when faculty are off contract. Specifically, Leads and team members can receive up to nine hours of **stipend funds** through Guided Pathways funding. Anecdotal data suggest that faculty involved in Equity & Action teams are excited about having an opportunity to meet their contractual obligation of college service in this manner - doing action-oriented, personalized equity work that improves student success.

- **Grant Dollars** / Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Cuyamaca College has received numerous funded **grants** that they **leverage** to support Guided Pathways efforts which are focused on similar goals. They note that they have "had a lot of funding to figure out, to play around and experiment and then decide what works and what doesn't. That definitely helps a lot because people are a lot more willing to participate in hours of experimental professional development if they're getting paid." Consequently, faculty who participate in the college-wide Equity-Minded Teaching and Learning Institute (EMTLI) community of practice are compensated for their time. The college also has paid positions for their part-time Academic and Career Pathways (ACP) Leads.

Emotional Support. Colleges note the importance of supporting faculty and staff as they deal with compassion fatigue.

- **Casual Get-Togethers** / Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Norco College hosts gatherings for teams by "going out, breaking bread, [developing] fellowship" and sharing how their work is going. One of the most important conversations that has arisen is noting the difference between burnout and compassion fatigue, and how faculty and staff can nurture themselves while supporting students and staying focused on what is important.

> "The need for real **relationships and connections as part of leading emotionally and psychologically taxing work**, like equity and racial justice [is essential]. Your supervisor support is one thing, but colleague and partnership support and even friendship-level support is really, really important."
> - Leader from Norco College

WHAT ARE COLLEGES DOING AT THE INSTITUTION LEVEL?

Governance Structures, Teams, and Positions. Engaged, committed, and influential champions can play an integral role in the shifts and evolution needed to advance racial equity at colleges. A few ways that this is unfolding are shared below.

> "Having a **student, a classified professional, a faculty, and a manager** on each team really helped to move the needle in so many ways…using and deploying **constituency-based, diverse operational teams** has been the game changer for us and has led to so many of our innovations via those teams."
> - Leader from Norco College

- **Participatory Governance** / Pillar 1: Clarify the path. As part of Norco College's effort for broader engagement, they created **operational teams comprised of students, classified professionals, faculty, and managers** to move equity work forward in a more collaborative and impactful way. The Guided Pathway Team Leads defined an equity-focused scope for the teams, including specific deliverables. For example, one question posed was, "What could equitable assessment look like?" Then people who were interested chose to be a part of that team and became champions of the work. They found that **providing opportunities that are bounded and structured for constituency participation (including students) has been pivotal**. A leader shared, "Having those champions in those critical spaces at those critical junctures," has been vital as new processes and systems are developed and implemented. Leaders elaborated that through this work, some of their most innovative advancements were initiated (e.g., Holistic Student Support Survey process).

- **Equity & Action Teams** / Pillar 1: Clarify the path. The Continuous Learning Institute introduced two Student Success Teams (Equity & Action and Case Management) that are now embedded at Long Beach City College. Four of the five Career and Academic Pathways (CAPs) have an Equity & Action team. The fifth CAP is deeply involved in the REACH work (Racial Equity for Adult Credentials in Higher Education), which is why they do not currently have an Equity & Action team. Once they complete the REACH Collaborative work, they will be included in the process. They are comprised of faculty, counselors, administrators, and Institutional Effectiveness representatives. **Teams look at data with a race-conscious lens, particularly for disproportionately impacted groups, to understand equity gaps and success rates**. Each of these four Equity & Action teams have developed activities to specifically address the issues uncovered through the data. Examples of the various areas that they are focusing on include: pedagogy and upgrading strategies; enrollment; Artificial Intelligence tools; and faculty professional development that focuses on incorporating equitable teaching strategies in the classroom (including flex credit for incorporating strategies).

- **Dedicated and Influential Positions** / Pillar 1: Clarify the path. People are central to advancing equity work and Cuyamaca College is committed to ensuring **key positions are funded and filled in an intentional and thoughtful way**. For example, when selecting Student Success and Equity Coordinators, they **chose people who have a sphere of influence** and noted that consequently, three-quarters of the Coordinator's department signed up for a professional development program that they had been wanting them to participate in. Cuyamaca also has dedicated counseling faculty (funded by Guided Pathways money and related grant funds) which enables regular meetings between instructional and counseling faculty. Another established role is Academic and Career Pathways (ACP) leads who serve as the point person for the Chairs, faculty, and dean so there is a centralized location for job, grant, and internship opportunities for students. Each ACP also has a Canvas container. In addition, Cuyamaca has a Student Success and Equity Council, which is one of three councils that feed into the main college council. Guided Pathways and equity work lives in this area.

