



Vision-Aligned Reporting (VAR)

General User Manual



California Community Colleges

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Purpose of this User Manual

This User Manual provides campus implementation leads and affected program staff with the information they need to submit their reporting via the Chancellor's Office Vision-Aligned Reporting (VAR) process. The Chancellor's Office created this manual for training in 2023-2024 and will update it, as needed, to serve as a resource in future years. The first VAR report will be due in December 2025 and will include data for the 2024-2025 academic year.

To maintain ease of use, any detailed background information is provided via links in this document. If users are interested in that information, they can access it separately. The Chancellor's Office will provide links to additional resources on its [VAR website](#) when they are available.

A glossary of terms used in this manual is available in Appendix B.

Background Information

Purpose of New Reporting Process

In 2017, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office announced a comprehensive reform agenda to improve student success outcomes in the state's largest segment of higher education. As a part of this reform effort, the Chancellor's Office committed to aiding colleges as they became more student-centered in their policies, processes, and funding. The Chancellor's Office also committed to reviewing current college reporting requirements with an eye towards improving that process. The Chancellor's Office review focused on understanding whether existing reports supplied the information colleges need to institutionally reflect, learn and act to achieve statewide and locally aligned colleges' local Vision goals. This was seen as a critical part of the California Community Colleges' overall goal to align reporting to colleges' local Vision goals and provide both colleges and the Chancellor's Office with the information they need to design, evaluate and continuously improve on their equitable student success efforts.

This new process aligns system reporting to the critical outcomes identified in [Vision 2030](#) with the express goal of producing data that will supply insight into what college programs are doing to increase equity in access, equity in support and equity in success.

More information on the new process's background and development can be found in the [VAR learning module on the Vision Resource Center \(VRC\)](#). Users must be logged into the VRC for the link to function.

In January 2020, the Chancellor's Office convened an internal workgroup to design, pilot and refine a new program reporting process focused on collecting only information that offers direct visibility into how program efforts impact student outcomes. The new process was designed to:

- maximize colleges' time and resources;
- enable institutions to evaluate, learn and evolve to better support student success;
- make it easier for decision-makers to interpret and act on data from our institutions; and
- activate Vision for Success core commitments and achieve the Vision for Success goals.

Early Indicators of Success

A cohort of colleges tested this new reporting approach between 2020 and 2023 and supplied feedback to refine the data collection tool and reporting process. Colleges have shared that the new approach enables them to:

- ♦ identify duplicative efforts and understand how to better leverage resources;
- ♦ examine their own data and put it to use immediately to shape next steps; and
- ♦ make evidence-based decisions to support student success and reduce equity gaps.

Preparing for Implementation

High-Level Implementation Timeline for the First Two Years

The Chancellor's Office is rolling out the first iteration of this new reporting process in fall 2024 for the following programs.

- ♦ NextUP (formerly Cooperating Agencies for Foster Youth Educational Support)
- ♦ CalWORKS
- ♦ CCAP (College and Career Access Pathways)/Dual Enrollment
- ♦ DSPTS (Disabled Student Programs and Services)
- ♦ EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services) & CARE
- ♦ Middle College High School
- ♦ MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement)
- ♦ SEA (Student Equity and Achievement) Program
- ♦ Strong Workforce Local Share
- ♦ Transfer Center Annual Report
- ♦ Veterans Resource Centers

These 11 programs were among the 15 included in the pilot program and were chosen for the first year of statewide implementation based on their impact and the ease with which they were transitioned to the new process during the pilot. By the 2024-2025 academic year, all statutory, regulatory and guidance language for these programs will have been changed, if needed, to align with the new process requirements. The new reporting structure will replace current reporting requirements for most of the included programs. Note that this tool will be integrated with Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) reporting in Year 2 and, therefore, does not replace MIS reporting requirements.

Given the scope of this project, a multiyear, phased implementation plan has been developed with a few additional programs being added each year. The following table provides a high-level outline of the implementation process for fiscal years 2023-2024 and 2025-2026.

Table 1: Implementation Plan

Term	Activity	Responsible Party
Fall 2023	Release detailed communication about the new process.	Chancellor's Office
	Identify 116 college implementation leads.	College CEOs
	Offer training for college implementation leads.	Chancellor's Office
	Develop process for submitting data via MIS starting in fall 2025.	Chancellor's Office
Spring/Summer 2024	Begin communicating about the VAR project on campus, as appropriate.	College implementation leads (with support from the Chancellor's Office)
	Train campus program staff for programs included in Year 1 of statewide implementation.	
	Figure out how college will collect required student-level activity data for the Year 1 of the statewide implementation.	
	Announce MIS implementation process and begin socialization/professional development.	Chancellor's Office
Fall 2024: STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION BEGINS	Begin collecting aggregated student-level activity for affected programs.	College project and program leads (with support from the Chancellor's Office)
	Begin planning how to collect student ID data at the program activity level in future years.	Colleges
	Identify and prepare for inclusion of additional programs in the 2025-2026 reporting year.	Chancellor's Office
	Announce new programs to be included in 2025-2026 reporting.	Chancellor's Office
	Begin training campus program staff for new 2025-2026 reporting.	College implementation leads
Fall 2025-ongoing	Complete VAR submission requirements for 2024-2025 academic year, including narratives (Dec. 15, 2025).	College implementation leads and program staff

The Role of College Implementation Leads

Each college CEO has identified an implementation lead for their institution. During fall 2023, these leads participated in monthly onboarding and training sessions to learn about the new process and their role in supporting their college's leadership and programs through implementation and beyond.

While the implementation lead may hold any position in the college administrative structure, CEOs were asked to choose someone with the following authority and skills to oversee a collaborative and open process.

- Design, organize, and convene an appropriate work group.
- Develop and oversee an implementation process appropriate to the college's context and culture.
- Understand the structure and culture of the college as it relates to programmatic reports and budgets.
- Work across silos to ensure all programs included in the first year of implementation have a voice in the process.
- Integrate additional individuals, groups, programs, and committees for discussion and action, as needed.
- Facilitate productive conversations about integrated college priorities and goals.
- Elevate critical updates, decisions and questions to appropriate groups and/or institutional leaders.

CEOs were asked to provide implementation leads with the time and resources needed to undertake this effort. In addition to the monthly onboarding and training already noted, beginning in early spring 2024 they will need to undertake the activities outlined in the bullet points above in preparation for the fall 2024 launch of the new reporting process.

The VAR project team at the Chancellor's Office will support all implementation leads during the year preceding full implementation (2023-2024) and the first two years of implementation (through June 2026). This will include the training noted above as well as access to a VRC community designed specifically for implementation leads, the ability to connect with the Chancellor's Office project team directly for just-in-time support, and other resources as requested during the implementation period.

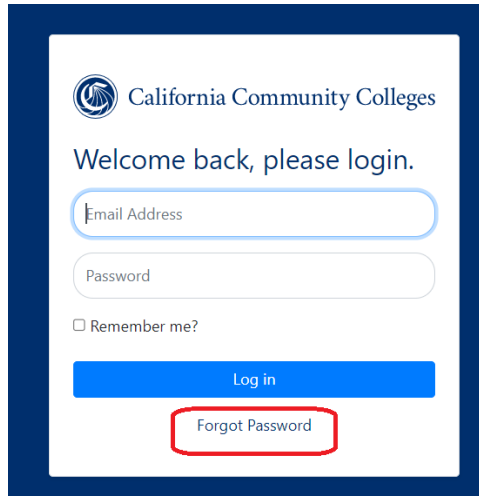
The Online Vision-Aligned Reporting Tool

Since 2020, an online tool for reporting via the new process has been piloted and refined. While a permanent, scalable statewide tool is being built and tested during the 2023-2024 academic year, all college implementation leads and affected college program leads have access to a demonstration/sandbox site for the purposes of training and onboarding during the pre-implementation year.

How to Access

Users can access the tool with a login and password at demovar.cccco.edu. Initially, the VAR project team will provide access to each of the college implementation leads. Once implementation lead accounts are created, individuals can create a password by going to the login page, entering their campus email address, and clicking on the “Forgot Password” link (see below). They will receive an email with directions for setting up a password.

Image 1: Screenshot of VAR Login Page



The screenshot shows a login page for California Community Colleges. At the top left is the college logo and the text "California Community Colleges". Below this is the message "Welcome back, please login." There are two input fields: "Email Address" and "Password". Below the password field is a checkbox labeled "Remember me?". A blue "Log in" button is centered below the checkbox. At the bottom, a red-bordered box highlights the "Forgot Password" link.

After implementation leads have set up their accounts, they can manage all other users at their campus within the tool. By clicking on “Manage” and choosing “Add Users,” implementation leads can add a variety of user types.

- **Implementation Lead:** While each campus may have only one implementation lead, others can be added if desired. Implementation leads can view and enter or change data in any program included in the VAR tool. They can also enter college-level narratives.
- **College Program Staff:** Program staff can view the data entered for any program but can only enter or change data for the program to which they have been provided access (see checkboxes in Image 2). If necessary, a staff member can have access to multiple programs. They cannot add or change college narratives.
- **College Read Only:** Read-only access can be provided to anyone on campus or at the district office who wants to view reporting progress and submitted data. These users cannot make any changes to program data or college narratives.

