EXAMINING THE RACIALIZED DISCOURSE OF GUIDED PATHWAYS:

HOW COMMUNITY COLLEGES IMPLEMENT TOWARDS RACIAL EQUITY

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RECOMMENDED CITATION:

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT EDWARD BUSH

As a liberatory educational leader, I believe that public postsecondary education as we know it, particularly as it relates to the community college system, was designed perfectly to produce the type of pervasive and persistent racial disparities in student academic outcomes across colleges. With this in mind, I contend that to improve outcomes for students of color, a total redesign and reimagining of the structure and policies of community colleges is necessary.

As a college president, when I first read the book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* in 2015, I immediately gravitated toward the authors' analysis and critique of community colleges. The authors' concept of starting with the student's end goal in mind and utilizing the four pillars outlined in the book to reduce time to completion and improve student outcomes by creating structured guided pathways resonated with my observations and critique of the community college system. In addition, the authors' notion that Guided Pathways was not yet another program but a mechanism for a complete redesign of our college meshed well with aspects of my liberatory educational framework. This led to a full embrace of Guided Pathways, and I moved quickly to prepare my institution to undertake the arduous and substantive work to become an early adopter of this Guided Pathway movement.

In my organization's journey to becoming a Guided Pathway college, our leadership understood early in the process that there was a critical element that was obviously and in many ways painfully omitted from the Redesigning America's Community Colleges text, which was the lack of explicit consideration as to how race, power, history, white supremacy, whiteness, structural racism, and how these systemic inequities impact the experiences of students of color and how it shapes and informs the structure of the community college system itself. This colorblind approach to addressing systemic issues facing our college was not going to produce the type of changes our college was hoping to achieve, so we moved quickly to augment our Guided Pathway approach by adopting a race-conscious, equity-informed implementation.

Towards this end, this brief, *Examining The Racialized Discourse of Guided Pathways: How Community Colleges Implement Towards Racial Equity* appropriately and impactfully centers equity and race-consciousness as imperative in implementing Guided Pathways. This work is an effective tool and powerful reference point for me and other educational leaders around the importance of leading Guided Pathways from an explicit race-conscious approach. This research report provides the language and research that was missing when I started our college's Guided Pathway journey and it creates an opportunity to reflect as a leader to determine whether or not we were explicit enough in how our implementation process centered around the experiences of our students of color.

In addition, Examining *The Racialized Discourse of Guided Pathways: How Community Colleges Implement Towards Racial Equity* challenges college leaders to deeply consider how racism impacts and informs all aspects of our colleges, including how we implement Guided Pathways. If we seek to disrupt the predictability of failure by race in our institutions then we have to name the problem, which is that our colleges are racist because we continuously produce inequitable outcomes for students of color. Given this, leaders who are working to implement and expand Guided Pathways must understand that this work does not exist outside the racist structure that is embedded in their institution.

It is clear from this report that Guided Pathways is not a race-neutral endeavor. As with many college initiatives, this work also produces winners and losers. This is why despite our institutional efforts to implement Guided Pathways with fidelity, we observe improvement in student outcomes throughout our system, with little to no reduction in closing gaps in student outcomes by race. The report gives us as educational leaders an opportunity by sounding the alarm for us within this Guided Pathway moment to center the experience of students of color by naming them and their experience and by approaching this work as a means to dismantling long-standing practices that have hindered the success of our historically minoritized students.

EDWARD BUSH, PH.D.

President
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND GUIDED PATHWAYS

In the California Community Colleges (CCC) system, the Guided Pathways framework is described as a tool to advance equity, transform institutions, redefine college and career readiness, and redesign supports. Since 2017, the system has actively worked to implement Guided Pathways to encourage individual institutions to organizationally restructure towards providing "clear paths for students and remove systemic obstacles to their success" (Chancellor's Office, n.d.). Given that three-quarters of the 1.8 million students enrolled in the CCC system are racially minoritized students, Guided Pathways and its system-wide transformation represents a clear opportunity to advance racial equity across the system and to rethink how existing structures, programs, and practices align with the needs of racially minoritized students and the specific challenges faced entering and persisting through community college.

THE RACIAL DISCOURSE OF GUIDED PATHWAYS IMPLEMENTATION

This report uses state-level data to examine how 115 community colleges described their experiences implementing Guided Pathways to address racial inequity and prioritize racially minoritized students in their institutional redesign. Data for this report comes from the 115 Scale of Adoption Assessment (SOAA) reports submitted to the system in 2021-2022, which offer the best window into how Guided Pathways has been implemented within and across the CCC system over the last five years. Since the 2017-2018 academic year, every respective community college has submitted a SOAA report summarizing progress to date, reflecting on implementing Guided Pathways, and sharing intended next steps in scaling up their Guided Pathways efforts. With over 2,600 individual practices employed by community colleges as they attempted to implement Guided Pathways, there was much to consider.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE REPORT

Our report begins with a state-level overview and shares how racial equity is discussed within and across the four pillars of Guided Pathways. We have identified five types of discourse across the four pillars: All Students, Deficit-Oriented, Equity, Proxy, and Racial. Focusing on how race-conscious efforts are being carried out across the system, we highlight those institutions that shared Pathways practices centered on racially minoritized students and issues of racial equity. Focusing in this manner, we identified only 45 reports of the 115 that used race-conscious descriptors, including terms like Black students, Indigenous, Racism, and Racial Equity. We also found that campuses with a higher percentage of students of color are more likely to use race-focused and equity-oriented language. Equity-based language was the most prevalent type of discourse identified, while deficit-oriented language was the least found across SOAA reports. We further highlight 1) race-conscious efforts in redesigning institutional pathways to be student-relevant, 2) onboarding and first-year experience programs, and 3) ways campuses have centered the needs of students of color in career readiness and workforce preparation. In closing, we offer recommendations to embed racial equity into implementing Guided Pathways. We hope that the race-conscious approaches and practices showcased in the report serve as exemplars to be considered and contextualized to redesign and restructure community colleges in ways that acknowledge, honor, validate, and serve racially minoritized students.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Out of the 115 SOAA reports, 45 were identified using race-conscious descriptors, including terms like Black students, Latinx students, racism, and racial equity.

- Campuses with a higher enrollment percentage of racially minoritized students were likelier to use race-based and equity-oriented language.

- Equity-based language was the most prevalent type of discourse identified, while deficit-oriented language was the least found across SOAA reports.

- Most of the equity-based language was within Pillar 4, where campuses prioritized offering equity-oriented professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to improve their approaches to supporting racially minoritized students.

- Campuses described using Guided Pathways to explicitly engage and retain racially minoritized students through redesigned onboarding and first-year experience programs.

- Some colleges used Guided Pathways to create race-conscious career readiness efforts and workforce opportunities that directly benefit racially minoritized students.

- Models of possibility were identified across the system as exemplars given how they described leveraging Guided Pathways as a tool to improve racial equity.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The largest such system in the nation, the California Community Colleges (CCC) find themselves at the center of postsecondary education as they actively transform their institutions to create more equitable conditions, experiences, and outcomes for students via Guided Pathways. With 116 institutions serving over 1.8 million students across the state's geographic diversity, the CCCs are charged with an open-access mission that paves the way for all students to achieve their educational goals. With such a broad mission, the CCCs have faced challenges to equitably support students generally, and to specifically support racially minoritized and historically minoritized groups (i.e., low-income, system-impacted, DACA/undocumented) in areas such as persistence,[1,2] completion of college-level courses,[3,4] and transfer or associate degree attainment.[5] To help counter these known barriers, the CCC adopted the Guided Pathways framework as a comprehensive approach to organizationally restructure each campus and provide "clear paths for students and remove systemic obstacles to their success" (Chancellor's Office, n.d.).[6]

Influenced by behavioral economists, the underlying theory of action behind Guided Pathways is to diminish choice and create clearer pathways to improve student outcomes in community colleges by restructuring academic and career programs into pathways and developing wrap-around student-centered support from onboarding to employment.[7,8,9] In short, Guided Pathways is an educational reform that seeks to simplify and structure career and educational choices for students in community colleges. Early work by Del-Amen[10] and Rosenbaum[11] explicitly named seven strategies to facilitate student success:

1) ELIMINATING BUREAUCRATIC HURDLES

2) REDUCING CONFUSING CHOICES

3) PROVIDING COLLEGE-INITIATED GUIDANCE THAT MINIMIZES THE RISK OF STUDENT ERROR

4) INVESTING IN QUALIFIED COUNSELORS

5) ELIMINATING POOR ADVISING

6) DETECTING AND ADDRESSING COSTLY MISTAKES, AND

7) REDUCING WITH OUTSIDE DEMANDS.

Building on the work of Rosenbaum and colleagues, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path,* by Bailey et al. (2015)[12], proposed the Guided Pathways model as we know it today. Guided Pathway, as a framework, focused on improving completion by addressing four practice areas, commonly called pillars:

Pillar 1 – Clarify the Path
Pillar 2 – Get on the Path
Pillar 3 – Stay on the Path, and
Pillar 4 – Ensuring Learning

By implementing these four pillars, Guided Pathways is meant to redesign students' educational pathways and simplify how they navigate and complete their postsecondary educational goals.[13]

Given that three-quarters of the students enrolled in the CCC system are racially minoritized students, Guided Pathways and its goal of system-wide transformation is a clear opportunity to advance racial equity across the system. It also represents a chance to rethink how existing structures, programs, and practices can be aligned to the needs of racially minoritized students and the specific challenges faced as they enter and continue through community college. While researchers have noted that Guided Pathways has successfully raised completion and success rates in community colleges, racial equity gaps still persist.[14,15,16] To successfully address these continued racial disparities, it is essential to move from a mindset of serving "all students" to one that can "focus on racial equity in guided pathways work, to close racial equity gaps and increase the impact of the reform" (Bragg, 2019, p. 3). Since 2017, institutions across the system have implemented various strategies under Guided Pathways seeking to redesign: program offerings, onboarding processes, academic support, advising approaches, and teaching and learning practices. These strategies, however, have had varying effects.[17]

As the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges advocated in 2019, in order for Guided Pathways to ensure intentional student outcomes are achieved, faculty and campus leaders must have the "courage to become race-conscious and to understand the exclusionary practices that have been part of the fabric of our education system."[18] Our analysis aligns with the Senate's perspective on Guided Pathways and is based in our examination of how community colleges and their different stakeholders recognize racial inequities by calling attention to practices that perpetuate racial disparities while working to re-create and realize strategies that eliminate inequities through individual and collective change. If Guided Pathways is to act as the vehicle for improved outcomes system-wide, then how do we ensure that the efforts being implemented under the framework are equity-minded and race-conscious? And how can we be certain that these efforts specifically address those barriers that create the persistent equity gaps experienced by racially minoritized students?

Our report draws insight from a discursive analysis of the 2021-2022 Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption Assessment (SOAA) reports submitted to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). The SOAA is a "planning tool" designed by the CCCCO to "assess and address" the progress being made in "adopting essential guided pathways practices at scale" as noted by the Chancellor's Office guidelines.[19] The SOAA is submitted annually via the NOVA online platform; each institution must reflect on *23 different pathway practices* across the four pillars of Guided Pathways (See Appendix C). Since the 2017-2018 academic year, every community college has submitted a SOAA report summarizing their progress to date, reflecting on the process of implementing Guided Pathways, and sharing intended next steps in scaling up efforts. These SOAA reports provide the best window into how Guided Pathways has been implemented within and across the CCC system over the last five years. With the ability to analyze the statewide implementation of Guided Pathways via SOAA reports, our project was guided by two research questions:

- How are California community colleges implementing Guided Pathways to explicitly identify, address, and serve racially minoritized students?

- In what ways do SOAA reports describe equity-minded and race-conscious approaches to implementing Guided Pathways practices?