WHAT ARE COLLEGES DOING AT THE INSTITUTION LEVEL?

Data and Assessments. Data can be a valuable source of information that galvanizes learning, reflection, and planning. It can be particularly powerful when designed, gathered, analyzed, and interpreted within an intentional, race-conscious frame.

> "We have had an issue over time **with disproportionately impacting our employees of color** and asking them to always be the standard bearer or the representative or the voice of, and that's unacceptable. We all need to understand why our institution had been built in that flawed way, and **how do we dismantle that not only for ourselves, so that we can be better for our students.**"
> - Leader from Norco College

- **Utilizing External Resource for Equity Audit** / Pillar 1: Clarify the path. Norco College decided to have an outside consultant, Lasana Hotep, conduct an Equity Audit. The Equity Audit assessed institutional practices, policies, and procedures through a variety of data collection activities, including surveys and focus groups with students and staff as well as document analysis. As one leader explained, "It was instrumental in crystallizing where we needed to keep working on ourselves." Restructuring the institution from the student-focused lens and the employees' systemic lens is happening in tandem.
- **Annual Review of Curriculum and Services** / Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Long Beach City College has overlaid the Guided Pathways framework on the template that faculty use for their annual Planning and Program Review. Through this process, faculty look deeply at their data and identify where the equity gaps are and develop strategies that they will implement in the next year to address these equity gaps. The report also includes space to reflect on how plans for the previous year unfolded, what worked, what did not, and what to carry forward. Tableau is used to visualize the data and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness serves as central support. There is a small group comprised of the Dean of Academic Affairs (who also oversees Guided Pathways), faculty representatives, and the Director of Planning who read all the plans and provide feedback to the faculty. One leader said, "We have really transformed as a college in terms of buy-in with Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) [compared to] where we were 10 years ago where we did it because we had to do it. Now, I think faculty do it because they believe in it and they're looking at the data." Separate to this, but equally notable, is the Learning, Belonging, Cultural Competence: An Equitable Teaching Community (LBCC: ETC) which builds upon a Cultural Curriculum Audit and creates supportive, co-mentoring relationships where colleagues collaboratively work on teaching for greater equity.
- **Data Dives with Student Success and Equity Council** / Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Cuyamaca College's Student Success and Equity Council invites the chairs of each discipline to meet with them to discuss courses with high equity gaps (which are typically the highest enrolled courses). The teams specifically use Program Review and Data Reports to inform their inquiry, and provide feedback, support, and resources. According to a leader from Cuyamaca, "The reason why those conversations can happen now and folks aren't freaking out is because [of] the work that we've done in the six years to normalize looking at course-level racially disaggregated data in our work with our Equity-Minded Teaching and Learning Institute." The importance of establishing a culture of not being afraid of looking at data, and specifically, racially disaggregated course level data, cannot be understated.

WHAT ARE COLLEGES DOING AT THE INSTITUTION LEVEL?

Data and Assessments (continued). In addition to audits, reviews, and data dives, colleges are also conducting student and faculty surveys to inform the programs, services, and supports offered.

- **Holistic Student Survey /** Pillar 1: Clarify the path. Directly related to their Guided Pathways and equity work, Norco College has embedded a holistic Student Support Survey into their onboarding and matriculation process to evaluate the needs of all incoming students and equip each student with a customized support plan. This emanated from feedback from students, particularly disproportionately impacted students, who did not find out about support programs and services until after being at the college for a long time. One consistent finding is the intersection between race and socioeconomic status. For example, numerous students, particularly Latinx and Black/African American students, elevated in the survey that paying for college was a huge barrier and concern for them. As a result, Norco built out a Financial Freedom Program centering on financial education that is provided to all students.
- **Student Experience and Sense of Community Survey /** Pillar 3: Stay on the path. Long Beach City College's Student Experience Survey is developed and administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness with input from colleagues across campus and participatory governance committees, including the Student Equity Subcommittee, Student Success Committee, and College Planning Council. Five main areas of students' experience are explored through closed and open-ended questions: (1) General Campus Environment; (2) Student Services; (3) Programs; (4) Classroom; and (5) Student Life. Insights from the survey inform how LBCC can strengthen policies and practices to close equity gaps and increase student success. The Science Department developed and administered a Sense of Belonging survey to their students. They engaged in sensemaking of the survey results and identified a low score relating to students not seeing images of themselves. The department decided to take action and created a repository of images that are inclusive of a range of races and abilities.