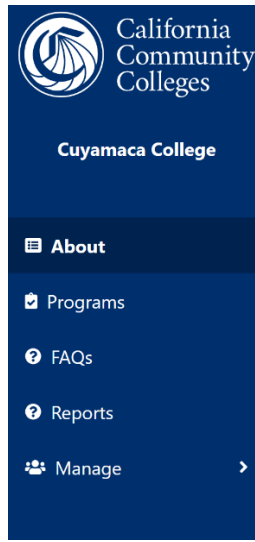
Image 2: Screenshot of User Interface to Add Users

The screenshot displays a user interface for adding users. It features several input fields and a list of programs to assign. The fields are: Email Address * (Required), Role * (College Program Staff), College * (Select), First Name (Optional), and Last Name (Optional). Below these fields is a section titled "Select and assign a program to this account." with a list of programs, each with a checkbox: CAFYES-NextUP, CalWORKS, DSPS, Dual Enrollment Community Colleges: College and Career Access Pathways, EOPS & CARE, MCHS, MESA, SEA Program, Strong Workforce - Local Share, Transfer Center Annual Reporting, and Veteran's Resource Center. At the bottom left, there is a blue "Save" button.

Basic Outline of the VAR Tool

When first logging in, each user will see a landing page providing basic information about the new tool and process. They will also have access to the following menu on the left side of the page:

Image 3: Screenshot of User Interface of the Menu on the Landing Page

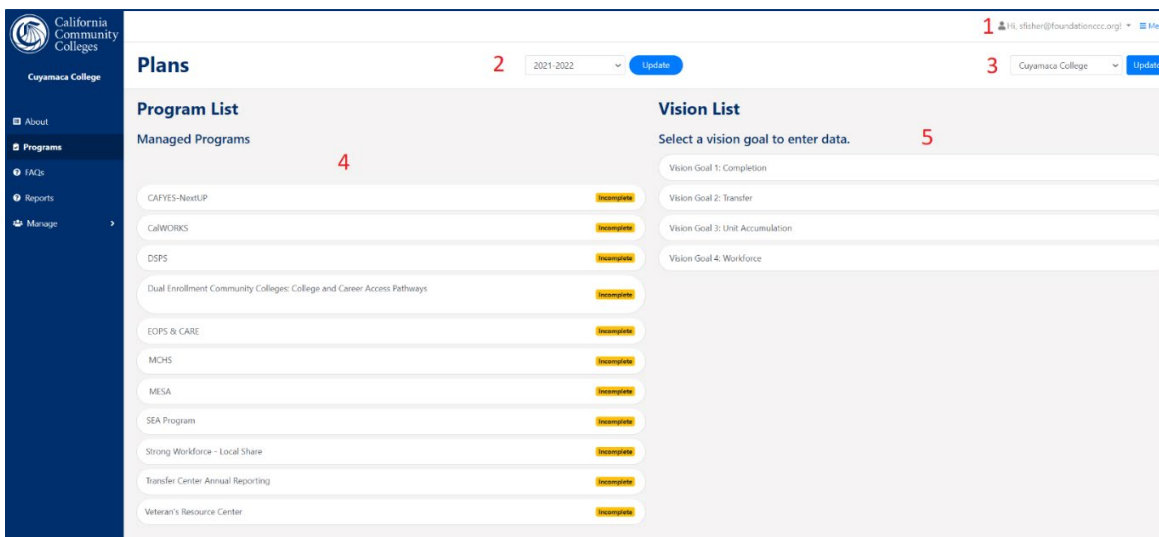


The “About” link returns to the landing page, while clicking on “FAQs” will take users to a regularly updated frequently asked questions (FAQs) page. The “Reports” link in the demonstration tool will take users to a page where they can download data they have already entered.

“Manage” is only available to implementation leads and will take them to user management pages where they can add, edit or delete users. Implementation leads can change or edit user information by clicking on “Manage” and choosing “Users.” The User List page will show the email address, user role and last activity date for each college user. There is also an edit button for each user so roles can be changed for current users. In the prototype, there is no delete button, but that will be available in the scaled version of the tool.

The “Programs” link takes the user to the following page:

Image 4: Screenshot of User Interface for the Programs Page



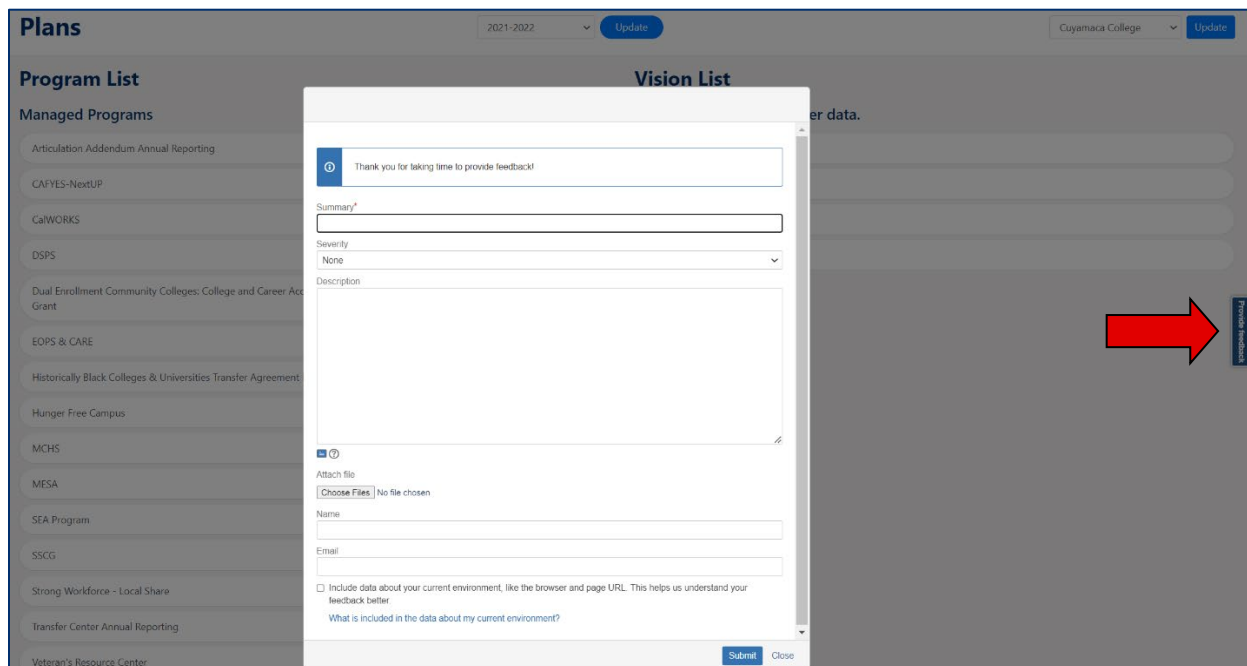
The information on this page includes:

- (1) the current user's email;
- (2) the reporting year that can be updated via a dropdown menu;
- (3) the college name;
- (4) links to a reporting page for each college program included in the tool; and
- (5) links to program data aggregated to the college-level and college narratives, by Vision goal.

How to Report Problems With the Online Tool

Every page in the online tool has a feedback button on the far-right margin (see red arrow below) for webpage or technical support requests. Clicking on that button will lead to a popup screen that allows users to provide information on their technical problem, which the project technology team will address.

Image 5: Screenshot of User Interface to Provide Feedback



The screenshot displays the 'Plans' page of an online tool. At the top, there are dropdown menus for the reporting year (2021-2022) and the college name (Cuyamaca College), each with an 'Update' button. The main content area is divided into 'Program List' and 'Vision List'. A feedback form is overlaid on the 'Vision List' section. The form contains the following elements: a thank-you message, a 'Summary*' text field, a 'Severity' dropdown menu (set to 'None'), a large 'Description' text area, an 'Attach file' section with a 'Choose Files' button and 'No file chosen' text, 'Name' and 'Email' text fields, and a checkbox labeled 'Include data about your current environment, like the browser and page URL. This helps us understand your feedback better.' Below the checkbox is a text input field for 'What is included in the data about my current environment?'. At the bottom of the form are 'Submit' and 'Close' buttons. A red arrow on the right side of the screen points to a small feedback icon in the margin.

The Chancellor's Office is providing a dedicated VAR project team. This team can provide support related to the general reporting process and the online tool. Any issues should be sent to VARSupport@foundationccc.org; during the work week, emails will be returned as soon as possible.