RACIAL DISCOURSE AND GUIDED PATHWAYS

Throughout this report, we focus on racial discourse—the explicit ways that community colleges use language to describe how their approaches, decisions, practices, and next steps under Guided Pathways work to recognize the inequities experienced by racially minoritized students and then lead colleges to develop strategies that are tailored and targeted to these specific groups.[20] To this end, we reviewed all the SOAA reports in an effort to find examples of race-conscious approaches to Guided Pathways. We operationalize race-consciousness as an active approach to implementing policies in ways that a) acknowledge the racialized nature of higher education,[21] b) use explicit language that prioritizes racially minoritized communities,[22] c) include strategies to address root-causes of racial inequity experienced by students,[23] and d) (re)direct material resources to the areas and groups with the greatest need.[24] On the other hand, a race-evasive approach to Guided Pathways ignores systemic inequities that perpetuate racial equity gaps by focusing on overall student success. Below, we offer some examples of race-consciousness approaches found in the Guided Pathways SOAA reports that both name racially minoritized groups within the strategy and are designed to close racial disparities experienced on campus (author's bold for emphasis):

EXAMPLE 1: RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS INCLUDES EXPLICITLY NAMING RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS AND DESIGNING SPECIFIC SUPPORT STRATEGIES.

Get on the Path – Practice E: Support Students to Succeed in College-Level Courses

Explore marketing and outreach efforts that specifically center **Black and Latinx students** and ensure marketing materials are **culturally relevant and accessible.** Provide professional development for the staff… with tools that can be used to foster a more **inclusive environment, promote social justice, and enhance cultural competence.** Provide support in noncredit courses that lead to credit courses. Implement summer programming for FTIC **Black and Latinx students.**

EXAMPLE 2: RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS TAKES INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PATTERNS OF INEQUITY AND ENHANCES PRACTITIONER COMPETENCIES TO SERVE RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS BETTER.

Ensuring Learning – Practice B: Instruction Across Programs Engages Students

A challenge to Guided Pathways is the lack of a campus-wide shared understanding of **racial equity and inclusion** and the need to change **long-held and systemic practices that may contribute to the disproportionate impact on underserved populations and students of color.**

EXAMPLE 3: RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS IDENTIFIES AREAS OF RESISTANCE TO RACIAL EQUITY EFFORTS AND WORKS TO BUILD COALITIONS AMONG PRACTITIONERS TO ENACT RACIALIZED CHANGE ON CAMPUS.

Clarify the Path – Practice B: Every Program is Well Designed to Guide Students

Some [academic] areas might not want to change or update their programs. Many are tapped for time and some are **resistant to change**. We need to be open and adopt a culture of learning that expects ongoing **social justice** and **racial equity** integrated in our classrooms and course material. Additionally, a habit of working within our own departmental silos has proven to be an invisible barrier to this work.

EXAMPLE 4: RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS FOCUSES ON INTEGRATED APPROACHES AND SYSTEMIC RESPONSES TO DISRUPTING AND ADDRESSING RACIAL INEQUITY ON CAMPUS.

Clarify the Path– Practice B: Every Program is Well Designed to Guide Students

Gateway and large GE courses need to be evaluated and revised using an **equity lens** (i.e. embedded student support, culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum, etc.) to reduce/eliminate racial equity gaps. Assessment and revision of [College's] program review and curriculum development processes should employ a **race-conscious approach to ensure racially marginalized students** are at the center of course and program design and implementation.

All four examples highlight ways to craft race-conscious strategies within Guided Pathways in order to provide a level of servingness[25] that intentionally redesigns institutional structures, programs, and practices to center and serve racially minoritized students explicitly. Through a race-conscious approach, educators in community colleges can address and eliminate the persistent racial disparities in the CCC system. To this end, we need educators who can talk about race, use data to identify patterns of inequity and work collectively to dismantle the root causes of racial inequity through the implementation of Guided Pathways. These examples are everyday actions on campus that can lead the redesigning of community colleges into more equity-minded and racially just institutions.

Since the SOAA does not prompt or require Guided Pathways leaders to report out on race-specific strategies, we spent time categorizing report language into five prevalent discourse types. Figure 1 (below) presents all five discourse types we identified within the SOAA descriptions of pathway practices. *All Students* captures the ways that colleges reported out strategies benefiting the general student population; *deficit* includes language that refers to students in negative ways; *equity* highlights discourse that mentions terms like "inequity" and "equitable;" *proxy* focused on language that uses umbrella terms alluding to racially minoritized students (such as "Umoja" and "Puente"); *racial* includes race-specific language.

ALL STUDENTS | **DEFICIT** (E.G., AT-RISK | **EQUITY** (E.G., INEQUITY, EQUITABLE) | **PROXY** (E.G., EOP&S, PUENTE, UMOJA) | **RACIAL** (E.G., BLACK STUDENTS, RACIALLY MINORITIZED)
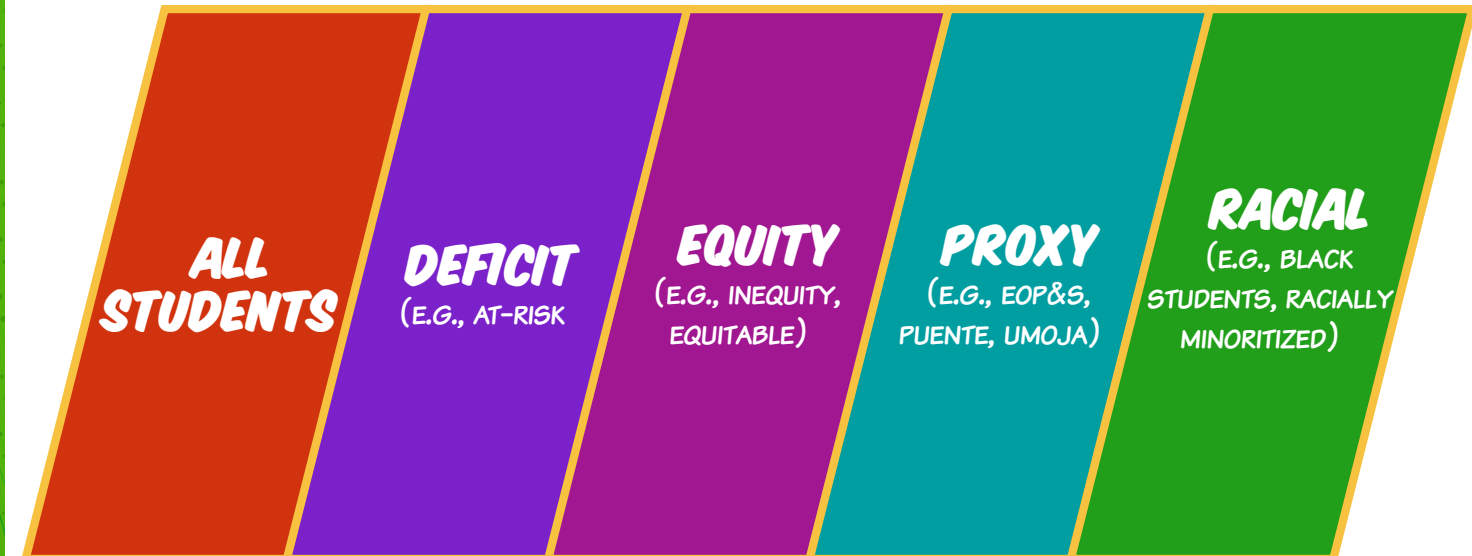
Figure 1. Types of Discourse Identified

REPORT ROADMAP

The following section reviews the methods utilized in our research and briefly describes our approach to analyzing the SOAA reports. The next section dives into the findings of this report. We conclude by assessing implications for the field and sharing recommendations for colleges to help them become more race-conscious and equity-minded in serving racially minoritized students through Guided Pathways.

METHODS

The insights shared in this report are based on data collected and discursively analyzed from 115 SOAA reports submitted to the Chancellor's Office for the 2021-2022 academic year. Specifically, two data sources were used for this project: 1) SOAA reports submitted by individual campuses, and 2) a comprehensive NOVA dataset with aggregated pathway practices. Reviewing the full SOAA reports submitted by each campus gave us the ability to conduct a contextualized analysis of Guided Pathways implementation. It allowed us to see how the 23 pathway practices are interconnected from pillar to pillar, how the reporting descriptions flow from section to section, how colleges describe their challenges and success stories, and how all these efforts come together within a comprehensive reform strategy to serve racially minoritized students. Since the SOAA reporting process was sometimes completed by an individual or sometimes a subset of people, we have include Table 1 for additional context.

PILLAR AREA	PRACTICES	TYPE OF CHANGE REQUIRED	EXAMPLE PRACTICE PROMPT
PILLAR 1. CLARIFY THE PATH	5	Reorganize and map programs into well-designed and easy to follow pathways for students. Provide detailed information for students to access and benefit from redesign of programs.	Practice B: Every program is well designed to guide and prepare students to enter employment and further education in fields of importance to the college's service area.
PILLAR 2. GET ON THE PATH	6	Restructure efforts to provide early career exploration and program planning, create support strategies to help students be successful in completing gateway courses.	Practice E: Intensive support is provided to help very poorly prepared students to succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible.
PILLAR 3. STAY ON THE PATH	5	Revise advising strategies, develop ways to identify students needing additional support, provide tools for students to map progress along the path, and consider ways to make course-scheduling more student-centered.	Practice B: Students can easily see how far they have come and what they need to do to complete their program.
PILLAR 4. ENSURING LEARNING	7	Use assessment to inform redesign process, create targeted professional development to enhance teaching strategies, better align program learning outcomes with employment outcomes, improve how students document their learning beyond transcripts.	Practice G: The college assesses effectiveness of educational practice (e.g., using CCSSE or SENSE, etc.) and uses the results to create targeted professional development.

Table 1. Pillar Practices Reported on within the Scale of Adoption Assessment

Every SOAA is organized to prompt colleges to reflect and report on the 23 different pathways practices under the four pillars. As described above, for example, Practice B under Pillar 1 asks colleges to share how, within their Guided Pathways implementation, "Every program is well designed to guide and prepare students to enter employment and further education in fields of importance to the college's service area." When a college does respond, they must share information in three key areas: Progress to Date, Next Steps, and Support. Within these completed SOAA reports, we pulled and analyzed discourse from all three of those areas. Additionally, the Chancellor's Office provided a comprehensive dataset from the NOVA platform that compiled all pathway practices submitted. The NOVA dataset included 17,731 observable practices across the system. After cleaning the data and removing duplicates and missing observations (rows without information in key areas), we found that there were 3,193 distinct practices, all of which we reviewed and analyzed, with the results presented in our findings.

These SOAA reports serve as an artifact of implementation, giving direct insight into how Guided Pathways has been implemented and scaled up across the state. Analyzing the SOAA reports is a critical step to understanding implementation progress to date, revealing institutional reflections on the process of scaling the Guided Pathways framework at the local level and suggesting the next steps needed for fully adopting the framework across the system. However, it is important to note that what is shared, described, and submitted is limited by the time and capacity that Guided Pathways leads have to sit, reflect, compile, and write a report. The reality is that these reporting processes can be cumbersome and time-consuming, thus limiting the capacity to do the actual work. Between documenting and doing change, we are more concerned about the actions carried out to improve outcomes for racially minoritized students. Nonetheless, the SOAA reports, as a reporting tool, provided us with unprecedented insight into how Guided Pathways as a framework, process, and practice is leveraged for institutional transformation. And how, if at all, these SOAA reports describe race-conscious, equity-minded, and student-centered approaches to the institutional redesign process. Analyzing SOAA reports in this way is one attempt to explore and understand how Guided Pathways implementation occurs across the system, highlighting the practices advancing racial equity for students. We acknowledge the extraordinary work being carried out across the system and recognize that a single report may not be able to capture all the good intentions and great strategies being implemented by campuses.

"THESE SOAA REPORTS SERVE AS AN ARTIFACT OF IMPLEMENTATION, GIVING DIRECT INSIGHT INTO HOW GUIDED PATHWAYS HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED AND SCALED UP ACROSS THE STATE. ANALYZING THE SOAA REPORTS IS A CRITICAL STEP TO UNDERSTANDING IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS TO DATE, REVEALING INSTITUTIONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS OF SCALING THE GUIDED PATHWAYS FRAMEWORK AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AND SUGGESTING THE NEXT STEPS NEEDED FOR FULLY ADOPTING THE FRAMEWORK ACROSS THE SYSTEM."

