California Community Colleges

SYSTEM WEBINAR SUMMARY:
Moving from TOP to CIP (February 2026)

This webinar discussed the transition from Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) codes to Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. Guest presenters included Eric Shearer of Butte College and Laura Coleman of the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research.

Why are We Changing from TOP to CIP codes?

- TOP codes were developed in California to categorize community college programs with similar objectives, while CIP codes were developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to track, assess, and report fields of study.
- We are now aligning with federal reporting standards to:
  - Adopt a nationally recognized framework that is well-managed and regularly updated, to improve consistency, transparency and usability and to reduce the need for dual reporting by colleges;
  - Strengthen interoperability with state and federal partners; and
  - Allow us to inform decennial revisions to CIP codes (next one in 2030).
- The TOP to CIP Code Transition Project website provides more information, including memos on operational alignment and implementation guidance and answers to frequently asked questions. The transition work is being done collaboratively with various constituency groups that will be affected by the change.

What Resources are Available to Support the Transition?

- A TOP-to-CIP Crosswalk is live and will continue to be updated, as well as examples of altered codes for noncredit programs. Colleges that have already been working on the transition should check their assigned CIP codes against the Crosswalk.
- The Chancellor's Office is holding TOP to CIP open office hours every two weeks, as well as special sessions for issues related to noncredit (February 10) and fiscal processes (February 24; will cover Budgeting and Accounting Manual [BAM] issues).
- Funding for the CCN process may be used for TOP to CIP transition processes.
- Send any questions or feedback to top2cip@cccco.edu.
- An Academic Senate presentation discusses code alignment issues for curriculum.
- NCES has a CIP crosswalk to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes.

What are the Timeline and Major Steps Involved?

- The timeline has colleges beginning their re-classifications this month, with ongoing

transition work through fall 2027, based on the published [crosswalk](#).

- Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADTs) and Common Course Numbers ([CCN](#)) will have consistent CIP codes assigned across the system.
- Colleges must submit other instructional CIP codes to the Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory ([COCI](#)) by December 31, 2026, followed by testing and corrections, and changes to other systems. A COCI update on February 26th will ensure that colleges only have to update the CIP code and the other requirements for the Course Outline of Record (COR) will update automatically.
- Colleges will report both TOP/CIP codes through spring 2027; CIP-only reporting begins summer 2027. Through 2026, changes to CIP codes will not trigger a new control number but will require confirmation that the code conforms to the crosswalk.

What are the Major Differences Between TOP and CIP Codes?

- Both are 6-digit codes (with 4-digit and 2-digit codes for less specificity). Typically, we have used only the first 5 digits of TOP codes but will use all 6 digits of CIP codes.
- CIP codes are often more detailed than TOP codes, so several different CIP codes may correspond to a single TOP code.
- CIP code descriptions by NCES designate programs as CTE ("a program that prepares individuals for…") or not CTE ("a program that focuses on…").
- CIP codes are determined by program intent and awards, such that a program resulting in a degree or certificate is assigned a credit-based CIP code. Noncredit programs have specific CIP codes that are designated as not valid for IPEDS reporting.

How are Colleges Impacted by the Change?

- Colleges have already been working with CIP codes for many years for a variety of federal reporting processes, so the transition may be technically complicated but should not pose conceptual challenges.
- Colleges likely have local crosswalks; this formal transition offers an opportunity to correct some past reporting practices by aligning with the updated crosswalk. College SIS and curriculum systems will need to hold both codes for a while.
- TOP codes were not intended for use in non-instructional administrative processes (e.g., faculty minimum qualifications or service areas, department and program organization, budget allocations, program review structures). We've built TOP codes into processes that they were not intended for, so this transition is an opportunity to ensure that those practices are not carried over to CIP codes, which may only be assigned to instructional programs and courses.
- Colleges will need a cross-functional team to work on the transition, with instructional, information technology, business, and other staff involved to ensure consideration of needed changes to all areas that have been using TOP codes.