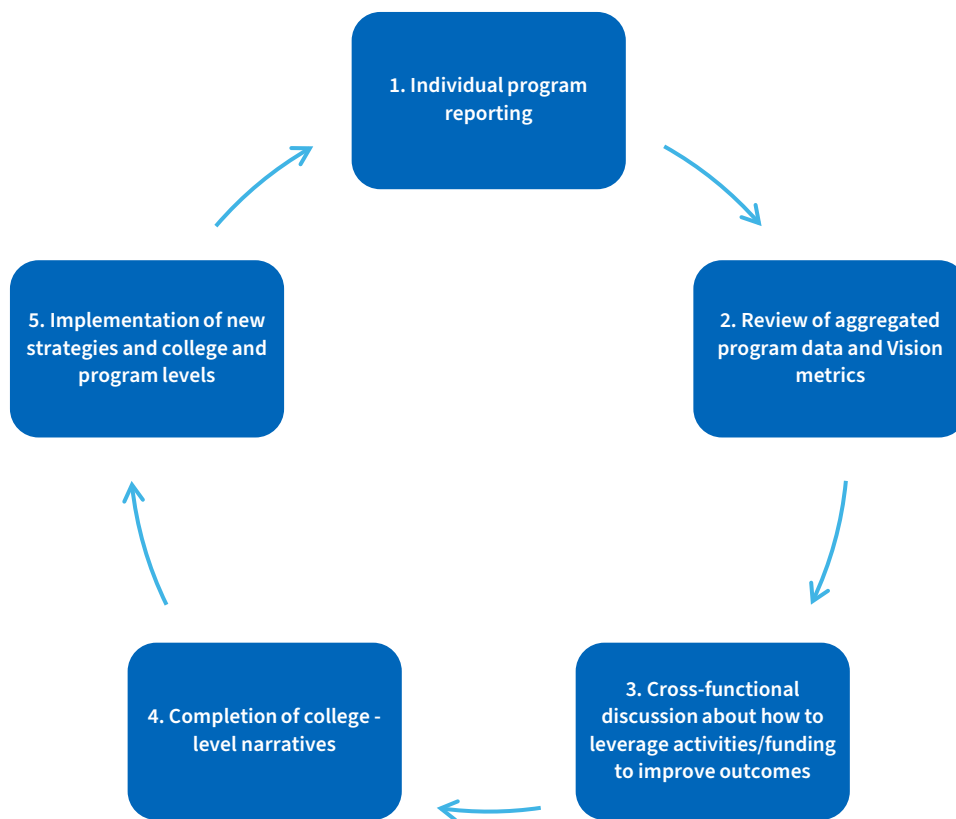
Information Required by the VAR Process

This section describes both the reporting process and the data that the process requires and defines critical terms to help both program staff and implementation leads provide accurate information. Users should send any issues to VARSupport@foundationccc.org; during the work week, the project team will return emails as soon as possible.

The Difference Between Program Reporting and College Reporting

Two goals of the new process are to (1) improve college capacity to plan, budget and report in a holistic way to maximize college time and resources and (2) activate Vision for Success core commitments and achieve the Vision goals. To these ends, program- and college-level reporting in the VAR are separate but closely aligned to provide both individual programs and college leaders with insight into how all programs work together to achieve colleges' local Vision goals. The design is also consistent with and should support the colleges' and system's efforts to improve student outcomes (see Figure 1 below). Each of these five steps are discussed in more detail below.

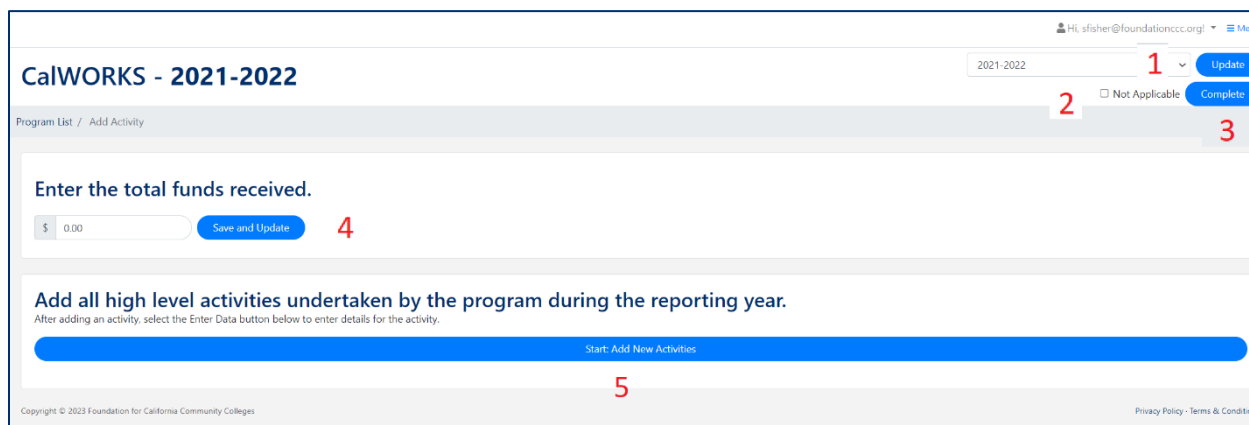
Figure 1: Role of the Vision-Aligned Reporting Process in Continuous Improvement



Program-Level Reporting

The first step of the reporting process is for all included programs to (1) enter total funds received for that program and (2) complete their listing of activities by providing both a general category and a subcategory from the list provided in a drop-down on the initial program reporting page (see the CalWORKs example below). Below is a description of the information available on that page as well as a more detailed guide to entering activities using the categories and subcategories found in the drop-down menus.

Image 6: Screenshot of User Interface to Explain Components of the Program-Specific Pages



The page includes the following information and options:

- (1) The reporting year for which data is being reported; this can be updated by choosing a new year from the drop-down menu and clicking “Update.”
- (2) If the reporting college does not have a program listed on the main program page, the implementation lead should go into that program and check the “Not Applicable” button, then “Complete.” This will mark the program as complete, and no further action is needed.
- (3) Once all activities and related data have been entered, the program lead should click the “Complete” button so the Implementation Lead knows that the reporting for that program is finished.
- (4) “Funds Received” should be entered for all funding the program utilizes. For CalWORKS, for example, that would be the total CalWORKS funding received for the reporting year.

Once all information from 1 through 4 is deemed correct, the program lead can begin reporting their program’s high-level activities by clicking on the “Start Add New Activities” bar (5).

Programs should enter information on any activities they carried out during the reporting year to meet program requirements and/or achieve program goals. The new reporting process requires programs to report the cost of providing that activity and information on the students each activity serves. They must also connect each activity to specific Vision goals.

Before entering activities, please review the main and subcategory descriptions (See Appendix A) by starting with the first page “Overview and Instructions.” You will need to choose a main category and subcategory for each activity, so it is important to understand the options available in order to choose the most appropriate for a given activity. This page also provides information on which of the category/subcategory combinations will require the submission of student-level data. **Each program lead will also receive a program-specific manual that outlines the categories and subcategories to be used for common activities reported for their program.**

Please note the different types of main categories. There are five categories for high-level activities and another one for miscellaneous expenses not related to a high-level activity. The high-level activities include Counseling, Direct Aid to Students, Instruction, Outreach/Inreach and Student Support Services.

If an activity falls into one of the five high-level categories, that is where it must be reported. Activities within these categories will require staff to report spending by object code, so any salaries, benefits, supplies, capital outlay, etc., used for a high-level activity will be included here. There is an additional category called, Misc. Program Support Costs—if a program activity does not fit into one of the first five categories, it can be reported here. Most activities should fall into one of the first five high-level activity categories and not the program support category, but this will vary by program and will be addressed in the program-specific manuals. This spending will still be broken out by object code but will not require student-level data.

Entering Activities

Step 1: Select the program and the correct reporting year.

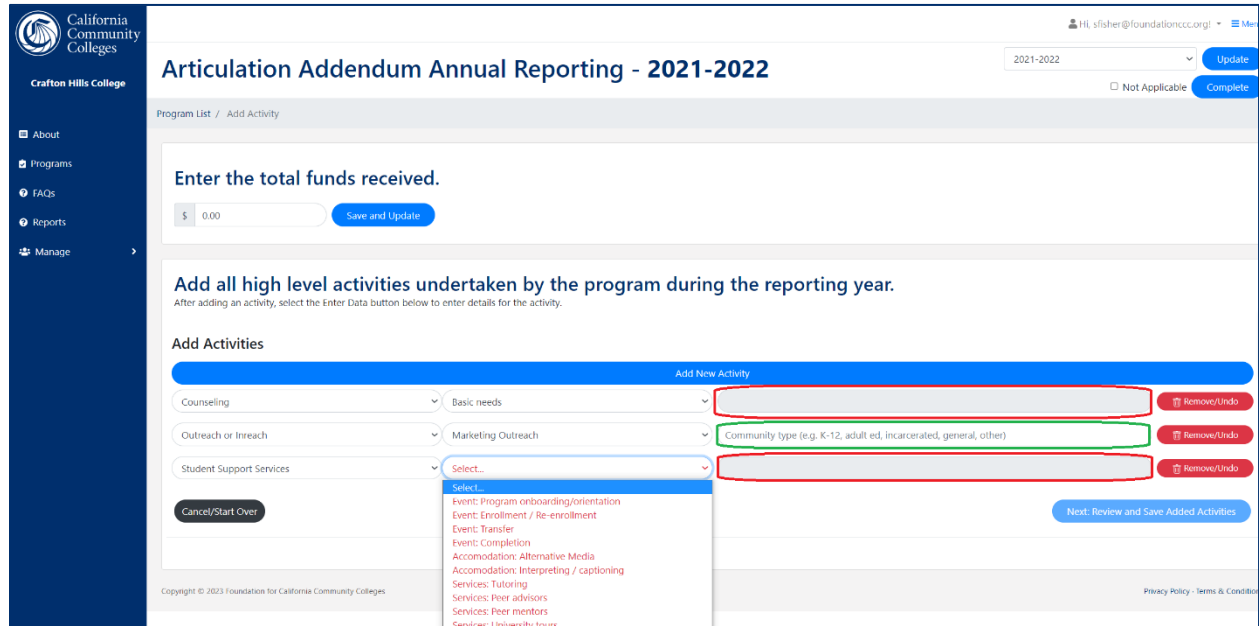
Step 2: Add activities by clicking on “Start Add New Activities” for each activity the program engaged in during the reporting year.