RESULTS

In an effort to synthesize what we learned from our analysis so as to better provide relevant practitioner insight, we narrowed the focus of our findings to four areas: (1) statewide descriptive statistics illuminating discursive patterns within each pillar of Guided Pathways, (2) how racially minoritized students are centered in the campus-wide redesign processes, (3) the development of race-conscious onboarding and first-year programs to engage racially minoritized students, and (4) pathway practices that enhance career and workforce opportunities for racially minoritized students.

FINDING 1: STATE-LEVEL INSIGHT

Our state-level descriptive analysis draws from the dataset provided by the Chancellor's Office, which included 3,193 individual practices submitted by 115 institutions in the system. We examined SOAA report discourse across five categories: All Students, Deficit (e.g., at-risk, poorly prepared), Equity (e.g., inequity, equitable), Proxy (e.g., underrepresented, Puente, EOP&S, Umoja), and Racial (e.g., Black students, racially minoritized). In aggregate, there were clear discursive patterns—differences in how community colleges described and reported their efforts within each pillar and associated practices of Guided Pathways. Figure 2 visualizes the total mentions for the five discourse categories examined in the dataset.
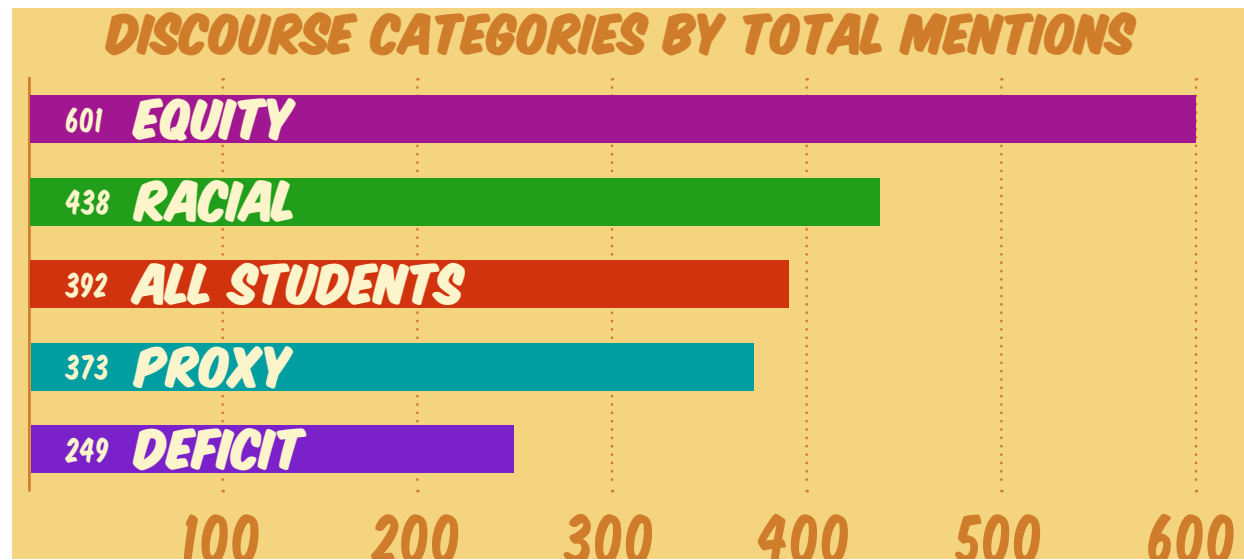
DISCOURSE CATEGORIES BY TOTAL MENTIONS

- 601 EQUITY
- 438 RACIAL
- 392 ALL STUDENTS
- 373 PROXY
- 249 DEFICIT

Figure 2. Total Discourse Mentions Across Identified Categories

Equity-oriented language allowed colleges to focus on equity efforts while Racial discourse enabled colleges to explicitly center their efforts to benefit racially minoritized student groups in their practice descriptions. Equity-oriented language was the most prevalent type of discourse (29%) identified in the SOAA dataset. There were 601 Equity mentions, which included terms like "equitable," "equity," and "equitizing." Overall, we found that colleges had a generally strong focus on equity and prioritized these discussions within Pillar 2 and 4, specifically. The second most identified discourse type was Racial, with 438 mentions (21%) of race-conscious language describing racial groups like "Black" and "Pacific Islander" in the pathway practices being implemented. While it was heartening to find that race-conscious discourse had nearly a quarter of the mentions, these descriptors came from only 45 of the 115 SOAA reports.

> "EQUITY-ORIENTED LANGUAGE ALLOWED COLLEGES TO FOCUS ON EQUITY EFFORTS WHILE RACIAL DISCOURSE ENABLED COLLEGES TO EXPLICITLY CENTER THEIR EFFORTS TO BENEFIT RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENT GROUPS IN THEIR PRACTICE DESCRIPTIONS. EQUITY-ORIENTED LANGUAGE WAS THE MOST PREVALENT TYPE OF DISCOURSE (29%) IDENTIFIED IN THE SOAA DATASET. THERE WERE 601 EQUITY MENTIONS, WHICH INCLUDED TERMS LIKE "EQUITABLE," "EQUITY," AND "EQUITIZING." OVERALL, WE FOUND THAT COLLEGES HAD A GENERALLY STRONG FOCUS ON EQUITY AND PRIORITIZED THESE DISCUSSIONS WITHIN PILLAR 2 AND 4, SPECIFICALLY."

As noted in the figure, the third most-used discourse type was All Students (19%). Proxy discourse alluded to programs and practices that may benefit racially minoritized students without explicitly mentioning racially minoritized students and included 373 mentions (18%), which captured terms like "Puente," "Umoja," and "underrepresented." The least identified discourse was Deficit oriented language, with 249 mentions (12%), which described students as "at-risk," "poorly prepared," or a "minority." These aggregate trends across the system showcase how Guided Pathways is being implemented and described as opportunities to enhance equity for students as well as build equity-minded competencies for practitioners that hold the institutions, not students, responsible for improving educational outcomes.

SHARE OF IDENTIFIED DISCOURSE BY PILLAR

- 11%
- 22%
- 20%
- 47%

- PILLAR 1: CLARIFY PATH
- PILLAR 2: GET ON THE PATH
- PILLAR 3: STAY ON THE PATH
- PILLAR 4: ENSURE LEARNING

Figure 3. Share of Discourse Mentions Across Pillars

When we examined all five discourse categories within each pillar, there was wide variance in the amount of identified discourse and the specific categories (See Figure 3). Each of the four pillars had between 5 and 7 pathway practices requiring responses; this added up to 23 total practices to describe in the SOAA report. Given our five categories, the percentage shares can be interpreted as the time and attention given by Guided Pathways leads for reporting the existing efforts undertaken within the program. This data also suggests that for practices being scaled in 2021-2022, most strategies were within Pillar 2: Get on the Path and Pillar 3: Stay on the Path, respectively. Table 2, below, contains a more detailed account of the prevalent discourse identified in the SOAA reports and includes the number of mentions identified (#) for each category and the share (%) within each pillar. As an example, racial discourse was identified 438 times across our dataset, and race-specific language was prevalent within each pillar. Deficit discourse, on the other hand, was identified just 249 times and 80% of that language was within Pillar 2.

> "THESE AGGREGATE TRENDS ACROSS THE SYSTEM SHOWCASE HOW GUIDED PATHWAYS IS BEING IMPLEMENTED AND DESCRIBED AS OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE EQUITY FOR STUDENTS AS WELL AS BUILD EQUITY-MINDED COMPETENCIES FOR PRACTITIONERS THAT HOLD THE INSTITUTIONS, NOT STUDENTS, RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES."
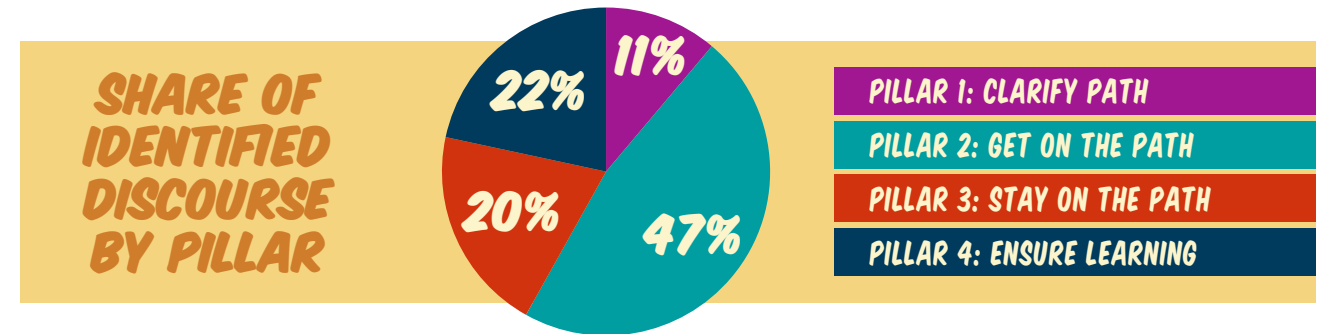
CATEGORY	ALL SOAAS #	PILLAR 1 #	PILLAR 1 %	PILLAR 2 #	PILLAR 2 %	PILLAR 3 #	PILLAR 3 %	PILLAR 4 #	PILLAR 4 %
ALL STUDENTS	392	47	12%	183	47%	122	31%	40	10%
DEFICIT	249	3	1%	199	80%	45	18%	2	1%
EQUITY	601	95	16%	193	32%	54	9%	259	43%
PROXY	373	12	3%	230	62%	104	28%	27	7%
RACIAL	438	72	16%	159	36%	91	21%	116	26%
TOTAL MENTIONS	2053	229		964		416		444	

Table 2. Discourse Type Identified in SOAA Reports

Figure 4, below, visualizes where the discourse "lives" within each pillar and notes the number of mentions for each category. Further, it displays the concentration of discourse within Pillar 2: Get on the Path and the high levels of Deficit and Proxy language there. Comparably, Pillar: 4 Ensuring Learning stands out for its large share of Equity mentions, having 259 (43%) of the total 601.
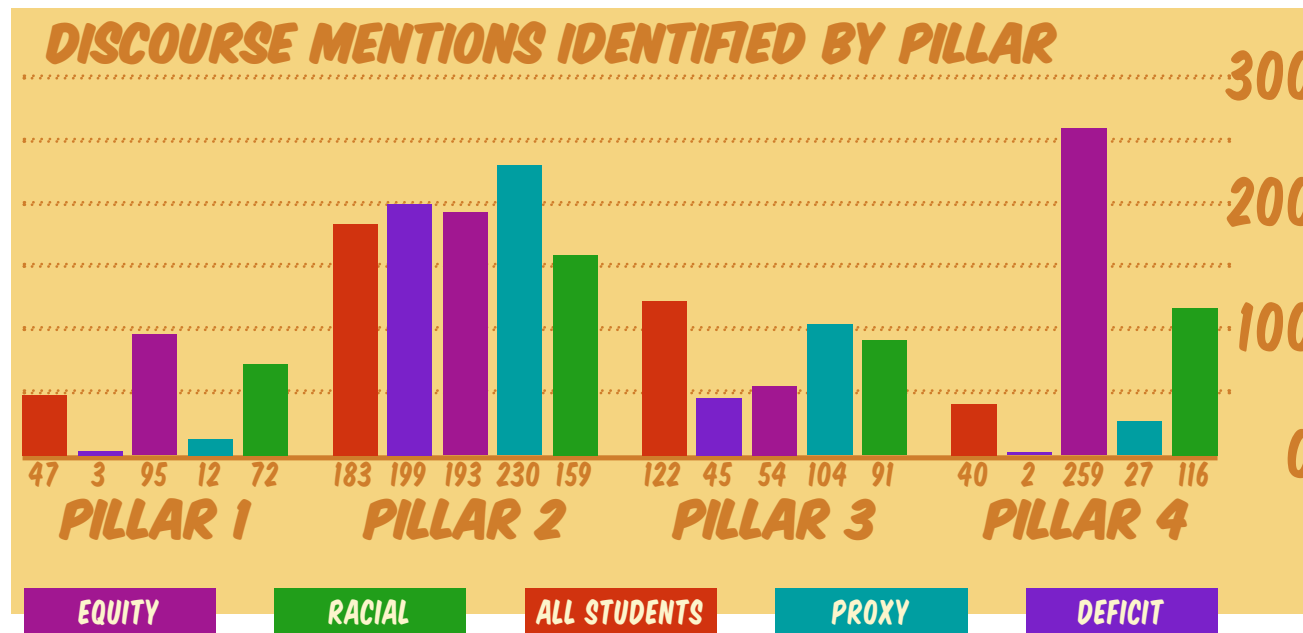

DISCOURSE MENTIONS IDENTIFIED BY PILLAR

PILLAR 1: 47, 3, 95, 12, 72
PILLAR 2: 183, 199, 193, 230, 159
PILLAR 3: 122, 45, 54, 104, 91
PILLAR 4: 40, 2, 259, 27, 116

EQUITY — RACIAL — ALL STUDENTS — PROXY — DEFICIT

Figure 4. Where The Discourse Lives

As we assess this first finding of State-Level Insight, it's important to examine how these discourse types are represented across the four pillars.

