

Insights from the Guided Pathways 2.0 Institute:  
 “Teaching and Learning as a Key Strategy to Ensure Equitable  
 Student Outcomes”  
 March 22–24, 2023

## INSTITUTE OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ Understand your role in the institutionwide commitment to equity-minded, asset-based teaching.
- ◆ Identify strategies for building capacity in teaching and learning to achieve equity goals.
- ◆ Understand how, and to what extent, students experience teaching and learning at the college.
- ◆ Prepare to engage students in teaching and learning and gain applied learning and other high-impact practices.
- ◆ Develop a culture of assessing programmatic equity with disaggregated student outcome data to make continuous improvements to teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** asset-based teaching, belonging, continuous improvement, equity, experiential learning, Guided Pathways, instructional design, student engagement, teaching and learning



# Teaching and Learning for Equitable Student Outcomes

“The way we frame problems influences the solutions we can envision,” according to [Dr. Tia Brown McNair](#), a leading expert on equity in higher education. California Community Colleges’ data shows disparities in enrollment, completion and transfer rates, particularly for Black and African American, Hispanic, Asian Pacific Islander and Native American/Alaska Native students – a result of [structural racism](#) that affects students’ and employees’ success and well-being.

Guided Pathways, as a framework for transformation, enables colleges to address structural inequities through a student-centered and equity-focused redesign. Guided Pathways equips practitioners with tools to implement evidence-based practices that transform the student experience by honoring their agency and identities, empower them as learners and strengthen their unconditional belonging on campus to succeed.

Teaching and learning makes the difference of whether or not a student completes their course or enrolls the next term. This brief highlights core strategies college professionals are executing to advance equity through teaching and learning: Build capacity, understand the student experience, apply high-impact teaching practices, and use data and self-reflection for continuous improvement.

“ One person can make a huge difference in your experience. I do not feel like I am alone — in the beginning, I asked, ‘Is college even for me?’ I felt love and support. It kept me going to take challenges one more semester at a time.

— Fabian  
Student

## What Colleges Can Do

### 1. Foster an institutionwide commitment to become student-centered and equity-minded practitioners.

Dr. Tia McNair acknowledges that faculty, administrators and classified staff across campuses nationwide have different levels of understanding of equity. This can create a lack of clarity regarding college personnel’s role in advancing institutional goals. Campus leaders can help foster an [institutionwide commitment](#) to equity by developing a shared definition. This definition of equity influences how data is interrogated, questions are asked, accountability is measured, interventions are made and solutions are framed. Leadership involvement is key to defining equity and ensuring support for college personnel to understand why these equity gaps exist and set their own professional development goals to achieve equity commitments.



Guided pathways is a powerful framework to enable evaluation of structures, including teaching and learning, to be more student centered. According to research by Dr. Linda Garcia, executive director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) at the University of Texas at Austin, college [faculty who are involved in Guided Pathways](#) (e.g., know about it, engage in implementation and participate in professional development) are more likely than their peers to use high-impact teaching and learning practices such as discussing career plans, incorporating peer interactions and designing coursework for skill development.

## ACTIONS COLLEGES CAN TAKE

- ◆ **Equity work is both about outcomes and processes.** College leaders can support college personnel to become more student-centered, race-conscious and equity-minded through 1.) developing experiences at scale for college personnel to engage with qualitative and quantitative data to identify equity gaps in student outcomes and 2.) facilitating the process for all staff to reflect and collectively make sense of the how/why of the data to inform their actions to continuously improve the student experience and educational outcomes.
- ◆ **Examine policies, practices and structures to embed equity accountability measures.** By embedding equity commitments into areas like performance appraisals and departmental goals, administrators help everyone understand that they have a role in advancing equity goals. Recent California Community Colleges [regulatory changes](#) will guide administrators to incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility competencies in performance evaluations of employees and faculty tenure reviews.

- ◆ **Provide equity-centered professional development.** Administrators can support this by assessing available resources, intervention support and professional development opportunities and making them accessible to all faculty, including full-time, part-time, tenured and nontenured faculty.

## STRATEGY IN PRACTICE: Two routes to professional development

Colleges are taking different approaches to provide professional development that advances equitable teaching improvements. In this section, we share two brief examples of what such a commitment can look like.