Image 7: Screenshot of User Interface to Add Program Activities

The screenshot displays the 'Articulation Addendum Annual Reporting - 2021-2022' interface. On the left is a dark blue sidebar for 'Crafton Hills College' with a menu: About, Programs, FAQs, Reports, and Manage. The main content area has a header with the title and a dropdown menu for the reporting year (2021-2022). Below the header, there is a section titled 'Enter the total funds received.' with a text input field containing '\$ 0.00' and a 'Save and Update' button. The next section is titled 'Add all high level activities undertaken by the program during the reporting year.' and includes a 'Start Add New Activities' button highlighted with a red box. The footer contains copyright information for the Foundation for California Community Colleges.

Step 3: Select a main category and subcategory that best describe each activity.

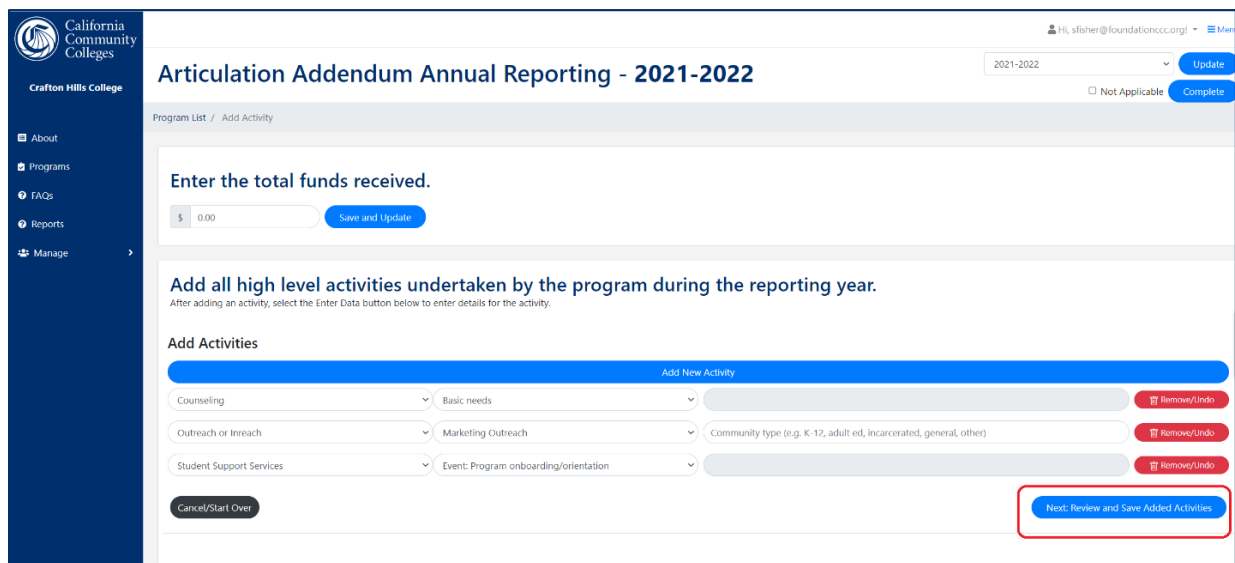
Image 8: Screenshot of User Interface to Add Subcategories and Text to Program Activities



If after choosing a main category and subcategory the third column (highlighted in solid red above) remains gray, you cannot add additional information there. If it is white and includes gray text (highlighted in green above), please provide the requested information, if appropriate. You will be able to proceed if you have no information to submit in the third column, even if it is not grayed out. [Staff should follow the guidance provided in the program-specific manuals when choosing categories and subcategories and entering descriptive text.](#)

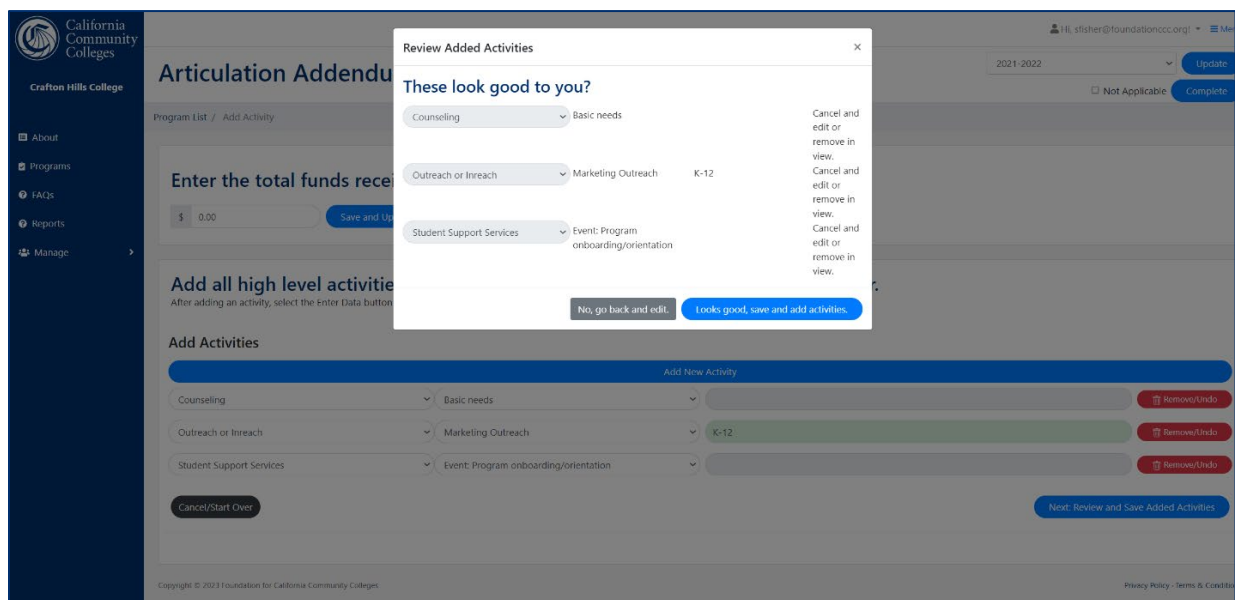
Step 4: When all activity category information has been entered, select “Next: Review and Save Added Activities” (outlined in red below).

Image 9: Screenshot of User Interface Button to Review and Save Added Activities



Step 5: Review and either approve or edit added activities.

Image 10: Screenshot of User Interface to Edit or Save Added Activities



Common Questions About Activities and Choosing Categories/Subcategories

Question 1: What is an activity?

Programs should report the activities they are undertaking to achieve their program goals. For example, for transfer centers, activities may include the following:

- ♦ holding transfer events;
- ♦ individual counseling;
- ♦ tours of four-year institutions.

Funding reported for each of these will break down how much staff time, cost of supplies, etc., by the object code that activity required during the year (e.g., for holding transfer events, \$3,000 for noninstructional salaries, \$1,000 for supplies and materials).

Total funds reported as “spent” for a program do not need to add up the total of actual funds spent. If programs would like to include miscellaneous expenses, they may do so under “Misc. Program Support Costs: Other.” However, anything related to specific activities to achieve program goals should be reported under those activity categories first, and only remaining funds should be included in the miscellaneous categories.

Question 2: What if categories overlap or I have other feedback on categories or subcategories?

The categories and subcategories were refined over multiple years of piloting with the hope of making them comprehensive and mutually exclusive. This process of refinement is likely to continue, if needed. If you believe an activity overlaps two or more categories or subcategories, choose the one you feel best describes the activity and provide information on the overlap in the “Comments” section of the activity details page (see red highlighted section below).

If you have suggestions for improvement of any individual or set of categories/subcategories, please email that input to the VAR project team at VARSupport@foundationccc.org or put the suggestion in the same “Comments” section highlighted below.

Image 11: Screenshot of User Interface to Provide Feedback on Activity Detail Page

Enter Activity details for Counseling - Other - All services (percentage varies by student need)
Please enter information for this Activity below.

Number of Students Served
Enter the number of students served by this activity.

0

Black or African American 0

Hispanic 0

Object Codes
Provide funding information for this activity by object code.