PILLAR ☀: AN "ALL STUDENTS" APPROACH TO REDESIGNING INSTITUTIONS

For efforts under Pillar 1: Clarify the Path, one of the three most common discourse categories focused on "All Students." Colleges shared strategies and practices seeking to reorganize academic programs via meta-majors and provide updated program maps with clear paths to educational and career goals. For example, one college stated, "Streamlining pathways in clearly written and visually appealing high-tech representations [as] an approach to elevate educational outcomes for all students." Similarly, another institution mentioned that a primary goal in mapping out programs for students was to "ensure that all students [had] a comprehensive educational plan that detail[ed] coursework from start to finish of a program or degree." This universal approach was also noted by colleges when prompted to reflect on how they have improved math taking patterns that align with students' field of study, where they stated, "All students now have access to transfer-level English and quantitative reasoning pathways" or "Launch and promote Academic and Career pathways to make degree maps with appropriate math courses accessible to all students." Both examples show a well-intended effort to support students in math courses—but there remains a lack of recognition for the specific groups facing persistent racial disparities in accessing and completing these courses. The inability to be more focused, aware, and intentional with the type of students that are entering college, exploring career pathways, and possessing various levels of information to self-place into math and English courses is especially concerning given the documented inequities experienced by racially minoritized students along their educational trajectory.

Lastly, Pillar 1: Clarify the Path had the least amount of content submitted to analyze across the four pillars. This lack of description might indicate that community colleges have advanced on these efforts over the last few years and chose to prioritize describing the strategies and efforts in other parts of the SOAA report.

> "THE INABILITY TO BE MORE FOCUSED, AWARE, AND INTENTIONAL WITH THE TYPE OF STUDENTS THAT ARE ENTERING COLLEGE, EXPLORING CAREER PATHWAYS, AND POSSESSING VARIOUS LEVELS OF INFORMATION TO SELF-PLACE INTO MATH AND ENGLISH COURSES IS ESPECIALLY CONCERNING GIVEN THE DOCUMENTED INEQUITIES EXPERIENCED BY RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS ALONG THEIR EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORY."

PILLAR ☀: REMEDIATING "POORLY PREPARED" STUDENTS

In our analysis, Pillar 2: Get on the Path had the highest levels of deficit-oriented discourse, which included describing students as "poorly prepared" and "at-risk," and calling out students who required being "remediated" to be successful in community college. Nearly 80% of all the deficit-oriented discourse across our data was found in Pillar 2. Under this pillar, campuses reported strategies and efforts focused on helping students explore career options, develop an educational plan, enhance academic readiness to successfully navigate through gateway courses, and establish support to progress toward educational goals.

In analyzing these patterns further, we noticed that the type of prompts asked in this pillar were themselves more deficit-oriented in nature, requiring colleges to reflect on and, at times, adopt deficit-oriented language when describing efforts to support students in their SOAA report. To be more precise, colleges responded to prompts that asked if "Practice B: Special supports are provided to help academically underprepared students to succeed in the "gateway" courses for the college's major program areas" and "Practice E: Intensive support is provided to help very poorly prepared students to succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible." We believe that the language used in the prompts influenced on the language used by colleges in their responses.

> "NEARLY 80% OF ALL THE DEFICIT-ORIENTED DISCOURSE ACROSS OUR DATA WAS FOUND IN PILLAR 2. UNDER THIS PILLAR, CAMPUSES REPORTED STRATEGIES AND EFFORTS FOCUSED ON HELPING STUDENTS EXPLORE CAREER OPTIONS, DEVELOP AN EDUCATIONAL PLAN, ENHANCE ACADEMIC READINESS TO SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE THROUGH GATEWAY COURSES, AND ESTABLISH SUPPORT TO PROGRESS TOWARD EDUCATIONAL GOALS."

By replacing terms like "underprepared" or "poorly prepared," the SOAA report can better prompt community colleges to serve students of color with even greater intentionality. For example, the wording of Practice B can be changed to "Special supports are provided to help Black and Latinx students to succeed in the 'gateway' courses for the college's major program areas." For Practice E, shifting away from deficit frameworks, the new question can read: "Intensive support is provided to help Black and Latinx students to succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible." However, as it currently stands, the way these questions are framed is deficit-oriented, leading many community colleges to adopt and use deficit-oriented language in their reports. Despite good intentions to support students needing extra academic help, negative and deficit-minded views can shape how these services are developed and provided.

Although Pillar 2's strategies are critical for getting students on the path, we found various examples of colleges negatively describing students as they created summer programming, boot camps, intrusive counseling practice, and improved data analysis practices meant to support students. One campus discussed creating summer academic enrichment workshops but lamented that "poorly prepared students who are most likely to benefit from academic workshops tend not to take advantage of this opportunity." A second shared, "Summer Bridge programs focus [on] supporting very poorly prepared students by providing a comprehensive summer program including a math jam course and workshop series classes…to build students confidence." Moving from summer activities, another college stated, "[We have] embedded tutors in the math and English courses to assist poorly prepared students." The process of identifying these students was raised as well. One campus attempted to better identify students in need of more academic support through institutional research. It claimed, "Many poorly prepared students do not persist until the end of the course, and often the cause of them leaving is unknown. This type of research is difficult, time-consuming, and labor-intensive." Another similarly noted, "Early identification of students who are poorly prepared has not been perfected; there needs to be additional time/attention put into screening ALL students who may be at-risk for poor performance that could lead to progress/academic probation." In a final example, a college described working closely with faculty to "identify poorly prepared students and direct them immediately to academic and student support services… and identify at-risk students for providing intrusive counseling and other non-academic support."

These report excerpts illustrate how, even if colleges wanted to support students needing academic support, many reported that they were unable to identify those populations to provide targeted efforts. Additionally, these excerpts illustrate how, despite well intended efforts to support students, the adoption of deficit language revealed that community colleges held negative views and deficit thinking about the ability of their students to participate and benefit from their newly created support services.

PILLAR 3: STAYING ON THE PATH VIA PROXY STRATEGIES

Focused on persistence and retention, many of the strategies in Pillar 3: Stay on the Path discussed how institutional efforts could shift to enhance advising practices, effectively monitor program progression, and improve course scheduling to be more student-centered. The primary discourse types under this pillar were All Students (122), Proxy (104), and Racial (91).

Many of the strategies under this pillar highlighted the importance of categorical programs and the type of engagement and support these programs provided community college students that we captured as Proxy discourse. Practices like this were commonplace; here are three examples: "EOPS/CARE and CalWORKs provide wraparound services, and support students with academic counseling, financial aid assistance and specialized workshops," "Counselors in the various Learning Communities, including First Year Experience, Puente, Umoja, CIN, Athletics and Movement engage in high touch practices with students through one-on-one counseling appointments, career assessment, and tailoring Student Education Plan based on academic, career and personal goals. These counselors also follow up with students and track their completion of program requirements" and "Guided pathways design principles were established to ensure the college continues to operate student supportive programs such as UMOJA, EOP&S, and NextUp."

These strategies showcase the importance of embedding counselors along program pathways and providing students with continued advising, affirmation, and support. Much of the race-conscious practices reported in the SOAAs were directly connected to supporting racially minoritized students as "affinity groups" tied to programs like Puente and Umoja that provide culturally relevant programming and support. There are opportunities to build on these tailored interventions by designing campus-wide efforts that are meant to be student-centered and equity-minded, seeking to improve experiences and outcomes.

> "MANY OF THE STRATEGIES UNDER THIS PILLAR HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF CATEGORICAL PROGRAMS AND THE TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT THESE PROGRAMS PROVIDED COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS THAT WE CAPTURED AS PROXY DISCOURSE."

PILLAR 4: EQUITY IN THE HOUSE, ENSURING EQUITABLE LEARNING

We identified an inverse relationship within Pillar 4: Ensuring Learning, where we found the highest equity-oriented discourse levels and the least deficit-oriented mentions. In fact, the Guided Pathways efforts reported under Ensuring Learning had the highest share of equity mentions across all four pillars, with just over 43% of the discourse, and the lowest percentage of deficit discourse, at just 0.8% of all mentions. Across the seven practices in the pillar, Practices B, E, and G (See Appendix C for Practice descriptions) had a concentrated amount of equity-oriented language describing professional development opportunities that could lead to more effective teaching practices and improve equity in student outcomes.

Using Data to Support Equitable Improvements. Before crafting professional development opportunities, colleges reported using survey data to understand the state of inequity and tailor support for faculty and staff. One college administered both the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) "to all enrolled students to assess constructs such as institutional commitment, impact of external environments, mattering and affirmation, racial learning and literacy, encounters with racial stress, and cross-racial engagement" and "learn about the climate issues that impact student experience and learning, particularly for racially marginalized students." A second institution used CCSSE results to implement culturally relevant practices in the classroom after racially minoritized students reported not feeling engaged by instruction. In doing so, this college shared that data dashboards were created "to provide faculty easy access to success and completion data (by course and department for the past 5 years) that can be easily disaggregated by numerous student variables (race, gender, first-gen status, and more)." The college closed by sharing that ongoing professional development on the dashboards was being designed to "equip faculty and staff with skills to apply an equity mindset to data."

These examples showcase how community colleges have effectively used data available to identify patterns of inequity and design strategies for institutional improvement. In these examples, using data enabled community colleges to identify areas of professional development and recognize equity gaps affecting students of color regarding learning and a sense of belonging. The colleges clearly made an effort to leverage and prioritize data-informed practices to support students of color.

Developing Communities of Practice. A second approach to embedding more equitable practices focused on supporting peer-to-peer learning and interaction by creating Communities of Practice. For example, one report shared, "The college has institutionalized the New Faculty Institute along with a year-long extensive professional development (PD) program that includes a broad-based Community of Practice (COP), which offers monthly workshops on active and applied learning." Another campus stated, "The professional development office created a Community of Practice (CoP) structure within each academic and counseling division that is designed as a system of collective critical inquiry and reflections where faculty can share experiences, reflect on practice, and identify ways to accelerate skill development." A third campus shared that their "design team established a data-informed, equity-minded community of practice to support departments to innovate and implement high-impact practices and policies where equity training occurs for all faculty."

Institutions looking to bolster their approach within the Guided Pathways framework had success with these Communities of Practice, enhancing participants' beliefs and competencies around equity (generally and specifically) within their instructional practices.

> "USING DATA ENABLED COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNIZE EQUITY GAPS AFFECTING STUDENTS OF COLOR REGARDING LEARNING AND A SENSE OF BELONGING. THE COLLEGES CLEARLY MADE AN EFFORT TO LEVERAGE AND PRIORITIZE DATA-INFORMED PRACTICES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS OF COLOR."