Cuyamaca College created the [Equity-Minded Teaching & Learning Institute \(EMTLI\)](#), an on-campus program to provide professional development to full- and part-time faculty across disciplines. EMTLI supports faculty in reflecting on their strengths and weakness in their teaching practices by gaining a deeper understanding of their own disaggregated course-level data; prompts faculty to reflect on their biases and perceptions of students who come from communities who have faced systemic racism; and the impact of race, racism and other systems of oppression on higher education outcomes. This has empowered faculty to implement classroom and curricular changes based on a culturally responsive and continuous improvement cycle. The program has also cultivated a shared language and understanding of equity among faculty.

In another approach, Hartnell College and San Diego College of Continuing Education engaged in Dr. Diego Navarro's [Faculty Experiential Learning Institute](#). This immersive program helped faculty and staff enhance their self-awareness, examine their teaching methods and consider areas for improvement. As a result, participants experienced improved interactions with students and colleagues, leading to stronger relationships. They also saw higher retention and course completion rates.

## 2. Engage and support students to help them achieve academic success.

Feeling a sense of belonging, value and affirmation increases student engagement, learning and academic progress<sup>1</sup>. Faculty play a key role in helping students feel safe, welcomed and supported, especially in the critical first few weeks on campus. Student panelists said that their success was impacted by faculty's willingness to learn about their lived experiences and develop authentic relationships with them. By knowing their students' stories, faculty can create spaces where students can be their full selves, help students leverage existing strengths and support them in building new ones.



Class has a beginning and end, but for me and many other students, life keeps going; there are responsibilities I need to take care of, especially since I live alone and my family is in another country. So, when professors understand my lived experience and my responsibilities, it helps my own learning experience, and I am open to receiving more in the classroom; but when they do not, this could lead me to leaving college.

— Ethan  
Student

<sup>1</sup> For more information on how student belonging supports student learning, please visit this GP Playbook brief: [Strategies for Building Student Engagement, Connection & Belonging](#).

## ACTIONS COLLEGES CAN TAKE

- ◆ **Socialize on-campus resources available to students, and remove the stigma around utilizing them:** Students' life circumstances, such as financial stability, physical and mental well-being, and support networks, impact their ability to reach their educational goals<sup>2</sup>. By including information about how to access holistic and student-centered campus resources (e.g., food pantry) in their syllabus and Canvas shell and on their classroom whiteboards, educators are making the information that students need readily accessible to them and normalizing the use of those services.
- ◆ **Take an interest in students' stories and their identities:** When students are introduced to new ideas, their identities and experiences help them make sense of new learnings. Faculty must understand students' identities critically and embed culturally responsive practices to support unconditional belonging and student learning. El Camino College's faculty conduct a [student survey](#) to understand students' strengths, identities, interests and outside responsibilities. The faculty use this information to shape course content, share what academic and holistic support services are available, and foster stronger relationships now that they know students' goals and responsibilities.
- ◆ **Understand that faculty interactions with students impact students' educational progress:** When students do not feel valued in the classroom or feel threats due implicit and explicit bias, this impacts their ability to learn. [Research](#) has shown that one faculty member connecting positively with a student within a classroom can inoculate them from negative experiences in their educational journey and promote their persistence and success. This reinforces the need for faculty to make students feel emotionally safe in the classroom to support their educational success. To learn more about how feeling psychologically safe in the classroom supports learning and student success, please log into the Vision Resource Center and view the brief "[Create Conditions of Success for Students of Color.](#)"



### STRATEGY IN PRACTICE:

College of the Canyons engaged in a project (Racial Equity for Adult Credentials in Higher Education, or REACH) to help adults of color feel a greater sense of belonging in degree pathways. With a goal to incorporate stackable credentials, culturally sustaining practices and holistic supports into degree pathways, the institution started by looking at the experiences of its adult learners, student parents and other nontraditional students. From its [findings](#), it developed solutions that directly addressed students' needs. It started with small changes. To help on-ramp students from noncredit to credit, the college began developing noncredit classes that mirrored credit classes, then used credit for prior learning if students wanted to later get credit for the course. It began focusing on onboarding adult learners through a counseling class. College of the Canyons expanded the Adult Reentry Alliance and REACH funding to provide counseling time for students. From there, the program is continuing to assess programmatic equity with disaggregated student outcome data.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on how colleges can develop an integrated and student-centered holistic support ecosystem, please visit this GP Playbook brief, [Developing a Structure to Provide Holistic Student Support brief](#).