Select an object code

Vision Goals
Please indicate the type of impact for each Vision Goal. ⓘ

Vision Goal 1: Completion
Increase by at least 20% the number of CCC students annually who acquire associate degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific job-oriented skill sets.
Impact: Primary Secondary No Impact

Vision Goal 2: Transfer
Increase by at least 35% the number of CCC students system-wide transferring annually to a UC or CSU
Impact: Primary Secondary No Impact

Vision Goal 3: Unit Accumulation
Decrease the average number of units accumulated by the CCC students earning associate degrees, from approximately 87 total units to 79 total units.
Impact: Primary Secondary No Impact

Vision Goal 4: Workforce
Increase the percent of existing students who report being employed in their field of study to 76%.
Impact: Primary Secondary No Impact

Comments
Please provide any additional information regarding this activity that may be helpful (optional).
Enter information (optional)

[Back to activities](#) [Return to Program List](#) [Next Activity](#)

Question 3: Where can I find detailed definitions for each category and subcategory?

Detailed definitions for each category and subcategory are available in Appendix A of this manual. Note that each category has its own set of subcategories. It is best to first identify the main category and then review only the related subcategories. As already noted, [program-specific manuals will provide more detail about which categories and subcategories will most likely be used for individual programs.](#)

Entering Activity Details

Identifying Students Served

The first activity detail required is the number of students *actively* served under that category/subcategory, broken down by student subgroup. During the first year of implementation, colleges are asked to submit aggregated numbers for the total and then by each subgroup—Hispanic/Latine, Black/African American, and economically disadvantaged.

“Actively served” means that the student actually took part in the activity, not that the activity was simply made available to them. For example, under “Student Support Services: Tutoring,” the program lead should enter the total number of students who used the tutoring services and then the number of those students who fall within one of the three student subgroups listed.

Note that, in the first year of implementation, this led to a few issues that will be addressed in future iterations of the tool. First, the number of students reporting within the subgroups may be duplicated if, for example, a student is both Hispanic/Latine and economically disadvantaged. Second, because the aggregated numbers cannot be deduplicated down to their constituent parts, some summary reports for college-level reporting will provide medians rather than raw, unduplicated student counts. Finally, data will be collected on only three student subgroups during Year 1 of implementation.

By fall 2025, the Chancellor’s Office will have a process in place for colleges to submit student identification numbers by program activity to MIS. Not only will this address the duplication issues noted above, but the Chancellor’s Office will be able to populate the program activities and details automatically from that file, limiting program reporting within the tool to budget numbers and identifying primary or secondary impact of activities on various Vision goals. Additional information on this integration will be provided to colleges starting in late spring 2024.

Entering Budget Information for Activities

Programs will also enter budget information for each activity using the seven 1000-level budget codes currently used by many programs. Those include:

- 1000 Instructional salaries
- 2000 Noninstructional salaries
- 3000 Employee benefits
- 4000 Supplies and materials
- 5000 Other operating expenses
- 6000 Capital outlay
- 7000 Other outgoing

During the first years of implementation, we expect these costs to be educated estimates as colleges develop processes for determining the cost of specific activities across their campus. This is one reason why VAR is not immediately replacing programmatic fiscal reporting. However, we do expect colleges to do their best to provide as accurate an estimate as possible.

Identifying the Primary versus Secondary Impact of Activities

Activities have a “primary” impact if there is a straightforward, easily identifiable connection between the activity and the goal and/or the express purpose of the activity is to achieve that goal. For example, activities undertaken by a transfer center or used to support new articulation agreements with local four-year institutions are expected to have a clear and direct impact on Goal 2: Transfer.

Activities have an “secondary” impact if the connection between the expenditure and the goal occurs through the support of an intervening activity or practice. For example, funds spent on AB 705 implementation have a direct impact on Goal 3 (reduce units to degree) but may also have an indirect impact on Goals 1 and 2 by moving students more quickly to completion of degrees, certificates and transfer because they do not need to go through a basic skills sequence.

Noting Completion of Data Entry for a Program

Once all program data has been entered, it is important for the program lead to go back to the specific program page to click on the “Complete” button (identified by the red 3 in the figure below). This will turn the program’s yellow “Incomplete” button to a green “Complete” button and inform the implementation lead that the data submission is final for that program. Once all programs are complete, the college-level stage of reporting can begin.

Image 12: Screenshot of User Interface to Note Completion of Data Entry for a Program

The screenshot displays the CalWORKS - 2021-2022 user interface. At the top, there is a header with the text "CalWORKS - 2021-2022" and a dropdown menu for the reporting year, currently set to "2021-2022". To the right of the dropdown is a red "1" and an "Update" button. Below the header, there is a "Program List / Add Activity" section. A red "2" is placed above a "Not Applicable" checkbox and a "Complete" button. A red "3" is placed above the "Complete" button. The main content area has two sections. The first section is titled "Enter the total funds received." and contains a text input field with "\$ 0.00" and a "Save and Update" button, with a red "4" next to it. The second section is titled "Add all high level activities undertaken by the program during the reporting year." and contains a "Start: Add New Activities" button, with a red "5" below it. The footer includes "Copyright © 2023 Foundation for California Community Colleges" and "Privacy Policy - Terms & Conditions".

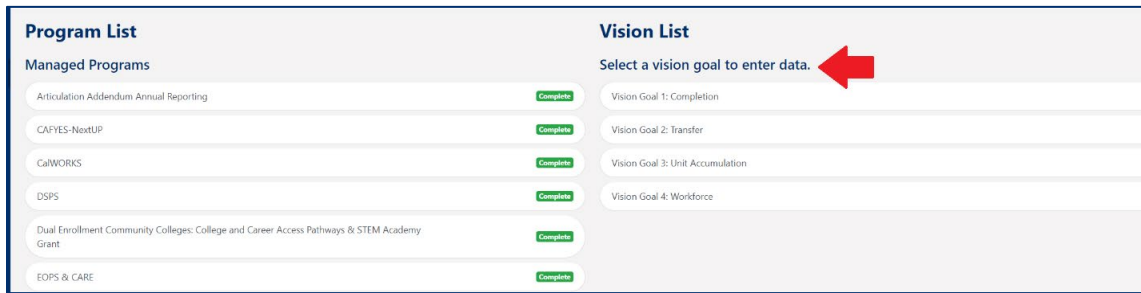
College-Level Reporting

Once all programs complete their reporting, the campus VAR team should review the aggregated data provided in the tool to inform the college's Vision goal narratives. A cross-functional team should complete the review and discussion, but how (1) the team is comprised, (2) the reviews and discussions are conducted, and (3) the narrative answers are identified will vary by college or district according to their specific structure and culture. The process utilized, however, should embody the following characteristics, regardless of college:

- ♦ has a cross-functional and cross-program membership;
- ♦ is open and transparent and keeps college leadership engaged and/or informed;
- ♦ incorporates discussions about equity throughout; and
- ♦ consciously considers strategies for aligning or leveraging activities, programs, and funds to create a larger impact.

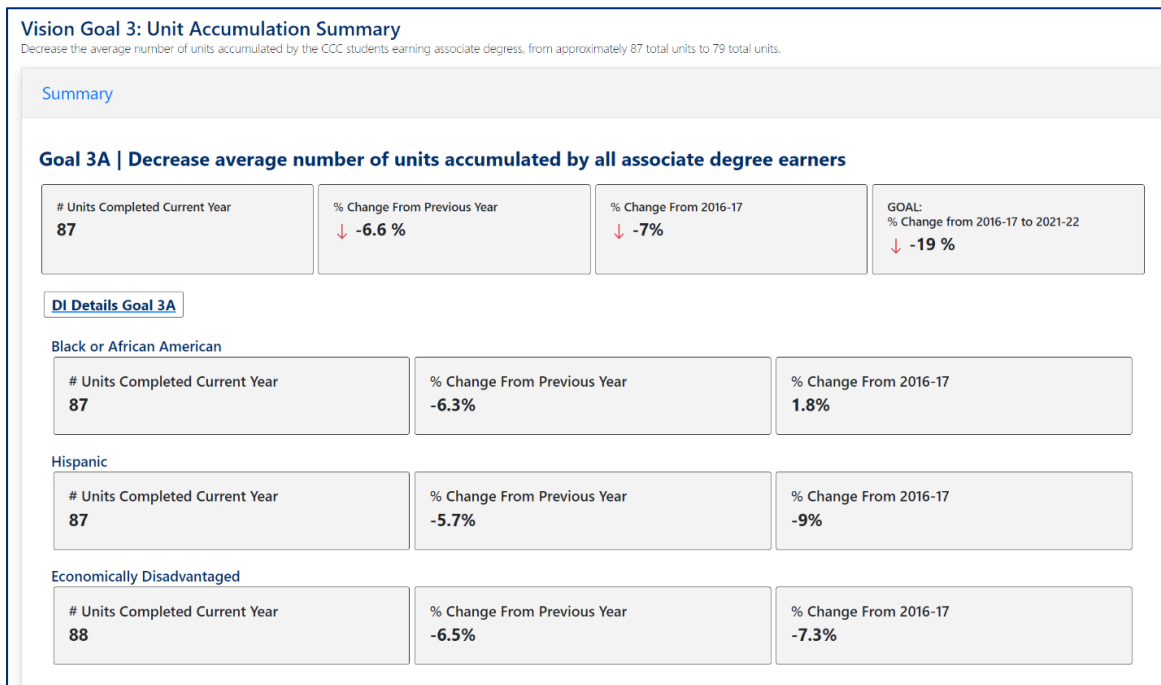
Once a Vision goal is selected from the program page (see red arrow below), two types of data will be presented.