External Support for Enhanced Equity. A third approach was based on collaborating with external organizations for professional learning. One college worked with the Association for College and University Educators (ACUE) Faculty Credential program "to help move the needle of success in Career Education (CE) programs for disproportionately impacted students." Another partnered with USC's Race and Equity Center through a Title V grant to provide an eight-week Equity Training for faculty and data coaches. Each developed an equity project and created strategies to implement in their respective department to improve outcomes for racially minoritized students. Clearly, many campuses reported a commitment to embedding equity into professional development opportunities and supporting educators to enhance their competencies in these areas to better serve students of color better as they enter, navigate, and succeed in their selected pathways.

FINDING 2: A REDESIGN, WITH WHAT STUDENT IN MIND?

In Finding 1, our discourse analysis revealed that, statewide, Pillar 1: Clarify the Path took an "all students" approach, including designing meta-majors and pathways in race-evasive ways. This approach to the institutional redesign process limits how new academic programs, career pathways, and structured supports serve and benefit racially minoritized students. While reviewing the colleges' processes of creating meta-majors and clustering related academic and career programs, we gained insight into how institutions attempted to improve their information-sharing techniques, such as online platforms that mapped out pathway programs.

In our assessment, we encountered practice descriptions such as: "The new college website was designed to guide students to the meta majors," or "Information about the career options available to students for each program can be seen on the Navigate platform as well as posted with the program information on the college website." Although racially minoritized students are a large segment of those enrolled in credit and noncredit programs in the community college system, this is not mirrored in meta-major information-sharing practices, which raised concerns for us about how racially minoritized students are prioritized in redesigned processes. The way these practices are framed in the SOAA reports tends to be race-evasive, thereby missing an opportunity to serve racially minoritized students by not explicitly communicating to them what their various paths for meta-majors are. Without acknowledging or showing an awareness for equity considerations, as race-evasive practices, both examples overlook the challenges that racially minoritized students often encounter regarding accessing, making sense of, and acting upon the information they need to successfully navigate and meet educational milestones in the community college system.

CENTERING STUDENTS OF COLOR IN REDESIGN EFFORTS

Despite the limited efforts to prioritize racially minoritized students within the Guided Pathways' redesign process, in this section, we highlight how community colleges can better serve racially minoritized students as they develop their meta-major communication channels. We identified Cuyamaca College and Saddleback College as engaging in promising practices to center students of color in their redesign processes. These colleges made efforts to reach students of color with meta-major-related information in culturally responsive ways. For example, Cuyamaca College sought to make meta-major-related information accessible to students of color by "[Providing] translation of the information in Spanish, Arabic, and Tagalog." Similarly, Saddleback College described its desire to "work on translating key community- and student-facing web pages and pathways materials into Spanish." By making information available to students in multiple languages, both colleges have shown efforts to foster conditions that make information more accessible to students of color. This accessibility is critical—many community college students speak languages other than English as their primary language. Using culturally sensitive methods, such as communicating with students in their native languages, can remove barriers for racially minoritized students in accessing and understanding meta-major information under Guided Pathways' redesign process.

Cuyamaca College also attempted to remove technological barriers to outreach to racially minoritized students through their desire to "Post the program maps to the college website and make them available as hard copies in counseling and other appropriate areas around the college." Cuyamaca explicitly considered equity within the same practice, noting, "standard format and maps will be reviewed to ensure that access to and use of this information is equitable for students who have been historically underrepresented and/or underserved in higher education." By providing printed versions of meta-major information, Cuyamaca College addressed concerns related to the digital divide, which disproportionately affects racially minoritized students, as internet access and the ability to navigate college websites to gain needed information can be a significant barrier for this demographic. Cuyamaca's approach recognizes that merely posting information online can exacerbate barriers to accessing information for students of color. Additionally, Cuyamaca College committed to ensuring that access to information and its effective utilization is attainable for racially minoritized students.

REFLECTION OPPORTUNITY

AS YOU CONTINUE IMPLEMENTING GUIDED PATHWAYS, CONSIDER HOW YOUR REDESIGN PROCESS CAN FOCUS ON THE STRENGTHS POSSESSED BY RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS AND ADDRESS THE EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS EXPERIENCED.

1. How can your institution take proactive steps to ensure that racially minoritized students have equitable access to, comprehension of, and utilization of meta-major information and other related Guided Pathways information?

2. What can your institution do to assess the extent to which racially minoritized students are proactively given information around meta-majors that is accessible and beneficial to them as they begin their journey in community college?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- **Intentional Outreach of Racially Minoritized Students:** While we recognize the legality and fear of Prop 209 in why colleges resort to generic "all students" language on websites and digital information sharing, [26] we believe that information alone is insufficient to reach and serve students through Guided Pathways. Community colleges must proactively engage in intentional outreach efforts focused on serving racially minoritized students. This includes conducting research inquiries that prioritize understanding how these students access, interpret, and utilize Guided Pathways information, with a specific focus on meta-major information.

- **Center Equity in Accessibility of Information:** As community colleges develop their infrastructure and information systems to assist students with meta-major-related information, they must engage in equity considerations to enhance how this information is presented and shared with students. By prioritizing equity, community colleges can avoid exacerbating disparities in access, comprehension, and utilization of information among various student groups. It is essential to conduct inquiry and assessment into the effectiveness of the redesign process for racially minoritized students and document how they benefit from the new academic pathways and whether they experience improved outcomes.

FINDING 3: EXPLICITLY ENGAGING AND RETAINING RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS

Our third finding highlights campus practices that described using race-conscious and explicit forms of engagement to support and retain racially minoritized students throughout their college experience. These initiatives and strategies for retention included developing culturally relevant First-Year Programs, institutionalizing new engagement centers across campus, and scaling up race-specific programs like Umoja/Ujima.

Cosumnes River College implemented a First Year Experience (FYE) program in 2018 with wraparound services for students needing additional support in English and math courses. A key aspect of their efforts was reaching out to disproportionately impacted students *before* their starting college and getting them connected with the FYE program. The College noted that their actions sought to address the "systemic racism and persistent racial inequities that exist within our institution, which disproportionately impact Black/African American and Latinx students." In their 2021-22 SOAA, the College documented that equity gaps had been reduced for both racial groups and that a "complete closing of the equity gap in transfer level English of Latinx students" had been realized.

A second example comes from Sacramento City College, where they brought in an external partner (LEARN/PERTS) to incorporate just-in-time interventions (for faculty and students) based on frequent student check-ins during the semester. For faculty, "professional development opportunities focused on how to close equity gaps for Black and Brown students, how to address students' affective needs, and how to keep students engaged." And they continually assessed and improved their FYE efforts, stating, "We have built professional development into our FYE program, drawing on data collected about the program."

Riverside Community College developed engagement centers for students involved in Umoja, La Casa, Puente, and Guardian Scholars to help them "navigate their pathway choice before attending RCC" and "connect with the student success team for each engagement center." Riverside City College also shared that they revamped their onboarding programs to include Welcome Days for affinity groups such as Umoja. Redesigning practices such as Welcome Days to be race-specific has gone beyond the parameters of a traditional new student program, setting the tone of the institution's effort to begin a student's transition with their community of peers, faculty, and staff that look like them.

Lastly, College of the Canyons reported how they were leveraging Guided Pathways to build new structures and supports for Black students on campus. They stated that a recently hired "Black Student Success Counselor" was "developing the Ujima Scholars; a learning community dedicated toward Black Student Success." The aim of the program was to "increase retention and matriculation of Black students" as well as a "sense of belonging on campus" by connecting them with Black faculty, staff, and peers. In addition to Ujima Scholars, College of the Canyons described creating a student success team for "African American/Black students" to engage and retain them along their educational journey via peer check-ins, mentoring opportunities, and counseling support.

These four examples showcase how community colleges can be race-conscious in their approach to developing onboarding, retention, and engagement strategies that specifically benefit racially minoritized students through targeted outreach before entering the institution, pairing welcome days with race-based affinity groups, and designing engagement centers that are culturally responsive to racially minoritized students.

REFLECTION OPPORTUNITY

AS YOU CONTINUE IMPLEMENTING GUIDED PATHWAYS, CONSIDER HOW YOUR REDESIGN PROCESS CAN FOCUS ON THE STRENGTHS POSSESSED BY RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS AND ADDRESS THE EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS EXPERIENCED.

3. How can your institution develop onboarding and engagement programs that validate and support racially minoritized and other marginalized groups who may encounter additional barriers entering community college?

4. How can your institution scale up identity-conscious and culturally relevant support and resources for racially minoritized students not in specific programs like Umoja or Puente?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Creating Race-Conscious and Culturally Relevant Onboarding Efforts:** Given the racial disparities in successful enrollment and persistence metrics, community colleges must be race-conscious and incorporate culturally relevant curriculum and programming into onboarding and first-year experiences. This can include a community of peers, faculty, and staff that also look like them. Learning from faculty that look like you, reading yourself in the curriculum, and having peer support all help racially minoritized students thrive as they enter and progress along their academic pathway.

- **Recommendation 2: Engaging in Inquiry to Identify and Close Equity Gaps:** Designing effective programming and services that cater to and prioritize the needs of racially minoritized students demands intentional efforts from educators to identify and close racialized equity gaps as students interact with their organizational structures. This intentionality can start with educators engaging in institutional inquiry and data-informed practices that emphasize a desire to understand how racially minoritized students engage with and benefit from existing policies and procedures as they become onboarded and retained within their institutions. In doing so, educators can use the information gained to develop or enhance existing educational structures to identify and close equity gaps by prioritizing and advancing the needs of racially minoritized students.

FINDING 4: ENHANCING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS

Providing career readiness, employment opportunities, and work-based learning are fundamental practices within Guided Pathways and embedded across all four pillars of the (SOAA) report. In this fourth finding, we showcase efforts describing the ways community colleges used labor-related data to identify racial disparities, acknowledged broader barriers to economic participation, and expanded programs to serve racially minoritized students.

Various colleges noted the importance of examining student employment data and other available surveys to understand the employability of their students. Cuyamaca College shared how it reviewed racially disaggregated data on student employment outcomes to "identify disproportionately impacted groups and address those equity gaps." From this data, Cuyamaca College reported "expanding work-based learning opportunities for these students." Similarly, Sierra College shared their institutional inquiry that uncovered "program selection patterns among historically underrepresented students and provide support and offer information to students on living wage, stackable certificates, and advanced education opportunities to support broadest career trajectory." Ventura College also discussed investigating the utilization and participation "for underrepresented students in experiential learning opportunities and internships" and increasing the number of internship possibilities accessible for racially minoritized students through its career exploration software.

Other institutions acknowledged the barriers racially minoritized communities face in securing employment opportunities, responding by tailoring career services for them. City College of San Francisco sought to create "equity opportunities for students of color to engage and connect with college representatives, internships/ apprenticeship, employment opportunities offered through internal collaborations such as the career center and career services as well as and partnerships with community-based organizations." MiraCosta College described having career advisors to assist students, as well as professional liaisons that help "disproportionately impacted students" with career exploration. Furthermore, the College has established six pathway success teams to assist first-time enrolled disproportionately impacted students with career and major exploration. MiraCosta College described forming several clubs to promote and support students with career discovery.

A subset of campuses described building up their capacity to serve minoritized populations with new career and workforce support through relevant programming. The College of Alameda shared that their newly created Certified Nursing Assistant program provided clinical placement and supervision opportunities to students in "Acceso/ Puente Programs," which serves and supports Latinx students. Similarly, the College of Alameda shared that a recent HSI grant enabled them to host "multiple career panels on medicine and vocational fields by inviting professionals to discuss their journey and success" with Latinx students. Mt. San Jacinto College described a variety of efforts to support "high priority populations" that included developing "deeper college to career business partnerships," establishing a campaign to increase participation in "limited-access programs" and "clinical placements," and raising awareness of biases in the labor market experienced by racially minoritized students. Lastly, "Career Launch" was designed at Lassen College to help students in the EOPS and TRIO programs prepare for life after college. Furthermore, the new TRIO SSS program provides "underrepresented students" access to experiential learning opportunities through face-to-face meetings, particularly in local industry and career service areas.