> "We're very aware [and] looking at it in the context of **a long journey**. It's not one semester to another so much as much as it is, 'Let's see where they're at now a year from now.' Let's see what that improvement looks like...We're really looking at **challenging epistemologies** in this process. These things take time."
>
> - Leader from Cuyamaca College

- **Faculty Survey /** Pillar 4: Ensure learning. As part of the Equity-Minded Teaching and Learning Institute (EMTLI), the team from Cuyamaca College conducts an annual pre and post survey with Institute participants. This survey gives faculty the space to share where they are at before participating in the EMTLI and reflect on what has shifted since they participated in the year-long professional development experience. As one leader explained, "It's not as a black and white as 'you've done this, and all of a sudden, these things improve.' It's going to take a while because it took a while for them to build the instructor they are now. To deconstruct that and reconstruct that is going to take some time."

WHAT ARE COLLEGES DOING AT THE INSTITUTION LEVEL?

Technology and Resources. Colleges are using new tools and resources and expanding services via use of technology to better meet the needs of students.

- **Purchasing New Technology** / Pillar 2: Enter the path. One strategy to institutionalize Guided Pathways that Long Beach City College has used is to purchase new software systems. For example, they now use HighPoint Degree Planner to augment the Degree Audit function in the PeopleSoft system. The new system pulls information from roadmaps that faculty use to sequence their courses along with data from PeopleSoft into HighPoint. When students meet with counselors, the counselor can upload the student's major and build a semester-by-semester schedule more intentionally. If students consistently use HighPoint, LBCC can mine that information to see what courses students need in the future and be able to offer them accordingly. For example, an LBCC leader shared, "We will be able to schedule so much more effectively, because we will know, come Fall '24, 500 students need Statistics I, so we better make sure that we have that course available and enough sections of it."

> "The college has been purchasing multiple **software systems** to improve **overall efficiency**, to be more in line with **students' needs**, and to be able to meet those needs."
> - Leader from Long Beach City College

- **Providing Online Counseling** / Pillar 3: Stay on the path. In an effort to reduce the digital divide, Long Beach City College also focuses on **reducing silos using technology**. One leader shared, "Online counseling was one of the models that we're utilizing to provide access to our most marginalized student population, specifically our adult learners who can't come to campus." LBCC now offers online counseling services in the evenings from 6-9pm, and on Saturdays from 9am-12pm. This new process has allowed for greater student access to counseling services.
- **Providing Free Online Textbooks** / Pillar 4: Ensure learning. Given the high cost of textbooks, many faculty members at Long Beach City College are utilizing Open Educational Resources (OER) to provide free digital textbooks for students. The college has an OER Librarian, OER committee on curriculum, and has received several grants to implement OER. As one leader noted, "OER really is huge when we're talking about social justice [and] economic justice when it comes to being able to have an education."

New Program Structures. Colleges adjust course and program structures to allow students to quickly complete required coursework in shorter periods of time and accelerate their time to completion.

- **Shorter Courses** / Pillar 3: Stay on the path. Long Beach City College is piloting a program called **Accelerate** which includes 8-week courses instead of 16-week courses. Consequently, students can focus on only a few courses in the first eight weeks and a few courses in the second eight weeks. These changes were based on local and national data which suggest that student success is greater in 8-week courses.

WHAT HAVE BEEN FACILITATORS TO SUCCESS?

Being Clear How Projects Connect

Colleges shared the importance of **being clear about how projects and outcomes connect**. One leader underscored the value of taking time to understand how projects are being developed and what the outcomes are before moving to the next phase. "That's a different way of thinking at the institutional level for institutional change," a leader from Norco College reflected.

Having Buy-In From Senior Leaders

Colleges indicated that having buy-in from senior leaders has been essential to their Guided Pathways work. A leader from LBCC shared, "When we had the resources, our senior leadership **transitioned the resources into all equity work**. Has there been a shift in culture? Absolutely, but as far as resources and leadership, we've had a lot of that support there." Similarly, a leader at Cuyamaca explained "Our new president [is] keeping that tradition moving, [saying] 'Okay, y'all know what you're doing. Let's continue this moving forward'...Having **good, strong leadership, but also trusting leadership who is willing to pivot has also been really important**."