Image 13: Screenshot of User Interface to Choose a Vision Goal for College-Level Reporting



The first is the Student Success Metric data appropriate to that goal, broken down by disproportionately impacted group.

Image 14: Screenshot of Summary of Vision Goal Metrics for the College



The data in the first three columns are automatically populated into the VAR tool from the “All Students” tab of the [Student Success Metrics Dashboard](#) and provide colleges with information on specific Vision goal metrics. The fourth column in the top row contains the local Vision goal the college set for that metric in 2018, which is automatically populated from the NOVA tool. *Note: In future years, colleges will be able to update their Vision goals within the VAR, if updating goals is required. More information on this will be provided in spring or summer 2024.*

The second type of data is the aggregated program data. Because the VAR requires each program to submit the exact same data, that information can be aggregated at the college level to (1) provide a more comprehensive view of all the efforts and funds being expended to achieve a specific set of student success outcomes and (2) determine whether those efforts are having the intended effect. For instance, program-level information can be aggregated across the college by the funds it spent and the activities it undertook and compared to progress on related Vision goals.

Image 15: Screenshot of Summary of Funds Spent and Activities Conducted to Achieve the Vision Goal

Primary and Secondary Impact Spent Towards Vision Goal 3: Unit Accumulation
 Funds spent across all program and all activities indicated as having a primary impact on Vision Goal 3: Unit Accumulation.

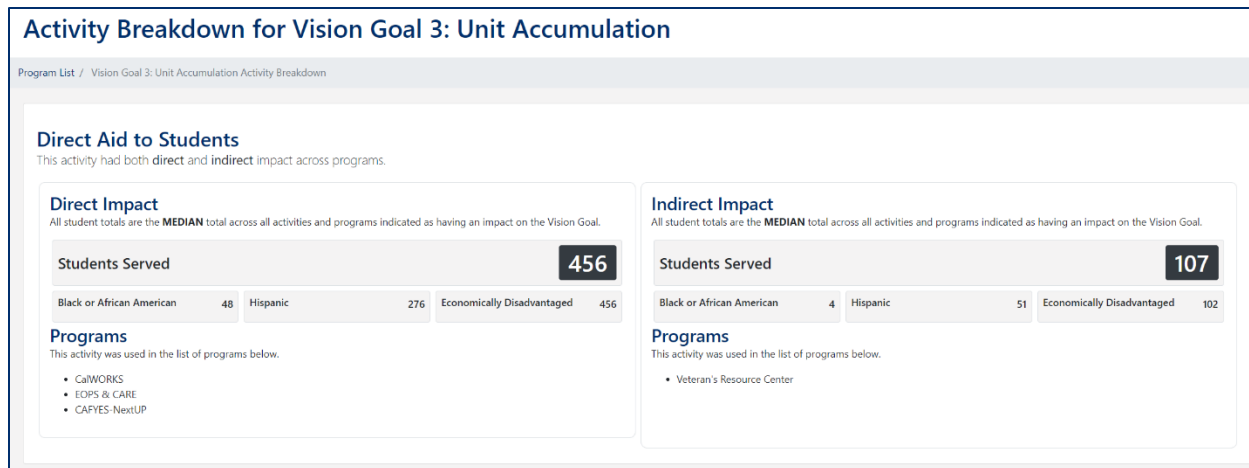
Primary Impact Total: \$12,575,065.00	Primary Breakdown	Secondary Impact Total: \$956,423.00	Secondary Breakdown
---------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Activities Used Towards Vision Goal 3: Unit Accumulation

DIRECT AID TO STUDENTS	Primary Impact Secondary Impact	Activity Breakdown
EMPLOYEE SALARIES AND BENEFITS	Primary Impact Secondary Impact	Activity Breakdown
CAPITAL OUTLAY	Primary Impact Secondary Impact	Activity Breakdown
OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES & SERVICES	Secondary Impact	Activity Breakdown
STUDENT EMPLOYEES/WORK STUDY	Primary Impact	Activity Breakdown

The table above contains data aggregated across all reporting programs by Vision goal. As you can see, this college has spent \$12.5 million on activities with an expected “Primary” impact on Goal 3: Unit Accumulation and another \$950,000 on activities with an expected “Secondary” impact. By clicking on the “Activity Breakdown” button to the right, colleges can see all programs implementing a specific activity and the median number of students served across the programs, broken out by disproportionately impacted group. *Note: Once the MIS submission process is complete (planned for the 2025-2026 academic year), the unduplicated total number of students served by this activity will be provided instead of the median shown below.*

Image 16: Screenshot of Activity Breakdown Summary



Using this information, colleges can determine whether the funds they spent are having the impact they expected. Program staff can see where others at their college are putting their efforts and perhaps align those efforts or funds to increase the impact of each. They could identify programs having success serving specific student groups and learn from them how best to reach those students to close equity gaps.

Cross-Program Conversations and Vision Goal-Specific Narratives

Almost all current college reporting allows or requires some amount of unstructured narrative to explain a program's work. This information is meaningful but difficult for the Chancellor's Office to systematically review and summarize at a statewide level. In addition, because narrative prompts are unique to each program, they are not useful for sharing successes or lessons learned with other programs, nor do they incentivize or facilitate cross-program discussions on campus. Therefore, the new reporting process asks college work groups to review the program data submitted and have cross-program conversations to construct three short, open-ended answers to each of five questions related to each Vision goal. These cross-functional and cross-program conversations provide colleges an opportunity to build a more holistic understanding of what their campus is doing to improve student success outcomes by identifying how each program (and its activities) contributes to student outcomes and equity efforts overall and how programs might work together for even greater impact.

The purpose of the goal-specific narratives is to provide the Chancellor's Office with the information it needs about what colleges are doing on their campuses to achieve Vision goals so it can elevate promising practices and provide support, as needed. The prompts are:

- Provide three specific highlights in which the disproportionately impacted groups were served with the goal of closing equity gaps.
- Aligning and organizing the efforts of multiple programs to support shared goals will create a larger impact. Name three concrete steps the college has taken to braid the efforts/funds across programs to increase impact.
- List the three most effective strategies or tactics used to achieve this goal.
- Identify three important barriers the college faced trying to achieve this goal.
- Identify the top three changes your college will make to achieve this goal.

Characteristics of Informative and Actionable Narrative Responses

Because narratives are so short (200 characters maximum), it is important that they are useful to the work the Chancellor's Office is doing to support colleges and inform stakeholders of efforts throughout the system. To this end, each narrative should:

- ♦ be as specific as possible about how the activity chosen relates to the specific Vision goal;
- ♦ identify the group(s) served/affected by the activity (when possible);
- ♦ quantify the number of people served (when possible);
- ♦ avoid repeating the exact same narrative across all goals—they should be goal-specific;
- ♦ avoid using only a couple of words, i.e., write in complete sentences; and
- ♦ be understandable to a wide audience, i.e., terms used should not be college-specific.

Examples of useful narrative responses are provided in the table below. Each of these was submitted by one of the pilot colleges in response to one of the prompts.

Table 2: Examples of Useful Narrative Responses

General Topic*	Narrative From a Pilot College
Training	We funded cultural proficiency programming and data coaching for faculty, classified professionals, administrators and peer mentors.
Student Support	Various student orientations (including family orientations and Spanish-speaking orientations) served 8,060 students.
Counseling	We increased counseling appointments and Success Coach sessions within these programs (as well as collegewide) to reduce the total units taken.
Program Administration	The Equity Committee brought together the student services team for planning retreats during the summer to work on figuring out how to help students overcome some of these barriers, such as financial.
Personnel	We hired a counseling assistant to work specifically with disproportionately impacted (DI) students. The assistant reached out to these students to ensure they had educational plans.
Outreach	In 2019-2020, Outreach served a total of 8,253 students. Of those, 1,124 students attended a campus tour, and 6,082 attended an event, such as a community event. Virtual welcome and help desk=1,047.
Direct Aid to Students	57% of Student Success Completion grant awardees were African American or Hispanic. These funds provide students financial aid beyond tuition that supports students staying enrolled and completing.

*The VAR Project Team identified the topics after pilot colleges' submissions.

Processes for Identifying the Focus for Each Prompt

Much like the program-level reporting, the process for identifying the three responses for each prompt and Vision goal will vary by college structure and culture. However, every college should try to create a structure that:

- provides a college-level perspective but with insights or examples from specific programs;
- allows for cross-division and cross-functional input, discussion and decision-making; and
- highlights the strategies and tactics that are helping the college move the needle on Vision goals or factors hindering that process.

Conclusion

This User Manual aims to support campus implementation leads and affected program staff with the information they need to submit their program reporting starting in fall 2024. Please refer to this manual as you are preparing for statewide implementation. The Chancellor's Office will continue to provide guidance and resources to the field to support implementation of the Vision-Aligned Reporting project. Please reach out to VARSupport@foundationccc.org for any feedback or questions. The project team will field questions, respond to issues and develop accompanying resources in a timely manner.