> "VARIOUS COLLEGES NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF EXAMINING STUDENT EMPLOYMENT DATA AND OTHER AVAILABLE SURVEYS TO UNDERSTAND THE EMPLOYABILITY OF THEIR STUDENTS."

As community colleges continue to evolve, institutions must remain dedicated to dismantling barriers that perpetuate disparities in employment opportunities for minoritized students. The colleges highlighted above shared how they utilized equity-minded practices in leveraging data to tailor efforts that explicitly address the barriers and challenges faced by racially minoritized groups. By embracing these equity-minded strategies and fostering an environment of inquiry, exploration, and inclusivity, institutions can usher in a new era of career readiness for racially minoritized students seeking economic mobility for themselves, their families, and their communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD

- **Disaggregate Programmatic Outcome and Compare Across Labor-Market Data:** A beginning step to enhancing career readiness and opportunities for students of color means examining the college's programmatic outcome data to identify where equity gaps might exist and persist in career readiness and opportunities. This data analysis should consider how, if any, disparities map out with current labor-market trends for specific employment sectors. This inquiry can lead institutions to understand better what career readiness programmatic support is needed for minoritized students to succeed. To know what to do or where to have the most impact, reviewing your data is an essential step towards providing a roadmap capable of pinpointing inequity clusters that you can target intentionally through your experiential learning opportunities.

- **Enhance Experiential Learning, Internship Opportunities, and Mentoring to Benefit Racially Minoritized Students:** Communities of color continue to endure stratification and gatekeeping practices within the workforce. To combat racialized practices that inhibit the professional development of racially minoritized students, community colleges can take proactive steps to enhance experiential learning and internship opportunities in sectors where students of color are underrepresented due to stratification and gatekeeping practices. Additionally, community colleges can incorporate culturally relevant mentoring practices to guide and prepare racially minoritized students to successfully navigate career opportunities.

REFLECTION OPPORTUNITY

AS YOU CONTINUE IMPLEMENTING GUIDED PATHWAYS, CONSIDER HOW YOUR REDESIGN PROCESS CAN FOCUS ON THE STRENGTHS POSSESSED BY RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS AND ADDRESS THE EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS EXPERIENCED.

5. Enhancing career opportunities for racially minoritized students requires acknowledging that inequities exist in career development, job placement, and the workforce. How has your institution engaged in equity-minded strategies to examine labor and outcome data by race and ethnicity to create targeted programs for career readiness?

6. How does your program ensure that business partners, who may have experienced departures of racially minoritized students due to insufficient support, are equipped with capacity-building strategies to enhance their cultural competence when engaging with a diverse range of potential employees?

FINDINGS SUMMARY

These findings highlight the racialized discourse found within the SOAA reports detailing the implementation progress of Guided Pathways. In our analysis, we started by recognizing the equity-oriented language prevalent in these reports, going on then to describe the unique patterns found across the four pillars. Sequentially, we highlighted community colleges that centered the voices and experiences of racially minoritized students in their institutional redesign process, tailored orientation and FYE programs to be race-conscious, and developed opportunities to enhance career and workforce readiness for racially minoritized students. We recognized the intentionality and innovation displayed in the different SOAA reports to center and prioritize students of color and highlighted practices showcasing how community colleges can effectively serve racially minoritized students through Guided Pathways. As we transition from looking at the previous SOAA reports to envisioning future possibilities within the CCC system through Guided Pathways, we have described exemplar practices as "Pillars of Possibility" (POP). These possibility models showcase equity-minded and race-conscious practices that demonstrate intentionality, care, and action to improve the conditions, experiences, and outcomes for racially minoritized students in community college.

MOVING FORWARD WITH GUIDED PATHWAYS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

Below, we outline possibility models for implementing Guided Pathways in race-conscious ways that build from individual practices shared across the four pillars within the complete reports submitted to the Chancellor's Office. These Pillars of Possibility demonstrate how community colleges across the state are using Guided Pathways as a tool to improve the conditions, experiences, and outcomes faced by racially minoritized students in community college—including the onboarding process, selecting an academic area of interest, sustaining their success in and out of the classroom, and being connected to career and workforce opportunities. Specifically, we focus on four Pillars of Possibility to consider and employ moving forward with Guided Pathways efforts: Being Race-Conscious, Data for Action, Capacity Building for Racial Equity, and Institutional Integration

PILLAR OF POSSIBILITY 1: BEING RACE-CONSCIOUS

PBelow, we outline possibility models for implementing Guided Pathways in race-conscious ways that build from individual practices shared across the four pillars within the complete reports submitted to the Chancellor's Office. These Pillars of Possibility demonstrate how community colleges across the state are using Guided Pathways as a tool to improve the conditions, experiences, and outcomes faced by racially minoritized students in community college—including the onboarding process, selecting an academic area of interest, sustaining their success in and out of the classroom, and being connected to career and workforce opportunities. Specifically, we focus on four Pillars of Possibility to consider and employ moving forward with Guided Pathways efforts: Being Race-Conscious, Data for Action, Capacity Building for Racial Equity, and Institutional Integration.[27] Through this report, we have highlighted the ways that many colleges were able to be explicit in naming racially minoritized groups, disaggregate data to identify patterns of racial disparity, and design culturally relevant strategies to improve experiences and outcomes.

A clear example of being race-conscious within the Guided Pathways framework is Berkeley City College (BCC) and their ability to create "**racial equity data**

success teams to conduct a course completion analysis by **race, ethnicity, and gender** to determine where additional support for staff, faculty and program areas is needed to increase success and completion for **disproportionately impacted student communities**, including a clear focus on our **Black and Latinx students**." BCC provides a possibility model that seeks first to understand the problem of practice on campus, then design efforts specifically for Black and Latinx students, and finally to ensure that additional resources are allocated to implement its strategy successfully.

As campuses look to close racial equity gaps towards Vision 2030:

- Revisit existing Guided Pathways efforts and name specific groups you intend to serve.

- Recognize the distinct challenges these students face on campus.

- Redesign efforts to be identity-conscious and culturally relevant.

- Reallocate and target resources to eliminate these persistent disparities.

PILLAR OF POSSIBILITY 2: DATA FOR ACTION

To close racial equity gaps, institutions must be able to effectively collect, analyze, and use data that identifies areas of inequity and then monitor and evaluate how Guided Pathways efforts are working to mitigate such outcome disparities. As Carter and colleagues [28] argue, "You can't fix, what you don't look at," and if institutions are not intentionally developing a culture of race-conscious inquiry, there will be many missed opportunities to uncover patterns of racial inequity to develop strategies that successfully close gaps. Our analysis found that several campuses conducted race-conscious inquiry and used the insight gained to drive discussions and actions that influenced practitioner beliefs and practices.

Santa Monica College (SMC) discussed how they "conducted qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of effective practices and barriers faced by **Black and Latinx students** in completing English 1 and identify the AB 705 support necessary to **close racial equity gaps**." From those inquiry efforts, SMC developed and "improved course content, material, and teaching practices to better serve **Black and Latinx** students." Building off this work, their Equity Avengers Program established

data coaching for all practitioners on campus, including classified professionals, to make sense of course-level, program-level, and system-level changes, ensuring that all colleagues "approach their work using an equity-minded perspective." One of the key drivers of change within Guided Pathways is how campuses are able to come together to identify problems of practice and collectively offer new and different strategies to address barriers to student success. Data for Action within Guided Pathways seeks to:

- Build race-conscious approaches to data inquiry that help institutional leaders drive decisions and actions for improvement.

- Provide fine-grained data that pinpoints racial inequities on campus.

- Inform how campus practitioners decide to redirect resources and redesign supports.

- Continuously monitor and assess progress toward closing racial equity gaps and offer insight to revise or scale up strategies via Guided Pathways.

PILLAR OF POSSIBILITY 3: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR RACIAL EQUITY

To enhance practitioners' beliefs and competencies in doing racial equity work, we offer a third possibility model: Capacity Building for Racial Equity, which illuminates ways community colleges can provide race-conscious and equity-minded professional development. Matschiner[29] finds that most professional development opportunities in education still tend to be race-evasive and stay silent on topics related to race, racism, and racial identity. In reviewing the efforts across the system, we firmly believe that to change the institution, the practitioner must first change. We highlight capacity-building opportunities that center racially minoritized students and seek to enhance and build all community college educators' awareness, competencies, and skills to create more inclusive and equitable environments that advance pathway completion and promote systemic change.

Cuesta College shared that, in 2021, they held their first "Justice, Equity, Diversion, and Inclusion Academy," which gave faculty the knowledge and skills to provide quality equitable instruction. Additionally, Cuesta described having workshops open to all campus members on the topics of "**student equity, belonging and inclusion, particularly for students of color**." They also highlighted expanding their professional development to focus on equity education. They mentioned that the "ongoing professional development" focused on equity seeking to address the "lack of a campus-wide shared understanding of **racial equity and inclusion** and the need to change

long-held and systemic practices that may contribute to the disproportionate impact on underserved populations and **students of color**." Cuesta College stands out as an exemplary institution that actively leads equity-focused professional development initiatives. Professional learning opportunities that advance race-conscious practitioners and more equitable institutions include:

- Centering the exploration of difficult topics such as race, racism, and structural inequity that operate within our institutions and perpetuate outcome disparities.

- Designing capacity-building opportunities and professional development for all campus stakeholders, where colleagues such as counselors, custodians, and classified professionals receive focused opportunities to learn, reflect, and grow.

- Creating strategies that represent continuous and sustained learning opportunities (rather than one-time workshops) that allow colleagues to develop a comprehensive set of beliefs, values, and actions that advance racial equity.

- Using professional development to prompt concrete shifts in actions and practices among campus educators, leading to improved conditions, experiences, and outcomes for racially minoritized students in and out of the classroom.

PILLAR OF POSSIBILITY 4: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

The final possibility model highlights campuses that described how they intentionally integrated race-conscious approaches to Guided Pathways into existing organizational structures, strategic plans, and related student success initiatives. To mitigate siloed strategies to either Guided Pathways or advancing racial equity, it is critical for campuses to seek convergence among large-scale change efforts attempting to improve student success and close equity gaps. With the adoption of external reforms, institutions move from *mobilization* (getting people organized and designing change strategies), to *implementation* (building infrastructure and carrying out change strategies), and then *institutionalization* (embedding the change strategies as part of the organization itself).[30] Intentional integration serves as an opportunity to weave Guided Pathways into the fabric of the institution, where it can permeate the culture, structures, and policies toward racial equity for students served.

Moreno Valley College shared how they were updating the "Integrated Strategic Plan to focus on Guided Pathways leading momentum points, which frames incorporating them into the Program Review process, operational plans, and participatory governance at the college." They continued to share, "each year there is an annual report" drafted that describes the implementation progress in "**scaling Guided Pathways and equity focused on social justice and racial equity**." They also mentioned that an external "equity audit" helped them to "catalog all the activities being completed" and integrate educational practices related to "racial equity and social justice" on campus. Cuyamaca College also demonstrated such integration, explaining how Guided Pathways efforts were tied to the "**President's Racial Equity and Social Justice Task Force**" as they continuously "gathered input and reviewed information to inform recommendations" on how to move forward with scaling-up guided pathways. Throughout Cuyamaca's report, they described how pathways efforts emphasized social justice and racial equity given its pairing with campus-wide efforts to improve these conditions as prompted by the President's Taskforce.

Lastly, Mission College shared how they were connecting their Guided Pathways efforts to the 2022-25 Student Equity Plan and Chancellor's Office Call to Action to develop "**an Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Curriculum Audit Process**" that supports equity-focused curriculum review and an opportunity for institutional learning and self-reflection. Change efforts are braided together to ensure that racial equity is embedded across every element of Guided Pathways, from clarifying the path, helping students on the path, developing supports for students to stay on the path, and ultimately ensuring students are learning and translating that mastery towards educational and career goals. Institutional integration strategies for race-conscious Guided Pathways can be:

- Map out all equity initiatives to develop an inventory of change efforts on campus and work to improve communication and collaboration across them.

- Convene leaders overseeing these change efforts to recognize how these reforms overlap and complement each—although they have different names, the aim is the same: equity.