Compensating Participants

Colleges acknowledged the importance of compensating participants. A leader at Cuyamaca noted, "People are pretty **overstretched**. One of the things I think has gone really well is **paying people to do work."** LBCC, Norco, and Cuyamaca provided compensation to professional development participants, stipends or reassigned time to Leads, and stipends to meeting/professional development facilitators.

Combining Funding Sources

Colleges explained that they have **merged a variety of funding sources to sustain their Guided Pathways efforts**. For example, one leader from Cuyamaca explained, "We're able to have different grants like Pathway Nav, Title V, Title III...and being able to focus them on Pathways. They're each doing their part to help and to inform the work that we're currently doing...Our results are not typical. We had a great number of forces aligned to make that possible, which is millions of dollars...We've also had a lot of funding to figure out, to play around and experiment and then decide what works and what doesn't."

Including Diverse Stakeholders

Colleges shared the importance of **including a variety of stakeholders in Guided Pathways efforts.** A leader from Norco explained, "Rather than convening a group, and cross-functional groups, we've been including students and classified professionals. We've been using cross-functional groups almost the entire time we've been doing this work. That in and of itself has also added to those layers."

Broadening Terminology

Colleges shared that sometimes not including the term "Guided Pathways" is helpful to obtain buy-in. One leader explained, "As we get buy-in for some of these things and people start to think more about equity and about Pathways as part of the regular process, [we stopped] using the word 'Pathways' as much. People got really burnt out on it. We sort of just **wove the practices into student learning outcomes, hiring all of our committees, and just stopped using the terminology unless we needed to**. The only downside to that is then people are like, 'Well, what is Pathways actually doing?' You got to be strategic in these things. Once we've proven it works, then we can talk and talk about being a little more transparent. I think that's been very beneficial to us."

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE COLLEGES EXPERIENCING?

Colleges are grappling with various challenges, some which are **local** to their college and Guided Pathways efforts and some which are **broader** but affect their Guided Pathways work.

Local Challenges

- **Sustaining Funding.** Leaders shared that **upcoming changes to funding will impact their Guided Pathways work**. One leader explained "Moving forward [we need] more resources. We are now potentially facing a cliff with the student-centered funding formula, which has completely changed. We're going off of [the] hold harmless provision."
- **Sustaining Buy-In.** Colleges shared the importance of having a **shared understanding** and **buy-in** of Guided Pathways efforts and goals, especially among **senior leadership**. One leader explained, "I know of other colleges that are struggling because they've had a change in leadership and they don't have the same kind of focus. The great work that they've done is now being dismantled because there's [new] senior leadership [and] there is defunding [of efforts]."
- **Communicating Internally.** Colleges explained that some people on their campus still **do not know about the Guided Pathways work being done**. One leader explained, "We still struggle with the communication piece because we'll go to meetings and people are, 'We're still doing Guided Pathways? Oh, I thought we stopped doing that.'...I think a lot of it is we're just so busy doing the work that we forget to tell everyone all the good work that we're doing."

> "The outcomes are not based on degrees or certificates. It's about living-wage careers. You need that type of **galvanizing college-wide buy-in** [and] **shared understanding**, because otherwise, the challenge is that everyone's in their silo doing good work, but it's all disconnected. We [will] never move the needle forward in equity and anti-racism."
>
> - College Leader

- **Working with Other Colleges in the District.** Colleges shared that **communicating and collaborating with other colleges in their district** has been challenging. For example, one leader shared, "We don't have conversations with our sister college about Pathways. We don't really rely on each other's expertise. It's more each one does their own thing. I would have loved to have somebody at the district level be able to say, 'Hey, what are we doing? How are we leveraging? What resources do you need?' That's non-existent. we're very much on our own and we've got to figure it out."
- **Having Few Racially Diverse Faculty and Staff.** One college shared that it is important to "**look at the racial makeup of our managers, our faculty, as opposed to our classified professional**, and being honest about it." It is important to "help people understand that they are in [the] system and trying to dismantle it at the same time."
- **Acquiring New Technology.** One college shared that **getting support from the district** to implement new technology is challenging. A leader shared, "We've been historically pretty far behind the technology curve and we've faced a lot of resistance within our own structure of our institution in catching up."