This manual will be updated as new information and resources become available. For example, new screenshots will be provided when the statewide tool is complete.



Appendix A:

List and Descriptions of Activity
Categories and Subcategories

Table A-1: Explanation of Main Categories

EXPLANATION OF MAIN CATEGORIES		
<p>There are five high-level activity categories. If an activity falls into one of these categories, that is where it must be reported. Each activity within these categories will require reporting on spending by object code, so any salaries, benefits, supplies, capital outlay, etc., used for a high-level activity should be included here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Counseling (2) Direct Aid to Students (3) Instruction (4) Outreach or Inreach (5) Student Support Services <p>Any funding that the program wants to report that was not spent directly on the above categories can be included in Misc. Program Support Costs.</p>		
EXAMPLES		
<p>Two Examples:</p>	<p>Example 1: A program’s counselors spend about 50% of the time doing academic counseling, 50% doing career counseling. These would count as two activities.</p> <p>The first activity would fall under “Counseling-Academic” and would include all costs of providing that service, 50% of all counselors’ salary/benefits, total amount of supplies/materials or capital outlay specifically related to that type of counseling or the appropriate share of any shared resource costs.</p> <p>The second and third activities would fall under “Counseling-Career” and “Counseling-Programmatic,” respectively, and would each include 25% of the related expenses.</p>	<p>Example 2: A program spends funds on general office materials used for a variety of program activities and has refurnished their student lounge that has no single, specific purpose. These funds would fall under Misc. Program Support Costs with spending reported by object code.</p>

Table A-2: List of Vision-Aligned Reporting Categories and Subcategories

VISION-ALIGNED REPORTING CATEGORIES & SUBCATEGORIES		
<p>High-level activity categories were developed over a multiyear process, as follows:</p> <p>Pilot Year 1: Colleges were provided open text fields and programs entered any activity they considered “high-level.”</p> <p>Pilot Year 2: Using the Year 1 submissions, a set of main categories was created and subcategories were open text.</p> <p>Pilot Year 3: Information from Year 2 used to create subcategories.</p> <p>After Year 3 was complete, feedback was collected from the pilot colleges. In addition, an analysis was conducted on how the categories/subcategories were used. This information led to a substantial reduction in the number of categories. The Chancellor's Office program staff reviewed the final set of categories to ensure they were comprehensive.</p>		
Category	Subcategory	Student ID Data Req.
Counseling	Academic	Yes
	Basic Needs	Yes
	Mental Health	Yes
	Career	Yes
	Financial Aid	Yes
	Transfer	Yes
	Program Specific Counseling	Yes
	Other [Specify]	Yes
Direct Aid to Students	Textbooks	Yes
	Emergency Aid	Yes
	Food	Yes
	Gift Cards	Yes
	Housing	Yes
	Child Care [on-campus or off-campus]	Yes
	Testing Fees for Licenses and Certifications [specific license or certification]	Yes

	External Tutoring Resources	Yes
	Transportation	Yes
	Academic Supplies	Yes
	Mental Health Grant	Yes
	Program Specific Grant	Yes
	Technology	Yes
	Work Study	Yes
	Other [Specify]	Yes
Instruction	Curriculum/Instructional Development [academic program name, if appropriate]	No
	Academic Program Development [academic program name, if appropriate]	No
	Instructional Supplies and Equipment [academic program name, if appropriate]	No
	Program Review/Evaluation Efforts [academic program name, if appropriate]	No
	Articulation [academic program name, if appropriate]	No
	Other [academic program name, if appropriate]	No
Outreach or Inreach	Outreach Marketing [community type (e.g., K-12, adult education, incarcerated, general, specific employers or industry sector, other)]	No
	Outreach Event [community type (e.g., K-12, adult education, incarcerated, general, specific employers or industry sector, other)]	No
	Other Outreach [community type (e.g., K-12, adult education, incarcerated, general, specific employers or industry sector, other)]	No
	Inreach Marketing	Yes
	Inreach Event	No
	Other Inreach [Specify]	Yes, if possible

Student Support Services	Program Onboarding, Orientation, and/or Retention Activities for Current Students	Yes
	Enrollment/Reenrollment Activities	Yes
	Transfer Assistance Activities	Yes
	Completion Activities	Yes
	Career Activities	Yes
	Independent Living Workshops/Activities	Yes
	Accommodation: Alternative Media/Adaptive Equipment	Yes
	Accommodation: Interpreting/Captioning	Yes
	Services: Tutoring	Yes
	Services: Peer Support	Yes
	Services: University Tours or Representative Visits/Transfer Fairs [segment, if appropriate]	Yes
	Services: Career Tours/Fairs [industry or employer, if appropriate]	Yes
	Services: Program Specific [Type, if appropriate]	Yes
	Unstructured Student Support	Yes
	Work-Based Learning	Yes
Internships	Yes	
Other [Specify]	Yes	
Misc. Program Support Costs	Program Staff Salaries and Benefits [specify, if required by program]	No
	Program Review/Evaluation	No
	Technology	No
	Professional Development [specify audience or topic, if appropriate]	No
	All Other Operating Expenses [specify, if appropriate]	No

Table A-3: Detailed Descriptions of Categories and Subcategories

COUNSELING <i>Activities related to counseling OR advising services provided to students</i> Subcategory should be chosen based on the primary goal of the counseling session.	
Related Subcategories	Description of subcategory
Academic	Any academic counseling provided to students such as transfer, probation/dismissal, educational planning, etc.
Basic Needs	Any counseling provided to students related to housing, food, transportation support, etc. Includes counseling resulting in referral to outside services like CalFresh
Mental Health	Any counseling provided to students related to mental health issues, including that resulting in referral to noncampus resources
Career	Any counseling provided to students related to choosing a career path and/or finding employment
Financial Aid	Any counseling provided to students related to transfer
Transfer	Any counseling provided to students related to identifying, applying for or receiving scholarships, grants or loans
Program Specific Offerings	Any counseling provided to students related to services provided by a specific program (e.g., CalWORKs, EOPS, etc.) that does not fall into one of the other counseling subcategories; can include referrals to other services
Other [specify]	Any counseling provided to students that does not fall into another counseling subcategory

DIRECT AID TO STUDENTS

Activities related to providing monetary aid or earmarked aid (e.g., gift cards, transportation vouchers, textbook vouchers) to support students

Should include both the actual aid provided and the costs of providing that aid.

Related Subcategories	Description of subcategory
Textbooks	Amount of aid provided for textbooks or financial aid earmarked for textbooks
Emergency Aid	Amounts of aid provided through an emergency aid program
Food	Amount of aid earmarked for food support, including food vouchers or food pantry support
Gift Cards	Amount of aid provided via gift cards to students and not earmarked for a specific expense. If earmarked for a specific expense, the gift card should be identified under one of the more specific subcategories
Housing	Amount of aid earmarked for housing support provided to students; could include on-campus housing, housing subsidies, etc.
Child Care [on or off campus]	Number of hours of child care provided to a student
Testing Fees for Licenses and Certifications [specific license or certification]	Amount of aid provided for taking licensure or certification tests; primarily for WEDD reporting
External Tutoring Resources	Amount of aid provided for tutoring NOT provided by the campus or program; primarily for WEDD reporting
Transportation	Amount of aid earmarked for transportation costs, including gas or bus vouchers, parking subsidies, etc.
Academic Supplies	Amount of aid earmarked for any nontextbook academic supplies
Grant: Mental Health	Amount of grant provided for mental health services and/or support

Grant: Programmatic	Amount of grant funds disbursed to students based on program eligibility (e.g., CalWORKS grants)
Technology	Value of technology either purchased for or loaned to students including laptops, hotspots, software, etc.
Work Study	Work study opportunities provided to students (e.g., under CalWORKS)
Other [specify]	Amount of any direct aid to students that does not fit into any of the other Direct Aid to Students subcategories

<p>INSTRUCTION <i>Activities related to instruction; could include the following categories: curriculum development and maintenance, faculty, courses, instructional equipment, dual enrollment classes, etc.</i></p>	
Curriculum/Instructional Development [academic program name, if appropriate]	Activities for the development of new curriculum or improvement of existing curriculum; include new supplies or equipment required for the new or improved curriculum
Academic Program Development [academic program name, if appropriate]	Activities for the development of a new academic program; include supplies or equipment required by the new program
Instructional Supplies and Equipment [academic program name, if appropriate]	Funds spent on general instructional supplies for existing curriculum and programs; may include consumable materials or materials loaned to students during their course of study
Program Review/Evaluation Efforts [academic program name, if appropriate]	Funds and staff time spent on program review and evaluation
Articulation [academic program name, if appropriate]	Funds spent on articulation efforts for specific programs or courses
Other [academic program name, if appropriate]	Funds spent on instructional activities not included in any other subcategory

OUTREACH OR INREACH

Activities to communicate about a program to a specific student population, community group and/or policymakers (i.e., marketing, printing, outreach, advocacy/liaison, program education)

Marketing Outreach: [community type (e.g., K-12, incarcerated, general, specific employer, industry, etc.)]	Media (e.g., print, social, tv/radio) activities directed toward specific potential student groups or the community in general about a program; could include marketing to former students for reenrollment
Event Outreach: [community type (e.g., K-12, incarcerated, general, specific employer, industry, etc.)]	Real-time event (in-person or virtual) directed toward specific potential student groups or the community in general about a program; could include events for former students for enrollment/reenrollment
Other Outreach: [community type (e.g., K-12, incarcerated, general, specific employer, industry, etc.)]	Communications to potential student groups or the community in general about a program that does NOT fit into one of the other two outreach subcategories; could include outreach to former students for enrollment/re-enrollment
Event Inreach	Any real-time event (in-person or virtual) directed toward a college's current students about a program
Marketing Inreach	Includes any media (e.g., print, social, tv/radio, tabling event) activity directed toward a college's current students about a program
Inreach: Other [specify]	Any activity to provide information to a college's current students about a program that does not fit into one of the previous inreach subcategories

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Academic or career services to directly support students (i.e., tutoring, American Sign Language interpreter, academic support, peer mentors, workshops, advising, program services, open lab). Not to be confused with the services providing direct aid to students or counseling.