- Consider how various efforts and plans such as Strategic Enrollment Management, Guided Pathways, Student Equity and Achievement, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, Equal Employment Opportunity, Strong Workforce, and AB-705 can be seen as one interconnected institutional effort to be leveraged for improve racial equity.

- Develop a singular institutional plan that sets a vision and direction for the campus. This vision incorporates overlapping reform efforts seeking improved student success, builds on Guided Pathways implementation, centers strategies that validate racially minoritized students, and explicitly addresses the barriers faced by these students in community college.

CONCLUSION

In 2017, Guided Pathways and the Vision for Success were launched simultaneously to transform the CCCs into a more equitable system. Specifically, two key goals were to reduce the equity gap among racially minoritized students by 40% between 2017 and 2022, and to fully eliminate all such gaps within 10 years (2027). Five years later, these disparities still exist and the ambitious goal of eliminating racial equity has yet to be fulfilled. Practitioners and institutions may be hesitant to be race-conscious in their Guided Pathways efforts—a stance that can potentially be traced to historic (Prop 209) and current (SCOTUS) "anti-affirmative action" legal and public discourse.[31,32] Although affirmative action in education mainly applies to admissions and not to services for enrolled students, national public discourse has tended to frame race-conscious decisions as reverse discrimination and counter to ideals of meritocracy. However, race-evasive policies and practices tend to negatively affect students of color and thus hinder efforts to mitigate equity gaps.[33,34]

Without the work of committed and critical educational leaders, no one policy can truly address the educational disparities endured by racially minoritized communities in community colleges. Guided Pathways is a race-neutral policy that requires the intentionality and leadership of community college practitioners and decision-makers to achieve the promise of racial equity in the community college system. Despite legislative restrictions against affirmative action, community college can take affirmative steps to serve and support racially minoritized students who stand to gain from organizational change rooted in racial equity within the community college system. To this end, this report has highlighted equity-minded and race-conscious Guided Pathways practices reported by California Community Colleges to show the possibility of racial equity through Guided Pathways.

> "WITHOUT THE WORK OF COMMITTED AND CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERS, NO ONE POLICY CAN TRULY ADDRESS THE EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES ENDURED BY RACIALLY MINORITIZED COMMUNITIES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES."

Although not prompted to be race-conscious in implementing Guided Pathways, several colleges described how their efforts specifically focused on serving racially minoritized students and redesigning structures, practices, and programs in ways that make their institutions more equitable. As community colleges continue to develop strategies under Guided Pathways, we offer examples to help focus their thinking in efforts to be more race-specific, identity-conscious, and culturally relevant when creating programs and practices such as onboarding efforts, FYE programs, career and workforce support, and professional development.

For Guided Pathways to serve as a tool for eliminating equity gaps among racially-minoritized student groups, practitioners must be able to talk, design, and act in ways that acknowledge race, racism, and the causes of persistent racial inequity. We hope this report provides new insight and recommendations to shape colleges' Guided Pathways efforts in ways that will improve racial equity. We see Guided Pathways as an opportunity to continuously design, evaluate, and refine institutional practices to ensure racially minoritized students experience success from the moment they apply to community college to the day they accept their job offer. In closing, we offer a reminder to always ask the question, "As we redesign our institutional structures, practices, programs, and beliefs, how do these changes, if at all, benefit and serve racially minoritized students to achieve their educational goals?"

> "FOR GUIDED PATHWAYS TO SERVE AS A TOOL FOR ELIMINATING EQUITY GAPS AMONG RACIALLY-MINORITIZED STUDENT GROUPS, PRACTITIONERS MUST BE ABLE TO TALK, DESIGN, AND ACT IN WAYS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE RACE, RACISM, AND THE CAUSES OF PERSISTENT RACIAL INEQUITY."

AUTHORS

CARLOS A. GALÁN
(HE/HIM/HIS)

Carlos A. Galan is a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Administration and Policy at the University of California, Riverside (UCR). Carlos has worked in K-12 education as a college access practitioner, in non-profits as a director of research and evaluation, and university settings as a university instructor.

As a first-generation college-goer and immigrant to the United States, Carlos' personal and professional experiences working in K-12, non-profit, and university settings inform his research and practice. Under the assertion that people closest to the problem are the people closest to the solutions, Carlos' research on equity and access emphasizes the lived experiences and knowledge of communities of color to speak to the possibilities of organizational change rooted in racial equity.

Before his Ph.D., Carlos earned a bachelor's degree in History and Public policy at the University of California, Los Ángeles (UCLA) and a master's degree in School Counseling at the University of Southern California (USC).

ERIC R. FELIX, PH.D.
(HE/HIM)

Eric R. Felix is the proud son of Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants. Born and raised in Anaheim, I'm the product and beneficiary of public education from kindergarten to graduate school. I'm the first in my family to attend and graduate college. I was lucky enough to stumble into Upward Bound and that has made all the difference in my academic trajectory. Now I get to be a faculty member at San Diego State University and do my best to fulfill our state's promise of providing affordable, quality, and transformative education. I hold three principles dear to me—Partner, Parent, Professor—and do my best to be present and passionate for each. Using Critical Policy Analysis, I explore the ways policymakers craft higher education reform and how institutional leaders implement them. Particularly, I focus on understanding how the implementation of lauded student success reforms may benefit, harm, or render invisible Latinx students and other racially minoritized groups in the community college context. Ultimately, my work seeks to highlight the possibilities of policy reform to improve racial equity in higher education.

ROGELIO SALAZAR
(HE/HIM)
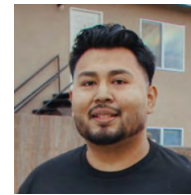
Rogelio Salazar is a first-generation doctoral student in the Higher Education & Organizational Change Program at UCLA's Graduate School of Education. Impacted by the effects of the school-to-prison pipeline, specifically, being denied opportunities to learn and engage in conversations about college access, Rogelio seeks to understand and dismantle systemic and structural inequities in secondary education including community college. Rogelio's work aims to address the disproportionate outcomes faced by students of color.

Rogelio's research centers around examining policies and mechanisms that hinder or render support to dual enrollment, statewide college promise programs, school discipline reform, removal of policing in schools, prison education, and racial equity reform including guided pathways in community colleges. Through a critical policy & quantitative perspective and a focus on race consciousness, Rogelio critically interrogates how racially minoritized and historically underrepresented students can be served equitably. Their goal as a scholar is to generate action-driven research that informs policies and engages relevant stakeholders. In addition, Rogelio's research has been funded by UCLA's 2023 Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship and 2022 Graduate Council Diversity Fellowship.

Prior to CCHALES, Rogelio spent nearly a decade as a practitioner across elementary education to community college, supporting the areas of bilingual education, mentorship for at-promise youth of color, college access, instructional pedagogy, and parent engagement. Additionally, Rogelio spent time with the Public Policy Institute of California and the Education-Trust West prior to starting his PhD program.

NATHEN ORTIZ
(HE/HIM/EL)

A first-generation, queer, Latino and second-year graduate student pursuing my masters in Postsecondary Educational Leadership with a specialization in Student Affairs at San Diego State University. I received my B.A in Political Science with minors in communication studies, and women and gender studies from California State University, Fullerton. Throughout my time at CSUF I had the opportunity to find mentorship among other individuals of color. Through my own experience with mentorship, I was reminded how important representation is for folks from underrepresented communities. My research interests include queer representation within academia, mentorship and retention rates among students of color, HSI's, and the impact of community building within academia. Outside of my academics I enjoy spending time with my dogs, trying new coffee shops, going to concerts, and watching the sunset at the beach.

STEPHANIE VÁSQUEZ
(SHE/HER)

Stephanie is a first-generation Latina and the daughter of Mexican immigrants who loves to embrace her culture. She is a doctoral student at San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University's Joint Doctoral Program in Education. Her educational background includes an associate's degree in behavioral and social sciences from Santa Monica College, a bachelor's degree in sociology from California State University, Los Angeles, and a master's degree from Loyola Marymount University. Her research interests include investigating equitable practices among community college women of color. She aims to empower and support women of color in their pursuit of higher education and careers. Stephanie's passion is to foster community among people in order to close educational gaps. What brings her the most joy in life is spending time with her family and her three dogs, Rocco, Lilo, and Stitch.

DR. ÁNGEL DE JESUS GONZÁLEZ
(HE/THEY/ELLE)

Ángel de Jesus González, Ed.D. (he/they/elle) is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration and Leadership (HEAL) at Fresno State University.

As a first-generation queer, Latinx, joto, they engage their scholarship through post-structuralist and transformative paradigms rooted in Xicana/Latina feminists epistemologies. Dr. González's research agenda focuses on three strands; 1) examining the conditions, experiences, and outcomes for queer and/or trans communities; 2) Latinx Leadership and organizational change; and 3) racial equity policy implementation all within the community college context. Dr. González's foundational research has been published in many leading community college and higher education journals such as the Community College Journal of Research and Practice (CCJRP), the Journal of Research for Community Colleges (JARCC), the Journal for Student Affairs Research and Practice (JSARP), New Directions for Community Colleges (NDCC), and the International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (IJQSE).

Prior to Dr. González's appointment at Fresno State, they were a postdoctoral scholar in the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California (USC) Rossier School of Education. Dr. González informed the creation and development of the Change Leadership Toolkit (CLT) funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Dr. González has over 10 years of Higher Education and Student Affairs experience having

worked across institution types (private, state, R1, community colleges, HSIs, MSIs, PWIs) and functional areas (residence life, student development, student government, student life, student conduct, academic advising, retention based programs).

As an interdisciplinary scholar, Dr. González employs critical theories and methods such as jotería studies, intersectionality, queer pláticas, testimonio, queer chisme, queer phenomenology, critical policy analysis, and QuantCrit to name a few. Dr. González is a Faculty Affiliate for the Queer and Trans Latinx/a/o in HigherEd Collective and the Community College HigherEd Access Leadership Equity Scholarship (CCHALES) research collective at San Diego State University (SDSU). They are part of the Queer Trans People in Education (QTPiE) Research Team as an Emerging Scholar at the University of Vermont (UVM). Their work has been celebrated and acknowledged by a myriad of organizations. Dr. Gonzalez was the 2022 recipient of the NASPA Community College Division Research and Scholarship Award and ACPA's Gender and Sexuality Coalition D.L. Stewart Research Award for their scholarship that advances queer and trans people of color well-being in community colleges and higher education.

Dr. González is involved in various national and regional leading Higher Education and Student Affairs associations including the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE), the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS), the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), the American Education Research Association (AERA), and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA).

CITLALLI FRANCO
(SHE/HER/ELLA)

Proud daughter of immigrants from Nayarit, Mexico. Born and raised in the Imperial Valley, I am a first generation and second-year Mexican-American graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Postsecondary Educational Leadership with a specialization in Student Affairs at SDSU. Growing up in an agricultural community near the border with limited educational resources inspired me to advocate for accessibility, retention and support in higher education settings for first generation, low income students. My educational background includes a B.A in Psychology and a B.A in Chicano/Latino Studies from UC Irvine. During my time at UCI, I had the privilege to work as a tutor for Upward Bound which served 3 high schools in Anaheim. This experience was pivotal as I recognized that mentorship is extremely important to students from underserved communities. My research interests include the roles of representation in mentorship to students who are POC, access and equity for underserved students, and the importance of academic familia in higher education. Outside of academia, I enjoy traveling, going to concerts and spending time with my cat Apollo.

WESLEY COX
(HE/HIM)

Wesley recently graduated from UCLA with a Master's Degree in African American Studies and a certificate in Digital Humanities. He is now a Ph.D. student in the Joint Doctoral Program in Education at San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University. He has been a panelist on various topics such as Blackness and Queerness to Black Student Success. Wesley has two publications, Book Review: We Are Worth Fighting for: A History of the Howard University Student Protest of 1989 (2020) and he co-authored Black Student Engagement: Resilience & Success Under Duress (2018). He currently has 4 digital projects as a part of his Digital Humanities portfolio and a wide array of skills in painting, drawing and design. At San Francisco State University, he graduated cum laude with a BS in Industrial Design and a BA in Africana Studies. He helped to found the Afrocentric Living and Learning Community at SF State and served as the Resources chair for the 15th annual Afrikan Black Coalition Conference (2018). Most importantly he was one of the inaugural employees of the Black Unity Center at SFSU, while also holding leadership roles on the executive boards of Black Residents United in Housing and Black Student Union.