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE COLLEGES EXPERIENCING?

Widespread challenges that colleges are facing across the system are highlighted below.

Broader Challenges

- **External competing mandates.** Leaders noted that **external mandates** (e.g., AB 705/1705, AB 1111, AB 359, AB 928, CalGETC, Title 5 changes for WEE and local Associate Degree requirements, Excused Withdrawals, Attendance Accounting methods, Bachelors Degree Program) **have put pressure on transformational efforts.** These efforts, on top of Guided Pathways efforts, take considerable time and funding. For example, it takes time to scale Guided Pathways, create cultural shifts, and dismantle and rebuild systems and processes. Leaders shared that continued funding is needed, especially for colleges who have not yet scaled their Guided Pathways efforts.
- **Emotional implications.** Leaders shared that their work has led to **vulnerability, burn-out, and compassion-fatigue.** One leader explained, "[We] talked about when the person of color has to be the one always carrying the burden of the work. I'm a little burned out, but I really got a lot of compassion fatigue, and how to nurture ourselves while we're doing the work to stay focused on what's important."

> "A problem is that we had the people who were having to be the standard bearer and **having to be the voice being exhausted** by that role and how to help people be better allies in the work, and not taking over the work, but having partnerships with people."
> - College Leader

- **Lower enrollment.** Leaders explained that **state-wide challenges with lower student enrollment** has impacted their Guided Pathways work. For example, one leader explained, "We're putting a lot of effort in enrollment management. I would say that resources to continue this very heavy lift and difficult challenges that Guided Pathways prevents breaking down silos, breaking down barriers, identifying those barriers, dismantling everything that was causing a barrier, and then rebuilding it, takes time, energy, and money."

Advice

Leaders share advice for other colleges embarking on equity-centered Guided Pathways efforts.

"Don't try to close equity gaps through student services, **focus on the classroom** and work your way out."
- Leader from Cuyamaca College

"Going through the process of identifying **how our work fits into each pillar of the Guided Pathways** framework has provided clarity on all the good work we are currently doing."
- Leader from Long Beach City College

"To do equity work well, there needs to be someone in **executive leadership** who is making equity their work and their responsibility. If you don't have someone at that level helping to lead the work, ensure there are resources for the work [and] integrate the work into plans."
- Leader from Norco College

"**Acknowledge that it's going to be a really long journey**. It's more of a glacial speed. It's okay to know that that's how it works because institutions don't like to change easily. They're built to be resilient to change because that's the nature of institutions. You just have to keep picking at the places that are willing to change and put your energy there instead of fighting people that want to fight you."
- Leader from Cuyamaca College

"Do your best to **involve the entire campus** in Guided Pathways efforts; we all have a part in this important work. We still struggle with this effort even though we know how important it is."
- Leader from Long Beach City College

"One of the biggest keys to getting it done is **understanding how those projects are being put together** and what their outcomes are for a year or 18 months, and then moving from that point either into the secondary project or application or testing."
- Leader from Norco College

"Don't be afraid to **pivot**. If something's not working, pivot. If your Pathways leadership is not working, then pivot, change it."
- Leader from Cuyamaca College

"**Put the work where you know it's going to be done** through the equity lens that you need. Don't put it in spaces by virtue of their mere existence. In some spaces, the folks that are driving or planning equity at the institution are not involved in Pathways work...They should be the ones that should be driving the work. They shouldn't be the ones sitting on the sidelines. They should be the ones helping, if not leading the work."
- Leader from Cuyamaca College

"One of the big keys is this duality between empowering them to do the work, but also **providing them the backup that they need** when they're out and about because that's how the work gets done. You're empowering them to change the things they can change. This is within your scope, change it. Then helping them to navigate the processes of strategic planning and institutional [guidelines]. That's where the expertise of having someone who understands the nuances of how it's going to have to go through all of the processes [is essential]."
- Leader from Norco College

"**Communicate often** about Guided Pathways efforts. We got so busy we didn't have time and then found out that colleagues not closely involved thought GP had 'gone away.'"
- Leader from Long Beach City College

"In the beginning, [Guided Pathways] was very prescriptive...Don't look at the framework and then your institution. Look at your institution and then look at the framework and go, 'What is feasible at our institution?'...We have to **do what makes sense for our institution based on who we are, who we serve, our structures, and our funding**."
- Leader from Cuyamaca College

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