### 3. Ensure students are learning through high-impact practices.

Two key [high-impact practices](#) include applied learning and opportunities for student engagement in the classroom. Applied learning experiences enable students to integrate and extend the knowledge they are learning in the classroom and apply it to real-world experiences. High student engagement occurs when college professionals purposefully design opportunities for students to engage with other students, professors, industry professionals and the subject matter they are learning. These evidence-based practices support student learning and persistence.

For example, [Los Angeles Trade Technical College](#) collaborates with employers such as [Metro](#) to co-create courses and programs that align with industry needs, maximizing students' employment readiness. At Riverside City College, administrators and faculty are working together to support faculty in integrating equity-minded career exploration with students in the classroom. The goal of embedding career conversations into the classroom is to support students in making informed career and educational decisions for the short and long term. Please see [career assignment examples](#) that incorporate equity-minded career research, career readiness and life planning activities for students.

## ACTIONS COLLEGES CAN TAKE

- ◆ **Develop collaborative assignments that foster relationships among students with different backgrounds.** At El Camino College, one of its assignments is called [Scientist Spotlight](#), in which students review scientists with different backgrounds and specializations. Each student chooses a scientist who is most interesting to them and shares why with their peers. Then the students respond to each other and learn more about one another and their chosen scientist. View more of El Camino College's [sample collaborative assignments](#).
- ◆ **Enhance learning by incorporating real-life examples, reducing apprehension, increasing engagement and supporting academic success.** CCCSE's video "[Ensure Students Are Learning: Real-life Applications in Chemistry](#)" connects chemistry to everyday life, such as household products, hair dyes, the impact of pH on different substances and gas laws applied to tire pressure.
- ◆ **Integrate students' cultural diversity in class content.** Include culturally relevant examples in pedagogical practices and course materials to help students of color feel seen and included, which increases their engagement and learning. Please see an [example](#) of a student sharing how impactful it was for her instructor to spotlight different students' cultures in his course content.

### STRATEGY IN PRACTICE: El Camino College makes STEM accessible

Professors Darcie McClelland, who is also the Academic Senate President, and Polly Parks at El Camino College make STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) approachable and relevant to students across different program paths or majors. Their student-centered, culturally relevant teaching practices build students' confidence and learning by tailoring courses to students' interests and needs. They aim to make their science courses less intimidating for nonmajors by providing applied learning projects instead of exams. Examples include creating a vaccine brochure or engaging with industry professionals to ask questions and receive career exploration opportunities. For pre-

med majors, they incorporate a racial equity lens into their course content by embedding topics like medical racism in their assignments to prepare future medical practitioners to identify and address these challenges. [Explore an example assignment.](#)

#### 4. Assess data for self-reflection and continuous improvement.

Quality assessment of program learning outcomes is essential to ensure that colleges and universities are fulfilling their commitments to prepare students for future work, life and civic engagement. Assessing program data is critical for advancing equity. In particular, reviewing course completion rates by race and ethnicity will help reveal racial/ethnic gaps in enrollment, persistence and completion course by course. When gaps exist, consider employing evidence-based, high-impact practices from an equity perspective. Practices should not be designed in an identity-neutral way, because student participation and needs vary, and catering to students with a specific set of resources normalizes privilege and perpetuates hierarchies and disparate outcomes. This process of continuous improvement is ongoing and crucial for equity-minded practitioners.

### ACTIONS COLLEGES CAN TAKE

- ◆ **Interrogate the how and why of the data:** Reflecting on teaching philosophy and examining data will help faculty understand how different student groups are being impacted. This requires interrogating the data, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, to identify the teaching and learning strategies that may be influencing these outcomes. Through continuous examination and improvement, faculty can better support all students' educational success.
- ◆ **Assess enrollment data to understand where the college is losing students:** While enrollment is important, it is also crucial to focus on retention and investigate why students are dropping off between classes and terms. Those findings can help identify factors that may be hindering student success and enable educators to develop strategies to address issues.
- ◆ **Examine whether high-impact teaching and learning practices are benefiting disproportionately impacted students:** Colleges should reconsider [high-impact practices from an equity perspective](#), not just based on outcomes. Interrogate who is participating in these practices, who is not and what barriers to participation exist. Students participate in different ways and have different needs, so colleges must design those practices to take into account student identities and [community cultural wealth](#).