ABOUT THE CENTER & FOUNDATION

USC RACE AND EQUITY CENTER

The University of Southern California is home to a dynamic research, professional learning, and organizational improvement center that serves educational institutions, corporations, government agencies, and other organizations that span a multitude of industries across the United States and in other countries. We actualize our mission through rigorous interdisciplinary research, high-quality professional learning experiences, the production and wide dissemination of useful tools, trustworthy consultations and strategy advising, and substantive partnerships. While race and ethnicity are at the epicenter of our work, we also value their intersectionality with other identities, and therefore aim to advance equity for all persons experiencing marginalization. Our rigorous approach is built on research, scalable and adaptable models of success, and continuous feedback from partners and clients.

COLLEGE FUTURES FOUNDATION

At College Futures Foundation, we envision a California where postsecondary education advances racial, social, and economic equity, unlocking upward mobility now and for generations to come. We believe in the power of postsecondary opportunity and that securing the postsecondary success of students facing the most formidable barriers will ensure that all of us can thrive—our communities, our economy, and our state. We believe that the equitable education system of the future, one that enables every student to achieve their dreams and participate in an inclusive and robust economy, will be realized if we are focused, determined, and active in our leadership and partnership.

CCHALES

The CCHALES Research Collective is focused on examining the systems, structures, and practices within higher education that hinder racial equity. We conduct policy-relevant and practice-focused scholarship to improve the conditions, experiences, and outcomes for racially-minoritized students, especially in the community college context. We are scholars of color making a difference in our communities, education, and society at large. We give back to the public education systems that shaped our trajectory and helped us become who we are.

CCHALES is more than research, it is family, it is community; a space for us to grow and thrive without having to reduce or silence ourselves to fit the norms of academia. The research we do, the skills we possess, and the conviction in our writing come from our parents, families, culture, and experiences. We gain strength from them and protect them from academic spaces seeking to erase our identities, experiences, and ways of knowing. As first-gen, community-grown, scholars of color, we say ¡CCHALES! to the whackness of white supremacy in higher education and do our best to dismantle and build something different, a new world is possible.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. ABOUT THE CCHALES RESEARCH COLLECTIVE

The Community College HigherEd Access Leadership Equity Scholarship (CCHALES) Research Collective at San Diego State University (SDSU) is focused on examining the systems, structures, and practices within higher education that hinder racial equity. We conduct policy-relevant and practice-focused scholarship to improve the conditions, experiences, and outcomes for racially-minoritized students, especially in the community college context. We are scholars of color making a difference in our communities, education, and society at large. We give back to the public education systems that shaped our trajectory and helped us become who we are.

As a research team comprised of master's students, doctoral candidates, and faculty members, our work then is focused on documenting how the California Community Colleges (CCC) leverage policy reforms such as Student Equity and Achievement, AB-705, Strong Workforce, and Guided Pathways to improve the conditions, experiences, and outcomes for the large share of racially minoritized students in the CCC system. Through this report, our hope is to highlight and honor the important work already done through Guided Pathways as a means to interrogate and address the institutional barriers still experienced by racially minoritized students. The Pillars of Possibility serve as exemplars for using reform as a possibility for racial equity.

APPENDIX B. OUR APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

A team of seven researchers from the CCHALES Research Collective reviewed and discursively analyzed those described practices over ten months to generate the data, insight, themes, tables, and recommendations shared in this report. Since our primary data source was SOAA reports, we were focused on analyzing textual discourse and interrogating the racialized language used to describe practices, students, and policies pertaining to Guided Pathways. As researchers, our priority was to use a critical lens to help us unravel potential concerns, challenges, successes, and opportunities for equitable advancements via the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework. As a group, we reviewed two SOAA reports to gain familiarity with their structure and content, identify areas of discourse, and analyze elements from the practices described. Based on our review of Fresno City College and San Diego City College, we then designed an analytic protocol that captured key information within each pillar and across the SOAA report.

Our protocol focused on the racial discourse shared in individual SOAA reports to more clearly understand how Guided Pathways can effectively serve to restructure institutions in ways that meaningfully acknowledge, engage, and serve racially minoritized students. Specifically, we analyzed three sections of discourse: Practice Implementation, Next Steps, and Support. For each report, we employed an analytic scheme that allowed us to build insight from individual practices to pillars and full institutional efforts. For example, at the practice level where campuses had to respond to 23 prompts, we asked

questions such as, "Does the Practice Implementation Section discuss students of color, issues of racial equity, or addressing racial disparities within the text?" At the pillar level, we asked, "After reviewing and analyzing the practices within the pillar, is there a focus on equity, generally, or racial equity specifically?" At the report level, we asked, "Are there instances in the report where the campus explicitly states how they are using Guided Pathways?"

As a team, we reviewed all 115 SOAAs available. Seeking race-conscious discourse, we narrowed the sample to the 45 individual SOAAs that we found included racialized language in their practice descriptions, then conducted a comprehensive review of the embedded discourse. We paired that insight with the NOVA dataset provided by the Chancellor's Office, which included 3,193 practices among 115 college reports that we were then able to analyze and code to provide insight into the state of Guided Pathways across the system. In particular, we focused on how issues of race, equity, and supporting racially minoritized groups were discussed and reported in pathway practices. Both data sources informed the findings shared in our report and the Guided Pathways strategies highlighted across the 115 SOAAs reviewed.

APPENDIX C. THE PILLARS AND PRACTICES WITHIN THE SCALE OF ADOPTION ASSESSMENT

PILLAR 1. CLARIFY THE PATHWAY (5 PRACTICES)

Practice A   Programs are organized and marketed in broad career-focused academic and communities or "meta-majors."

Practice B   Every program is well designed to guide and prepare students to enter employment and further education in fields of importance to the college's service area.

Practice C   Detailed information is provided on the college's website on the employment and further education opportunities targeted by each program.

Practice D   Programs are clearly mapped out for students. Students know which courses they should take and in what sequence Courses critical for success in each program and other key progress milestones are clearly identified. All this information is easily accessible on the college's website.

Practice E   Required math courses are appropriately aligned with the student's field of study.

PILLAR 2. GET ON THE PATH

Practice A   Every new student is helped to explore career/college options, choose a program of study, and develop a full-time program plan as soon as possible.

Practice B   Special supports are provided to help **academically underprepared students** to succeed in the "gateway" courses for the college's major program areas.

Practice C   Special supports are provided to help academically underprepared students to succeed in the program-relevant "gateway" math courses by the end of their first year.

Practice D   Special supports are provided to help academically underprepared students to succeed in the "gateway" English courses by the end of their first year.

Practice E   Intensive support is provided to help very poorly prepared students to succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible.

Practice F   The college works with high schools and other feeders to motivate and prepare students to enter college-level coursework in a program of study when they enroll in college.

PILLAR 3. STAY ON THE PATH

Practice A   Advisors monitor which program every student is in and how far along the student is toward completing the program requirements.

Practice B   Students can easily see how far they have come and what they need to do to complete their program.

Practice C   Advisors and students are alerted when students are at risk of falling off their program plans and have policies and supports in place to intervene in ways that help students get back on track.

Practice D   Assistance is provided to students who are unlikely to be accepted into limited-access programs, such as nursing or culinary arts, to redirect them to another more viable path to credentials and a career.

Practice E   The college schedules courses to ensure students can take the courses they need when they need them, can plan their lives around school from one term to the next, and can complete their programs in as short a time as possible.

PILLAR 4. ENSURING LEARNING

Practice A   Program learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements for success in the further education and employment outcomes targeted by each program.

Practice B   Instruction across programs (especially in program introductory courses) engages students in active and applied learning, encouraging them to think critically, solve meaningful problems, and work and communicate effectively with others.

Practice C   Students have ample opportunity to apply and deepen knowledge and skills through projects, internships, co-ops, clinical placements, group projects outside of class, service learning, study abroad, and other experiential learning activities that program faculty intentionally embed into coursework.

Practice D   Faculty/programs assess whether students are mastering learning outcomes and building skills across each program, in both arts and sciences and career/technical programs.

Practice E   Results of learning outcomes assessments are used to improve teaching and learning through program review, professional development, and other intentional campus efforts.

Practice F   The college helps students document their learning for employers and universities through portfolios and other means beyond transcripts.

Practice G   The college assesses effectiveness of educational practice (e.g. using CCSSE or SENSE, etc.) and uses the results to create targeted professional development.

APPENDIX D. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS, REVIEW STATUS, AND MENTION OF KEY RACE CONSCIOUS TERMS

Institution	Race-Conscious	Racial Equity	Black Students	Latinx Students
Allan Hancock College				
American River College				
Antelope Valley College				
Bakersfield College	X	X	X	X
Barstow College				
Berkeley City College	X	X	X	X
Butte College				
Cabrillo College	X			X
Canada College				
Cerritos College	X			X
Cerro Coso Community College				
Chabot College	X		X	X
Chaffey College				
Citrus College				
City College of San Francisco	X	X	X	
Clovis Community College	X			X
Coastline Community College				
College of Alameda	X	X		X
College of Marin				
College of San Mateo				
College of the Canyons	X	X	X	X
College of the Desert				
College of the Redwoods	X			X
College of the Sequoias				
College of the Siskiyous				
Columbia College				

Institution	Race-Conscious	Racial Equity	Black Students	Latinx Students
Compton College				
Contra Costa College				
Copper Mountain College	X			X
Cosumnes River College	X			X
Crafton Hills College				
Cuesta College	X	X	X	X
Cuyamaca College	X	X		X
Cypress College	X	X		X
De Anza College	X			X
Diablo Valley College				
East LA College				
El Camino College				
Evergreen Valley College				
Feather River College				
Folsom Lake College				
Foothill College				
Fresno City College	X	X		X
Fullerton College				
Gavilan College				
Glendale Community College	X	X		X
Golden West College				
Grossmont College				
Hartnell College				
Imperial Valley College				
Irvine Valley College				
LA City College	X		X	
LA Harbor College				
LA Mission College	X		X	X
LA Pierce College				
LA Southwest College				

Institution	Race-Conscious	Racial Equity	Black Students	Latinx Students
LA Trade-Tech College				
LA Valley College	X		X	X
Lake Tahoe Community College	X			X
Laney College	X			X
Las Positas College	X			X
Lassen College				
Long Beach City College	X		X	X
Los Medanos College				
Madera Community College	X			X
Mendocino College				
Merced College				
Merritt College	X			X
MiraCosta College	X		X	X
Mission College	X	X		X
Modesto Junior College	X			X
Monterey Peninsula College				
Moorpark College	X			X
Moreno Valley College	X	X	X	X
Mt. San Antonio	X		X	X
Mt. San Jacinto College				
Napa Valley College	X		X	
Norco College				
Ohlone College	X	X		X
Orange Coast College				
Oxnard College				
Palo Verde College				
Palomar College	X			X
Pasadena City College	X			X
Porterville College				
Reedley College				

Institution	Race-Conscious	Racial Equity	Black Students	Latinx Students
Rio Hondo College				
Riverside City College				
Sacramento City College	X		X	X
Saddleback College	X			X
San Bernardino Valley College				
San Diego City College				
San Diego Mesa College				
San Diego Miramar College				
San Joaquin Delta College				
San Jose City College				
Santa Ana College	X			X
Santa Barbara City College	X			X
Santa Monica College	X	X	X	X
Santa Rosa Junior College	X			X
Santiago Canyon College				
Shasta College				
Sierra College	X		X	
Skyline College				
Solano Community College				
Southwestern College				
Taft College				
Ventura College				
Victor Valley College	X			X
West Hills College Coalinga				
West Hills College Lemoore				
West LA College				
West Valley College				
Woodland Community College				
Yuba College				