Onboarding, Orientation, Retention Activities for Current Students	Any noncounseling activity to provide onboarding, program orientation, or retention support to current students
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Enrollment/Reenrollment	Any noncounseling activity to provide enrollment/reenrollment support to students
Transfer Assistance	Any noncounseling activity to provide transfer support to students
Completion	Any noncounseling activity to provide completion support to students
Career	Any noncounseling activity to provide career support to students
Independent Living	Any noncounseling activity to provide independent living support to students
Accommodation: Alternative Media/Adaptive Equipment	Activities related to accommodation for students with disabilities by providing alternative media or adaptive equipment
Accommodation: Interpreting/Captioning	Activities related to accommodation for students with disabilities by providing interpreting or captioning
Services: Tutoring	Provision of tutoring to students via program tutors, a tutoring center or an extended course
Services: Peer Support	Provision of any peer support to students including mentors, advisors and/or ambassadors
Services: University Tours, University Representative Visits to College Campus, or Transfer Fairs; [segment, if appropriate]	Provision of university tours to students or transfer fairs to students; also includes visits from four-year institution representatives
Services: Career Tours/Fairs [industry or employer, if appropriate]	Provision of career tours, orientations or career fairs for students
Services: Program Specific [Type, if appropriate]	Provision of any services specific to the program (e.g., Veterans Centers helping students with GI certification)
Unstructured Student Support	Any activities that provide student support on an ad hoc basis. Could include quick questions via drop-in, phone, etc.
Work-Based Learning	Provision of work-based learning opportunities to students

Internships	Provision of internships to students
Other [specify]	Activities related to the main category that do not fit into one of the other Student Support Services subcategories

MISC. PROGRAM SUPPORT COSTS	
Activities that support a program's operations NOT included in a main category.	
Program Staff Salaries and Benefits [specify, if required by program]	Any funds spent on program staff salaries and benefits not included in another main category
Program Review/Evaluation	Any funds spent on general program review and evaluation not related to another main category activity
Technology	Any funds spent on technology not included in another main category
Professional Development [audience or topic, if appropriate]	Any funds spent on professional development not included in another main category
All Other Operating Expenses [specify, if appropriate]	Any funds spent not included in another main category or another Misc. Program Costs subcategory

Appendix B:

Glossary of Terms

Activity categories and subcategories: To align reporting across programs, the VAR has a defined set of activity categories and subcategories for programs to report on. Information on those categories and subcategories (e.g., specific definitions for each and whether they require student identification information) can be found in the Appendix to the General VAR User Manual.

Activity impact: Programs will need to identify the expected impact of each activity on four of the student outcome Vision goals—completion, transfer, unit accumulation and workforce. See primary impact and secondary impact for more detail.

Aggregated student-level activity data (for VAR): For the 2024-2025 reporting year, campus programs are only required to submit the total number of students served by each activity broken out by the following disproportionately impacted student groups: Black/African American, Hispanic/Latine and economically disadvantaged. In future years, programs will be required to submit student IDs for each student served by specific activities.

Campus implementation leads: One or two individuals identified by their CEO to lead the campus' work on implementing the new VAR reporting process and overseeing the data collection and reporting process across the included programs. The specific role of the college implementation leads can be found in the General VAR User Manual.

Campus program staff (or affected program staff): Staff on each campus who oversee the programs required to report their activities via VAR. Programs for the 2024-2025 reporting year include:

- ◆ NextUP (formerly Cooperating Agencies for Foster Youth Educational Support)
- ◆ CalWORKS
- ◆ CCAP (College and Career Access Pathways)/Dual Enrollment
- ◆ DSPS (Disabled Student Programs and Services)
- ◆ EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services) & CARE
- ◆ Middle College High School
- ◆ MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement)
- ◆ SEA (Student Equity and Achievement) Program
- ◆ Strong Workforce Local Share
- ◆ Transfer Center Annual Report
- ◆ Veterans Resource Centers

Chancellor's Office Internal Work Group: A work group convened between January 2020 and June 2023 made up of selected Chancellor's Office staff and leadership. The purpose of the work group was to design, pilot and refine a new comprehensive reporting structure for college programs.

The work group was replaced with the Vision-Aligned Reporting Governance Committee that began meeting in July 2023.

Chancellor’s Office Management Information System (MIS or COMIS): Legislation mandates the data collection function of [MIS](#). The data that MIS collects (from the colleges/districts) provides accountability to governing bodies regarding the California Community Colleges’ functioning and drives funding. MIS data supports accountability in the form of the [Student Success Metrics Dashboard](#), the annual [State of the System](#) report, and various reporting to the Legislature and governor.

College-level reporting: After programs have completed their reporting, the Vision goal narratives should be completed from a college perspective with input from the affected program staff and others with a campuswide perspective, as appropriate.

Demonstration site: The Chancellor’s Office is providing a demonstration site of the VAR online tool between fall 2023 and summer 2024. Implementation leads will have access to the site in fall 2023 and can add additional users — e.g., leadership, campus program staff — as needed. The site is a “sandbox” that allows individuals to add or delete data to better understand how the new reporting site will function. None of the information added to the site during the demonstration period will be saved or used for any purpose.

Online VAR Reporting Tool: Reporting college program and narrative data will occur via an online reporting tool based on the tool developed during the pilot period. A more robust version of the pilot tool is being built and tested during the 2023-2024 academic year and will be released in summer 2024.

Pilot colleges: A group of colleges from around the state that participated in the VAR pilot process. All CEOs were contacted about participating in the process, and all 15 who were interested participated in Year 1. Fifteen colleges were included in Year 1, and nine of those colleges continued throughout all three years of piloting.

Primary impact (of program activities): For the purposes of program reporting, activities have a “primary” impact if there is a straightforward, easily identifiable connection between the activity and the goal and/or the express purpose of the activity is to achieve that goal. For example, activities undertaken by a transfer center or used to support new articulation agreements with local four-year institutions are expected to have a clear and direct impact on Goal 2: Transfer.

Program activities: Programs should enter information on any activities that they carried out to meet program requirements and/or achieve program goals. A list of activity categories and subcategories is provided in the appendix to the General VAR User Manual, and a crosswalk for each program (between previously reported activities and VAR categories) can be found in the program-specific manuals.

Program reporting: Affected campus programs are required to submit the following information via VAR for each reporting year:

- ♦ total funding the program received;
- ♦ all activities the program undertakes;
- ♦ student IDs for each student served by program activity;
- ♦ annual cost of providing each program activity;
- ♦ how each program activity is expected to affect the Vision goal metrics of completion, transfer, unit accumulation and workforce.

Project team: A team located in the Student Success Center of the Foundation for California Community Colleges created to support the Chancellor's Office as it develops, pilots and refines the VAR process. They

will continue their support through the statewide implementation effort ending June 2026. Contact the project team at VARSupport@foundationccc.org regarding any aspect of the project.

Reporting year: For the purposes of the VAR, the reporting year is each academic year, including the leading/previous summer term. Because of the timing of implementation, Year 1 of VAR is from fall 2024 to spring 2025, and colleges will report data from this period in December 2025.

Secondary impact (of activities): Program activities have a secondary impact on a Vision goal if the connection between the activity and the goal occurs through the support of an intervening activity or practice. For example, AB 705 implementation activities have a direct impact on Goal 3 (reduce units to degree) but may also have an indirect impact on Goals 1 and 2 by moving students more quickly to completion of degrees, certificates, and transfer.

Student ID data: Beginning with the 2025-2026 reporting year, affected programs will be required to submit the student identification numbers of each student served by most program activities reported. Find a list of which categories require student ID data in the appendix to the General VAR User Manual.

Students served: For most activities, programs are required to provide student IDs for everyone served by that activity. Students are considered served if they actually took part in the activity, not that the activity was simply made available to them.

A list of categories requiring student IDs is provided in the appendix to the General VAR User Manual.

Vision Resource Center (VRC): The professional development platform for all California community college professionals.