#### STRATEGY IN PRACTICE:

The USC Center for Urban Education provides [professional development opportunities](#) for faculty to analyze their course completion rates by race and ethnicity. An English faculty member and former department chair at West Los Angeles College describes her experience learning this new skill and how it impacted her teaching philosophy and shaped her journey to become a more race-conscious and equity-minded educator. She found that men of color were not performing as well as other student groups in her courses. As a result, she reexamined her curriculum, interactions and teaching philosophy

to equitably support the success of all students. “My teaching philosophy had to be transformed,” said Jennifer Ortiz, professor at West Los Angeles College. “Every semester, I pulled out data to really learn how our teaching is impacting minoritized students and how to do better. Becoming racially equity-minded is a lifelong journey — this is not ‘you finish a course or go to a conference and the work is over.’ It is something you continuously need to do as practitioners and as people who care about our community college students.”

## Conclusion

High-impact instructional practices that honor student agency and leverage their motivations and interests must be designed in an equitable manner that considers student identities and cultural wealth to break down historical systems of privilege and oppression. This transformational equity work requires a systematic approach that involves looking at qualitative and quantitative data to understand the student experience and reflect on practitioner actions. Faculty, staff and administrators must be race-conscious, equity-minded practitioners and use data to reflect and change their behavior. This includes changing curriculum, instruction and relationships with students. College leaders play a crucial role in spearheading these efforts, providing resources, mediation and professional development to infuse equity work within the organizational culture. Ultimately, this work aims to create a welcoming and humanizing campus environment that affords students opportunities to improve their educational success and economic mobility.



“Our role as educators is to take the strengths of students of color and apply what you teach to their academic background and career interests, in what they are trying to do and their goals, and watch out — they will outperform their peers groups because they have the problem-solving skills, fortitude, tenacity and determination to succeed.

— Diego Navarro

*Professor emeritus at Cabrillo College  
Founder of the Academy for College Excellence (ACE)*

Please log into the [Vision Resource Center](#)  
before clicking presentation links.

## RESOURCES:

- ◆ Dr. Tia Brown McNair: “[From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education](#)”
- ◆ Book by by Isis Artze-Vega: “[The Norton Guide to Equity-Minded Teaching](#)” First Edition
- ◆ Book by Paul Hernandez: “[The Pedagogy of Real Talk: Engaging, Teaching, and Connecting With Students At-Promise](#)”

- ◆ USC Race and Equity Center: [“Race-conscious Implementation of a Developmental Education Reform in California Community Colleges”](#)
- ◆ USC Race and Equity Center: [“Post AB705, How Do We Do the Hard Work of Engaging in Racially-Equitable Curricular Reform?”](#)
- ◆ Dr. Sherry K. Watt, University of Iowa: [Privileged Identity Exploration \(PIE\) Model](#)  
(Frameworks like PIE can help college personnel recognize and reckon with their own privileged identities and hold courageous conversations to identify and dismantle structural inequities. See the University of Iowa Associate webpage to learn [more](#).)
- ◆ Book by Claude M. Steele: [“Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do \(Issues of Our Time\)”](#)
- ◆ Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences: [“Brief Intervention to Encourage Empathic Discipline Cuts Suspension Rates in Half Among Adolescents”](#)
- ◆ Book by Kathryn E. Linder: [“High-Impact Practices in Online Education: Research and Best Practices”](#)
- ◆ CCCSE:
  - Videos and narrative resources: [Explore 10 areas of high-impact teaching practices](#)
  - Briefs and spotlight series: [Equity Tools and Issue Briefs](#)
  - Playbook: [Teaching and Learning Within a Guided Pathways Framework](#)

## RELATED PRESENTATIONS TO VIEW:

- ◆ [“Grounding Inquiry into Equity-Based Teaching & Learning in the Student Experience: Student Panel”](#)
- ◆ [“Findings on Student Engagement & an Overview of the Expanded Definition of Guided Pathways Pillar #4”](#)
- ◆ [“From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Our Shared Responsibility for Infusing Equity into Teaching & Learning Approaches”](#)
- ◆ [“Pathways to Economic Mobility”](#)
- ◆ [“The Physiology of Equity: Instilling a Culture of Dignity”](#)
- ◆ [“Seizing the Moment: Implementing AB 705/1705 with Fidelity to Racial Equity”](#)

*The resources listed in this document are a combination of those introduced by plenary session speakers, concurrent session speakers and concurrent session participants. They are provided for exploration and learning and are not specifically endorsed by the authors.*



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